

KILPECK CASTLE, KILPECK

Archaeological Evaluation

commissioned by Natural England

September 2013





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Illus 1

Site location

KILPECK CASTLE, KILPECK

Archaeological Evaluation

Headland Archaeology was commissioned by Natural England to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Kilpeck Castle Herefordshire prior to proposed structural stabilisation work. The four test pits revealed in situ medieval deposits at a depth of 0.3m below ground level, showing that there is sufficient thickness of topsoil to undertake the stabilisation work without significant damage to nationally important archaeological remains.

1 INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology was commissioned by Natural England to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Kilpeck Castle Herefordshire.

The surviving fragments of the polygonal shell-keep that stand upon the top of the motte are at risk of structural collapse due to their proximity to the edge of the motte head; erosion of the motte's upper slopes; the influence of plants and burrowing animals; and deterioration of the standing masonry.

A structural survey undertaken in February 2013 (Avent 2013) recommended the emplacement of ground-anchors tied into the upstanding masonry in order to prevent movement of the structures. The proposed ground anchors will be a series of connected rods laid horizontally at a depth of ~300mm below ground level. The connected rods will tie into a termination plate secured to the mound by two rods driven ~3m into the ground at a 45° angle from the termination plate.

The castle is an archaeologically sensitive area and a scheduled ancient monument. Scheduled monument consent is required for the proposed stabilisation works. This programme of preliminary investigations (test pits) was lawfully carried out under Class 7 of the Ancient Monuments (Class Consent) Order 1994. The results of the test pits will more fully inform the design of the ground anchors and the potential impacts of the remedial works upon the scheduled monument.

1.1 Location

The site is located approximately 7 miles southwest of Hereford, adjacent to Kilpeck Parish Church in the village of Kilpeck. The centre of the site lies at National Grid reference SO 4442 3046.

1.2 Archaeological background

Kilpeck Castle is a Norman defensive work on the classic lines of a raised mound, or motte, encircled by an enclosing ditch; and with

further ditched and fortified enclosures – the inner and outer bailies – attached. The earliest structure on the motte is believed to have been timber; the stone keep is believed to have been built in the 12th century AD prior to the death of Hugh de Kilpeck in 1168/69. The keep is believed to have been partially demolished during the English Civil War in 1645 (Shoesmith 2008).

Archaeological excavations have taken place within the inner bailey (1982), and outside of the castle earthworks (1988/89). Both uncovered the remains of medieval settlement dating to between the late 11th and early 14th centuries.

In connection with the structural survey, trial pits and boreholes were excavated adjacent to the upstanding masonry and on top of the motte (Avent 2013). The test pits demonstrated the relatively shallow depth of the structural foundations; the boreholes demonstrated that topsoil on top of the motte platform was approximately 0.4m thick, overlying the mound material.

A resistivity survey (Mayes 2013) on of the top of the motte was undertaken by Headland Archaeology in May 2013. The survey has indicated the presence of buried stone structures on the motte platform, including the possible presence of backfilled cellars adjacent to the two surviving masonry fragments; a possible tower in the south-east corner of the motte; a possible wall running up the eastern side of the motte; and a possible central structure. Some of the possible stone remains appear to be at a shallow depth of <0.75m; others (including the possible cellars) were visible at a depth of 1–1.5m.

2 OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGY

The objectives of the evaluation were:

- to determine the presence or absence of significant archaeological remains that would be impacted upon by the proposed works;
- to establish whether or not any structural remains relating to the demolished keep survive in the areas that could be affected by the stabilisation works;

- to inform any alterations to the stabilisation works design that may be required in order to ensure that the integrity of the scheduled monument is preserved;
- to inform the design of any further archaeological works that may be required by English Heritage; and
- to produce and deposit a satisfactory archive and disseminate the results of the work via grey-literature reporting and publication as appropriate.

