



**Bramber Castle
Bramber, West Sussex**

Archaeological Watching Brief Report





**BRAMBER CASTLE
BRAMBER
WEST SUSSEX**

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Prepared for:
English Heritage
Eastgate Court
195-205 High Street
Guildford
Surrey
GU1 3EH

by
Wessex Archaeology
Portway House
Old Sarum Park
SALISBURY
Wiltshire
SP4 6EB

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Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by English Heritage (South East Region) to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Bramber Castle, Bramber, West Sussex, centred on National Grid Reference 518667 110734 (hereafter the 'Site').

Bramber Castle is a Scheduled Monument (SM no. 12859) and comprises the remains of a motte and bailey castle. It was occupied almost continuously from 1075 until 1450 by the descendants of the founder, William de Braose.

The watching brief was undertaken during the repair works, which comprised the relaying of the gravel access track and excavation of a new soakaway with an associated drainage trench across the access track.

No archaeological features or deposits were observed in the course of the watching brief and no artefacts were retrieved. Topsoil and, in the drainage trench across the access track, gravel made ground were recorded overlying the natural chalk geology.

The watching brief was carried out between the 15th and 17th March 2011.

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Acknowledgements

This project was commissioned by English Heritage and Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Dave Latham in this regard.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Jon Martin. This report was compiled by Julia Sulikowska. The illustrations were prepared by Linda Coleman. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Sue Farr.

**BRAMBER CASTLE
BRAMBER
WEST SUSSEX****Archaeological Watching Brief Report****1 INTRODUCTION****1.1 Project Background**

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by English Heritage (South East Region, the Client) to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Bramber Castle, Bramber, West Sussex, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 518667 110734 (hereafter the 'Site') (**Figure 1**).

1.1.2 Bramber Castle is a Scheduled Monument (SM no. 12859) and comprises the remains of a motte and bailey castle.

1.1.3 The watching brief was undertaken during repair works, which comprised the relaying of the gravel access track and improvements to the drainage in the car park. The mitigation was required as part of the Class VI Scheduled Monument Consent approval, which has been granted by the Inspector of Ancient Monuments in order to facilitate repair work.

1.1.4 A Written Scheme of Investigation was prepared by Wessex Archaeology (Wessex Archaeology 2011) and approved by English Heritage in advance of the watching brief. The document set out the methodologies and standards employed by Wessex Archaeology during the fieldwork and was prepared in line with the guidance included in *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* ('MoRPHE', English Heritage 2008) and the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (IfA 2008).

1.1.5 The watching brief was carried out between the 15th and 17th March 2011.

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

1.2.1 The Site is positioned within the centre of Bramber and is bounded to the south by The Street, to the west by Roman Road and to the east by a tributary of the River Adur (**Figure 1**).

1.2.2 Bramber Castle is situated on a natural knoll on an artificial causeway in the floodplain of the River Adur.

1.2.3 The British Geological Survey map for the area (1:50,000 Solid and Drift Series Sheet 318/333) indicates that the underlying geology of the Site consists of Lower Chalk.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1.1 Bramber Castle was occupied almost continuously from 1075 until 1450 by the descendants of the founder, William de Braose.