3 METHOD

The location of the evaluation trenches was agreed upon prior to excavation and indicated on a site plan. Trench positions were determined on the ground as constraints allowed, but they conformed to the following principles:

- TP1, measuring 2m x 1m x 0.3m deep. Adjacent to the north wall to investigate depth of cover over possible buried stone structures or rubble;
- TP2, measuring 2m x 1m x 0.3m deep. Adjacent to the south wall to investigate depth of cover over possible buried stone structures or rubble;
- TP3, measuring 2m x 1m x 0.3m deep. In the centre of the motte (allowing for adjustment due to existing vegetation) to investigate the possible central structure shown on resistivity;
- TP4, measuring 2m x 1m x 1m deep. At the location of the proposed ground anchors to investigate the existence of and foundation depth of the north-south possible wall detected by the resistivity, to inform the positioning of the driven rods.

All trenches were located using a Trimble differential GPS system. A record sheet was completed for each trench, even where no deposits of archaeological significance were present. All trenches were assigned context numbers relative to the test pit (TP) number i.e. TP1 was assigned the block of context numbers ranging from 100–199, TP2 was assigned contexts 200–299, TP3 was assigned contexts 300–399 and TP4 was assigned 400–499.

Excavation was undertaken by hand using appropriate tools. Turves were cut by hand and laid aside for reinstatement following excavation.

All recording followed IfA Standards and Guidance. All contexts and small finds were given unique numbers. All recording was undertaken on pro forma record cards. 35mm colour transparencies and B/W prints were taken; a graduated metric scale was clearly visible. Digital photographs on a 7.2mp camera were taken for illustrative purposes only and will not form a part of the site archive.

A plan at a scale of 1:20 was produced of each trench, with individual features reproduced at 1:20. A section of each trench was recorded at a scale of 1:10.

An overall site plan at an appropriate scale and relative to the National Grid and Ordnance Datum was recorded.

4 RESULTS

The stratigraphy across site was generally consistent, with similar deposits observed within TP1–3 and a series of tip line deposits observed within TP4.

In TP1–3 (see **Illus 2–4**), three distinct deposits were encountered. The earliest archaeological deposit, contexts (102, 203, and 302) was observed at a depth of 0.3m and contained charcoal flecks throughout, abundant medieval pottery, animal bone and occasional small-large stones with mortar attached. The deposit may represent a medieval occupation layer from within the castle (see **Illus 6**).



Illus 2 Test Pit 1



Illus 3 Test Pit 2



Illus 4

Test Pit 3



Illus 5 *Test Pit 4, north facing section*



Illus 6 Plan of Test Pit 2

An environmental soil sample obtained from (203) revealed charred cereal grain, plant, charcoal and animal bone which suggests incidental deposition of domestic / settlement waste (see Appendix 2 for Palaeoenvironmental report).

Above this was a rubble deposit (101, 201, and 301) which contained small-large angular stones. Deposit (202), a rubble deposit similar to (201), was observed within TP2 also (see **Illus 6**). This rubble layer (202) contained more stones than (201); however it can also be associated with the castle demolition phase. Mortar was attached to some of the stones indicating a possible association with the 17th century demolition of the castle walls. Medieval pottery and animal bone was recovered from within the deposit. In TP3, a piece of decorated stone, which may represent a medieval gaming board, was found within (301).

The entire site was sealed by topsoil (100, 200, and 300). The topsoil varied in depth across the site, between c. 0.15–0.30m. Post-medieval material such as clay pipe stems and pottery were found within.

TP 4 was dug to a depth of 1m which gave a greater insight into the stratigraphy of the motte. The section face revealed a series of tip lines whose formation is likely to be associated with the man-made formation of the motte (see **Illus 5**).

Nine distinct tip line deposits were observed (402-410) (see Illus 7).

Mortar fragments were recovered within deposits (401, 408, and 410). Topsoil (400) contained modern material. Pottery recovered from (401) was dated to the post-medieval period. No datable material was recovered from within the tip line deposits.