- 2.1.2 The castle was established as a defensive and administrative centre for the Adur estuary and the north-south strip of Sussex. Only small fragments of upstanding masonry survive, including several sections of curtain wall, although none of 11th century date. Four storeys of the western wall of the gatehouse survive at a height of 17m above ground level. The lower parts of the eastern wall also survive and indicate that the external dimensions of the building measured 12.5m x 11.5m.
- 2.1.3 Partial excavation of the Site in 1966-7 revealed how the castle developed from a 'motte and bailey' type to an 'enclosure' type castle. The excavation showed the northern gateway had been blocked in the 12th century which suggested the gatehouse may have been converted into a keep or tower (Barton, 1977).
- 2.1.4 The overall mound of the castle is natural in origin. The motte and the outer ditch form part of the earliest works on the Site (pre-1073). The motte ditch was backfilled with material derived from the motte construction and suggests the motte was short lived perhaps replacing the gatehouse in its modified form (*ibid.*). The ditch created an inner bailey north of the motte.
- 2.1.5 Documentary sources suggest large scale works were undertaken on the outer ditch in 1209. The inner scarp of the outer ditch caused considerable problems for the curtain wall. Excavation undertaken in 1966-8 and 1987 (Kerr, 1987) have shown the earlier walls collapsed into the ditch with later walls built over the remaining foundations (Allen Brown, 1963).
- 2.1.6 Inside the castle were a number of buildings used until the 15th century. The footings of the access bridge on the south side of the castle survive beneath the modern structure here. Subsidence on a large scale saw the ruin of the castle during the 16th century.
- 2.1.7 The Site lies within the Bramber Conservation Area.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 General

- 3.1.1 The objective of the watching brief was to establish within the constraints of the agreed strategy the presence or absence, location, extent, date, character, condition, and depth of any surviving remains which may be affected by the proposed works.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation and requirements of the Client and the Property Curator for English Heritage. All Site attendance and recording was conducted in compliance with the standards outlined in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (IfA 2008).

4.2 Fieldwork

- 4.2.1 The fieldwork consisted of the monitoring of groundworks made beneath the present ground surfaces during the excavation of a drainage trench and a

soakaway and the levelling of the gravel access track. The excavation was conducted using a tracked mini digger under the constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist. Machine excavation was halted when it was necessary to undertake archaeological investigations by hand.

- 4.2.2 The soakaway trench measured 3m x 2m x 2m deep and the drainage trench, extending to the south of the soakaway, across the gravel access track, was c. 6.5m long x 0.6m wide x 0.6m deep.
- 4.2.3 The access track resurfacing works comprised the levelling of the surface with the tracked mini-digger, subsequent resurfacing with fresh gravel and compacting with a road roller. These works did not break ground sufficiently to expose any archaeological features.

4.3 Health and Safety

- 4.3.1 All work was carried in accordance with Health and Safety at Work *etc.* Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety regulations 1992 and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation and regulations and codes of practice in force at the time.
- 4.3.2 In advance of the fieldwork, a Risk Assessment was prepared. Staff involved in works signed and complied with this document.

4.4 Recording

- 4.4.1 All exposed archaeological deposits were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system.
- 4.4.2 A full photographic record, which included photographs of the watching brief areas and of the Site as a whole, was maintained throughout the watching brief using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels. Digital images will be subject to managed quality control and curation processes which will embed appropriate metadata within the image and ensure long term accessibility of the image set.

5 FIELDWORK RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 No archaeological features or deposits were observed during the course of the watching brief and no artefacts were retrieved.

5.2 Stratigraphic sequence

- 5.2.1 Topsoil, of approximately 0.3m depth, comprised a dark greyish brown silty loam and was observed overlying the natural geology in the soakaway trench (**Figure 2, Plate 1**).
- 5.2.2 In the drainage trench across the access track, a modern gravel made ground layer overlay the natural deposits (**Figure 2, Plate 2**).
- 5.2.3 The natural geology recorded across the Site comprised weathered chalk.

6 DISCUSSION

- 6.1.1 Despite the location of the groundworks within boundary of the Scheduled Monument at Bramber Castle, no archaeological deposits, features or finds were identified during the watching brief.
- 6.1.2 Topsoil and, in the drainage trench across the access track, gravel made ground were recorded to overlie the natural chalk geology.

7 ARCHIVE

- 7.1.1 Arrangements will be made with the local museum for the deposition of the archive. Provision has been made for the cost of long-term storage.
- 7.1.2 On completion of the report a cross-referenced and internally consistent archive will be produced. The primary archive, including copies of all photographs, will be deposited with the relevant museum, no later than six months after completion of the work.
- 7.1.3 The completed project archive will be prepared in accordance with the guidelines outlined in Appendix 3 of *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991) and in accordance with the *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long term storage* (UKIC 1990).

8 REFERENCES

- Allen Brown, R., Colvin, H. M. and Taylor, A. J. 1963: *The History of the King's Works* (Vols. 1 and 2: The Middle Ages, 1963), 62, 79, 110-11, 575 and 691
- Barton, K. J. & Holden, E. W. 1977: 'Excavations at Bramber Castle, Sussex, 1966-67', *Archaeol. J.* 134 (1977), 30-8.
- Harris, R. B. 2004: *Bramber Historic Character Assessment Report*, 2004
- Kerr, J. B. 1987: *Bramber Castle Excavation Summary, July-August 1987*, unpubl. report, Central Excavation Unit, English Heritage, September 1987: CEU site code 421
- Kerr, J. B. (ed.) 1989: *The work of the Central Excavation Unit 1987-8* (1989), 16-18
- Wessex Archaeology 2011: *Bramber Castle, Bramber, West Sussex. Written Scheme of Investigation: Method Statement for an Archaeological Watching Brief*, report ref. 77150.01

APPENDIX 1 - OASIS FORM**OASIS ID: wessexar1-102035****Project details**

Project name Bramber Castle, West Sussex

Short description of the project Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by English Heritage (South East Region) to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Bramber Castle, Bramber, West Sussex, centred on National Grid Reference 518667 110734 (hereafter the 'Site'). Bramber Castle is a Scheduled Monument (SM no. 12859) and comprises the remains of a motte and bailey castle. It was occupied almost continuously from 1075 until 1450 by the descendants of the founder, William de Braose. The watching brief was undertaken during the repair works, which comprised the relaying of the gravel access track and excavation of a new soakaway with an associated drainage trench across the access track. No archaeological features or deposits were observed in the course of the watching brief and no artefacts were retrieved. Topsoil and, in the drainage trench across the access track, gravel made ground were recorded overlying the natural chalk geology. The watching brief was carried out between the 15th and 17th March 2011.

Project dates Start: 15-03-2011 End: 31-05-2011

Previous/future work No / No

Any associated project reference codes 77150 - Contracting Unit No.

Type of project Research project

Site status Scheduled Monument (SM)

Current Land use Other 8 - Land dedicated to the display of a monument

Monument type NONE None

Significant Finds NONE None

Investigation type 'Watching Brief'

Prompt Conservation/ restoration

Project location

Country England

Site location WEST SUSSEX HORSHAM BRAMBER Bramber Castle

Postcode BN44 3GW

Study area 0.10 Hectares

Site coordinates 518667 110734 518667 00 00 N 110734 00 00 E Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 11.00m Max: 11.00m

Project creators

Name of Wessex Archaeology
Organisation

Project originator brief English Heritage/Department of Environment

Project originator design Wessex Archaeology

Project director/manager Sue Farr

Project supervisor J Martin

Type of English Heritage
sponsor/funding
body

Name of English Heritage
sponsor/funding
body

Project archives

Physical Archive No
Exists?

Digital Contents 'other'

Digital available Media 'Text','Survey'

Paper Contents 'other'

Paper available Media 'Context sheet','Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes','Photograph','Plan','Report','Section','Unpublished Text'

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title Bramber Castle, Bramber, West Sussex