5 DISCUSSION

Deposits (101) and (201/202) contained abundant stone rubble fragments that corroborate the results of the geophysical survey, which detected large areas of potential rubble spreads in the vicinity of TP1 and 2. Both test pits confirm the presence of rubble within these areas, probably associated with the demolition of part of the castle in the 17th century. Rubble (301) was detected within TP3; however the frequency of rubble within was not as substantial as those in TP1 and 2, which were located closer to the castle walls, suggesting a greater density of rubble closer to the walls of the shell keep. This suggests that the rubble deposits are likely to contain only low quality archaeological information, and their disturbance by the small slit trenches required by the stabilisation works will not harm the archaeological significance of the castle.

TP3, located at the centre of the motte beneath a cluster of trees, was situated in an area where a potential structure was detected on the geophysical survey. No evidence for structures were uncovered within the depth investigated by TP1–3; if structural remains are present below this level then they will not be affected by the stabilisation work.

Deposits (203 and 302) were found to contain charcoal flecks and pottery dating to the medieval period. The pottery pre dates the demolition of the castle. A soil sample taken from (203) reveals

3-

evidence for domestic/settlement activity (see Appendix 2). Therefore, these deposits most likely represent a medieval occupation deposit within the shell keep.

Sherds of pre-Conquest pottery from within (302) may place Kilpeck Castle within the limited class of pre-Conquest motte and bailey castles in the Welsh marches. Further study of the sherds is planned following completion of the mitigation works.

TP4 found no evidence for the linear wall like feature detected on the geophysical survey. The stratigraphical sequence of tip lines recorded may indicate evidence for material being dumped outside and up against the walls of the shell keep, therefore consolidating the mound. Mortar fragments from deposits (401, 408, and 410) suggest there was an accumulation of soil associated with the period in which the castle was in use. Few fragments of pottery were found within the deposits noted in section therefore suggesting it is not an accumulation of waste, but in fact material brought in from elsewhere to form the motte. The archaeological value of this material is unlikely to be significantly affected by the emplacement of the ground anchors.

6 CONCLUSION

The test pits revealed a series of consistent deposits present across the site. The earliest consisted of a medieval occupation layer, with the later rubble material associated with the demolition of the castle in the 17th century, all sealed by topsoil. The tip lines observed in TP4 grant us a glimpse into the construction of the motte and consolidation of the mound itself.

No significant structures were discovered within any of the test pits. If structural remains are present below this level then they will not be affected by the stabilisation work.



Illus 7

Λ

North facing section of Test Pit 4

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APPE	NDICES				Photo	C slide film 801	B/W film 787	Digital	Direction facing	Description
Anner	ndiv 1 S	ito ronisti	orc		6	32	32	06	W	TP2 — E-facing section
лррсп		ite registi			7	31	31	07	E	TP3 – W–facing section
Annend	div:11 Tr	rench reaist	ter		8	30	30	08	E	TP3 — W-facing section
Trench	Length (m)	Width (m)	Av. depth (m)		9	29	29	09	SE	TP3 — plan (colour picture faces south)
1	2.0	1.0	0.3		10	28	28	10	E	TP3 — plan
2	2.0	1.0	0.3		11	27	27	11	E	TP1 — post-ex plan
3	2.0	1.0	0.3		12	26	26	12	Ν	TP1 — S-facing section
4	2.0	1.0	1.0		13	25	25	13	S	TP4 — N-facing section
					14	_	-	14	W	TP4 — E-facing section
Append	dix 1.2 Co	ontext regi	ster		15	_	-	15	Ν	TP4 – location view
Context	Description	1		Dimensions (m)	16	-	-	16	Ν	General shot TP4 in foreground, T1 close to N wall
100	Dark greyish	brown silty clay		0.3	17	_	_	17	Ν	General shot — general shot TP4 in foreground, T1 close to N wall
101	Light grey br	own-silty loam-	-rubble layer	0.02	18	_	_	18	Ν	General shot – TP1
102	Light grey pi	nk silty clay-mee	dieval occupation layer	-	19	_	_	19	W	General shot – TP3
Test Pit	2 Topsoil mid a	arev brown silty	clav	0.13	20	_	_	20	SW	General shot — TP3 (left), TP2 (right)
200	Subsoil-light	arev brown silty	v clav	0.15	21	_	_	21	SW	General shot – TP2
201	Rubble deno	sit-medium-lan	ne stones	_	22	_	_	22	S	General shot – TP3
203	Light grey pi	nk silty clay-me	dieval occupation layer	0.02	23	_	_	23	Ν	General shot — TP2 in foreground, TP3 beneath trees, TP1 at N wall
Test Pit	3				24	24	23	24	SW	TP2 backfilled
300	Light grey br	own silty clay		0.13	25	23	22	25	W	TP1 backfilled
301	Light grey br	own silty clay		0.12	26	22	21	26	S	TP3 backfilled
302	Light grey pi	nk silty clay-mee	dieval occupation layer	0.05	27	21	20	27	NW	TP4 backfilled
Test pit	4									
400	Topsoil-dark	brown		0.17	Annon	div 1 4	Drawing	rogistor		
401	Subsoil-build	ding rubble mate	erial	0.16	Appen	uix 1.4		register	• .•	

0.66

402 Deposit made of tip lines-reddish brown silty clay and medium brown clayey silt

Appendix 1.3 Photographic register

Photo	C slide film 801	B/W film 787	Digital	Direction facing	Description
1	37	37	01	-	ID shot
2	36	36	02	S	TP2-midexwithrubbleatSend
3	35	35	03	S	TP2 — rubble at S end
4	34	34	04	S	TP2 — post-ex
5	33	33	05	W	TP2 — Efacing section

Drawing	Scale	Plan/Section	Description
1	1:10	Section	East facing section TP2
2	1:10	Plan	Plan of TP2
3	1:20	Section	North facing section of TP4

Appendix 2 Palaeoenvironmental sample assessment report

By Laura Bailey

Introduction

A sample taken during evaluation at Kilpeck Castle was processed for palaeoenvironmental assessment.

Method

The sample was processed using a standard floatation method (cf. Kenward et al 1980). All plant macrofossil samples were analysed using a stereomicroscope at magnifications of x10 and up to x100 where necessary to aid identification. Identifications were confirmed using modern reference material and seed atlases including Cappers et al (2006).

Results

The results of the sample processing are provided in Table 1 (Retent) and Table 2 (Floatation). Suitable material for AMS dating is also identified in the tables. All plant remains were preserved through charring.

Plant remains

Cereal grain

Table 1

Retent sample results



Key: + = rare (0-5), + + = occasional (6-15), + + + = common (15-50) and <math>+ + + + = abundant (>50)NB charcoal over 1cm is suitable for identification and AMS dating

Table 2

Flotation sample results



Key: + = rare (1–5), ++ = occasional (6–15), +++ = common (16–50) and ++++ = abundant (>50) NB charcoal over 1cm is suitable for identification and AMS dating

A small amount of charred cereal grain was present in the flot and included wheat (*Triticum* sp.) and indeterminate cereal grains. The grains were heavily abraded and broken. A single cereal grain was also recovered from the retents, however it was heavily abraded and therefore not possible to identify.

Wild taxa

A range of wild taxa were also present. These were typical species associated with agricultural fields and disturbed ground and include fat hen (*Chenopodium* cf. album), dock (*Rumex* sp.), grass seed (*Poaceae* sp.) and legumes.

Wood charcoal

Wood charcoal was abundant in both the flot and retent. Where possible, the charcoal was identified as oak or non-oak. The majority of charcoal fragments recovered proved to be oak (*Quercus* sp.). Two of the larger charcoal fragments (1.5cm) were tentatively identified as roundwood.