Author(s)/Editor(s) Sulikowska, J

Other bibliographic details 77150

Date 2011

Issuer or publisher Wessex Archaeology

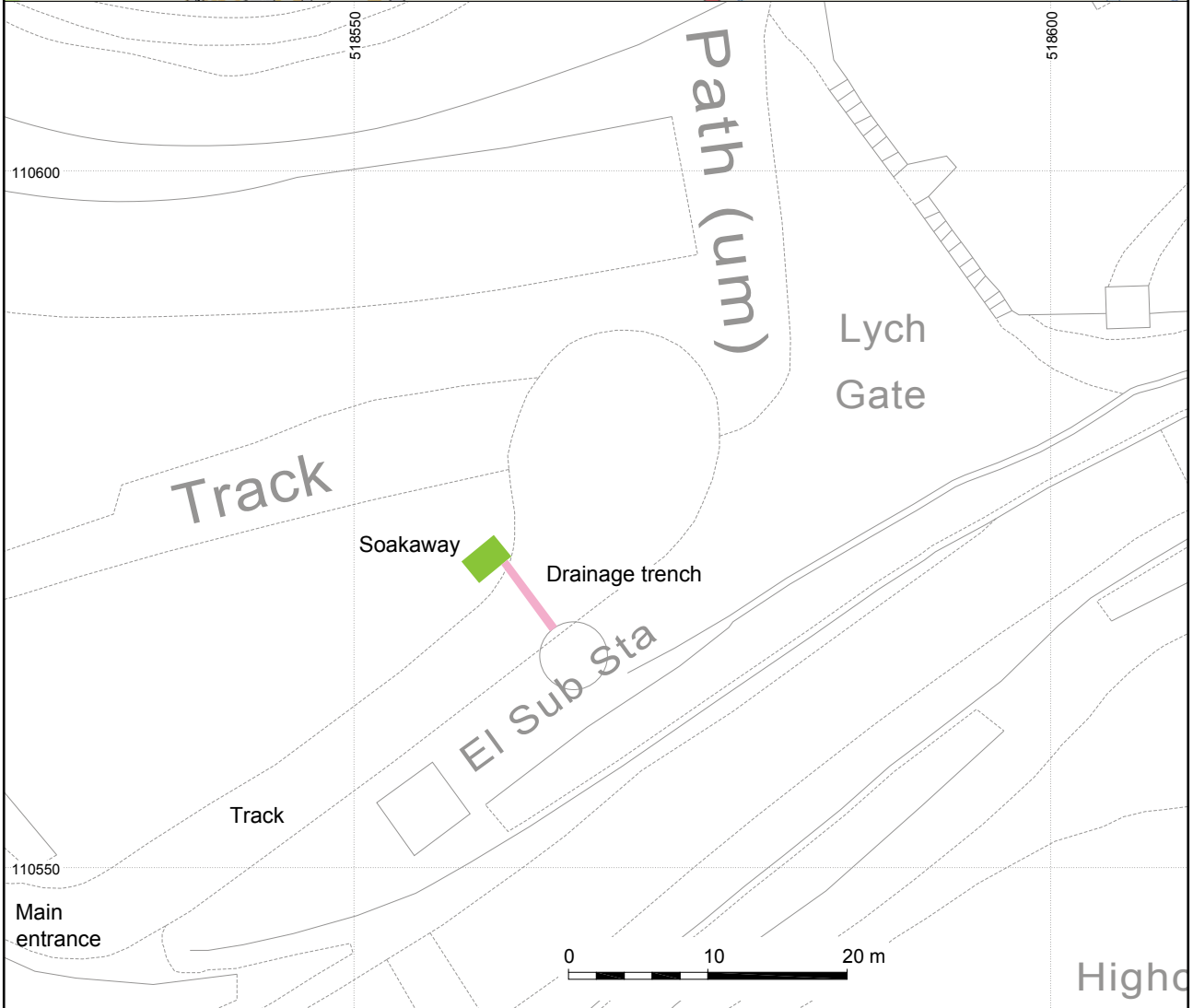
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Site location plan

Figure 1



Plate 1: Machine excavation of the soakaway trench, view from north-east



Plate 2: Machine excavation of the drainage trench, view from north-east

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WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY LIMITED.

Registered Head Office: Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EB.

Tel: 01722 326867 Fax: 01722 337562 info@wessexarch.co.uk

Regional offices in **Edinburgh, Rochester and Sheffield**

For more information visit www.wessexarch.co.uk