Other finds

Together with the charred plant remains the sample also contained small fragments of animal bone. Pottery, brick, lead and mortar fragments recovered from the retents will be the subject of a separate report.

Discussion

The charred cereal grain assemblage is very small. The abraded nature of the grains suggests that they are not the result of primary deposition within the feature. The charred wild 'seeds' present was probably accidentally incorporated, perhaps by windblow or surface run-off and therefore gives no indication of the function of the feature from which they were recovered. The majority of charcoal fragments recovered from the samples were in the small-size range (<1cm) suggesting that they are more likely to relate to background burning than in situ conflagration events. The charred cereal grain, plant, charcoal and animal bone all suggest incidental deposition of domestic/ settlement waste.

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Appendix 3 Finds assessment

By Julie Franklin & Stephanie Ratkai

Introduction

The assemblage numbered 89 sherds of pottery, and a small collection of building materials, metalwork, glass and industrial waste. The majority of the material is of medieval date. Finds were recovered from four test pits (TP1–4). They were concentrated in TP2, but TP3 also produced some interesting finds.

Pottery

The assemblage amounted to 89 sherds of pottery. They were catalogued according to Hereford fabric codes defined by Vince (1985). They range in date from the late 11th century to the modern period but it is the earlier material which predominates, with all but four sherds apparently dating to the medieval period and most dating to between the 11th and 13th centuries.

Fabric A2 is the most common fabric. It is unusual for this fabric to be so well represented but that may be influenced by the small sample size. A glazed bowl / cooking pot in fabric A2 is an unusual find. There are also four sherds (context 302), coded 'G' for 'unknown source'. The fabric is not dissimilar to the finer version of Fabric A2 but it is extremely micaceous. The surfaces appear almost burnished; this could be a result of knife-trimming or wiping the surface of the pot. The curvature on the sherds does not immediately suggest a vessel form. It is possible that these sherds are pre-Conquest.

Finds

The other finds were predominantly made up of various building materials and other structural remains probably deriving from the fabric of the medieval castle. Few can be dated with any certainty but most are consistent with a medieval date. Only one find was definitely later, a clay pipe stem of post-medieval date (context 200).

The structural finds include, a large stone floor tile apparently later reused. Two further pieces of worked stone may derive from floors or walls. One is scored with a nine-mens morris board (context 302), a game popular in the medieval period. Such boards are often found scratched into architectural fragments and incorporated into structures and are thought to derive from games played by the stone masons during construction (Croft 1987, p1). The other stone fragment is also scored, though it is not clear if this is part of another board, or a mason's mark. There are also seven sherds of ceramic building materials, all representing roof and ridge tiles of medieval date. Where identifiable, sherds are local or Malvernian. Other material include fragments of mortar, two fragments of window glass, some lead sheet offcuts and two iron nails.

The only other finds are a small quantity of ironworking waste, probably relating to blacksmithing at the castle either during construction, or during its occupation.

Discussion

The finds strongly suggest the survival of medieval deposits in the area. Contexts (203) and (302) in particular would appear contain only

finds of early 13th century and earlier date and would thus appear to have been deposited in the early 13th century. The pottery is in good condition and many good-sized sherds are present suggesting that area excavation would produce a good assemblage of finds. The nature of the finds indicates a mixture of domestic midden and demolition deposits.

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Finds catalogues

Pottery

TP	Context	Sherds	Fabric/ object	Comment	Spot date
1	100	2	Mod	Small chips of transfer-printed ware	19th-20th
1	100	1	B4	?bowl	Mid 14th—16th
1	100	3	B4?	Small chips, poss cbm	Mid 14th—16th
1	100	1	Organic	Calcined bone	-
2	200	4	A2	Cpj 2 x in-turned rims	Late 13th?
2	200	6	A7b	Jug(s) — probably all one vessel with complex roller stamp design (spirals/ring and dot)	Mid 13th—15th
2	200	1	B4	Jug	Mid 14th-16th
2	200	1	D2?	Chunky hand-formed	Late 11th—12th
2	201	6	A2	Same vessel as from 200	Late 13th?
2	201	1	A2	Срј	Late 12th—13th
2	201	1	A2	Int glaze ext soot — bowl/ pipkin?	13th?
2	201	4	A7b	Same vessel as from 200	Mid 13th-15th
2	201	1	A7b	Jug	Mid 13th-15th
2	201	1	A7e	Jar with thumbed neck cordon, fabric too fine for B4	Post-med
2	203	3	A2	Срј	Late 12th—13th
2	203	2	A2	Large int cpj/bowl, in-turned rim form	Early 13th?
2	203	10	A2	V. fragmentary	Late 12th—13th
2	203	6	A3	Срј	Early 13th
2	203	1	A3	Срј	Early 13th
2	203	4	B1	Срј	13th
2	203	1	B1	Срј	13th

TP	Context	Sherds	Fabric/ object	Comment	Spot date
2	203	1	C1	Срј	12th-13th
2	203	1	D2?	Срј	Late 11th—12th
3	301	2	A2	Срј	Late 12th—Early 13th
3	301	1	A2	Pitcher	Late 12th—13th
3	301	5	B1	Срј	13th
3	301	1	C1	Срј	12th-13th
3	302	5	A2	Срј	Late 12th—13th
3	302	3	A2	Citcher	Late 12th—13th
3	302	1	A3	Cpj? base	Early 13th
3	302	2	A3	Pitcher	Early 13th
3	302	1	B1	Cpj non-standard form	13th
3	302	1	D2	Cpj rim, ?wheel -finished	12th?
3	302	4	G	?burnished, pre-Conquest?	?
4	401	1	A7e	_	Post-med

Finds

TP	Context	Qty	Weight (g)	Material	Object	Description	Spot date
1	100	1	-	Glass	Window	Small sherd, dark, crystalising, opaque	Medi?
1	100	1	1	Industrial waste	Slag?	Small glassy fragment	_
1	100	1	_	Stone	Scored stone	Small piece of sandstone, flat surface with score mark — possibly architectural fragment with mason's mark, or part of another gaming board	_
2	200	1	-	CBM	Rooftile	Roof tile	Medieval
2	200	1	-	CBM	Ridge tile	Malvernian ?ridge tile	Medieval
2	200	2	-	CBM	Rooftile	A7 roof tile	Medieval
2	200	1	-	Clay Pipe	Stem	Narrow stem, wide bore	17th—19th
2	200	1	_	Glass	Window	Small sherd, dark, crystalising, opaque	_
2	201	1	64	Industrial waste	Iron slag?	-	-
2	201	1	_	Iron	Nail	Small T-head, clenched shaft, wrought	PM or earlier
2	203		67	Building material	Mortar	Small pieces of pink and white lime mortar	_
2	203	1	1	CBM	Fragment	Small red fragment	-
2	203		4	Industrial waste	Mag res	-	-
2	203	1	-	Iron	Nail	Flat round head, wrought, bent tip	PM or earlier
2	203		12	Iron	Fragments	Small flakes of iron	-
2	203	5	5	Lead	Offcuts	Fragments, offcuts and shavings	-

TP	Context	Qty	Weight (g)	Material	Object	Description	Spot date
3	301	1	-	CBM	Rooftile	Flat roof tile	Medieval
3	302	1	_	Stone	Gaming board	Lump of pink sandstone with one dressed face featuring part of nine- mens morris board, possibly inscribed on architectural fragment?	11th—17th
4	401	2	_	CBM	Rooftile	Flat roof tile	Medieval
4	402	1	_	Stone	Floor tile	Large corner sherd of thick grey sandstone tile, beveled edge, pink mortar on all surfaces including top and break implying reuse in wall or similar. Some score marks on top surface, probably darnage during uplift and reuse, length 252+, thickness 45	-

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