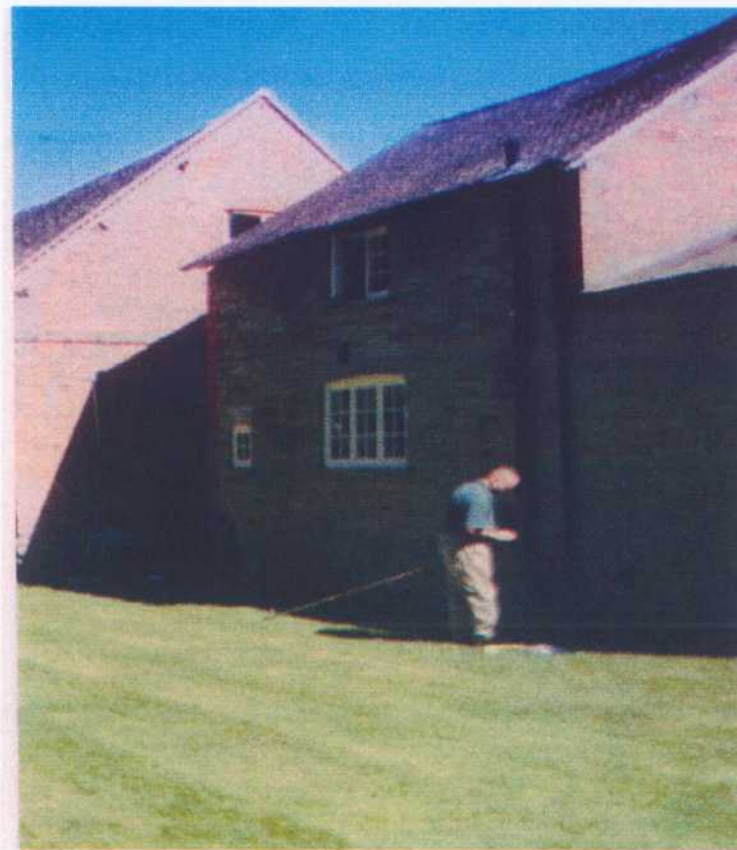




EARDISLEY CASTLE HOUSE

Eardisley

Archaeological Monitoring



August 2005

SMR 42633

Hereford Archaeology Series 685

This report is produced by

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Cover picture: Engineers working at Eardisley Castle House

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**EARDISLEY CASTLE HOUSE,
EARDISLEY
Herefordshire.
NGR SO 3109 4910**

Archaeological watching brief

Text

B. Ward

Site Work

B. Ward

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August 2005

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Eardisley Castle House,
Eardisley
Herefordshire.
(NGR SO 3109 4910)

Archaeological Watching Brief

1. Summary

Archaeological Investigations Ltd was commissioned by Fastrack Geotechnical Services to undertake archaeological monitoring of engineering holes being excavated at Eardisley Castle House, which is a Scheduled monument No. 86.

An application has been submitted to the Department of Culture, Media and sport to seek permission for further investigation of subsidence under the present house (SMC ref HSD 9/2/7176.). Archaeological monitoring was required as a condition of the Scheduled Monument Consent.

The site lies within the boundaries of Eardisley Motte & Baily and the main aim was to enable archaeological features to be adequately recorded in the areas affected by the proposal. No archaeological features or finds were recovered during the investigation.

Archaeological Investigations Ltd would like to thank staff from Fastrack Geotechnical Services, the on site contractor for their co-operation while the archaeological monitoring was carried out.

The fieldwork was undertaken on the 8th of August 2005.

2. Introduction

The site lies at the north east edge of Eardisley Castle bailey, grid reference NGR SO 3109 4910 (Fig 1), which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Monument number HW86). It is presently partly occupied by a domestic residence and gardens/lawn. The site lies at a height of approximately 80m OD and the underlying geology comprises of Old Red Sandstone.

The site is a roughly oval moated enclosure with motte on the SW side. It is about 35.5 ft in diameter at the base and rises 14 ft above the bailey. Most of the moat is wet and encloses about 1.25 acres. Along the west and south/west sides is an outer bank and further west a stream seems to have been used to form an outer enclosure. Further to the west is another stream and bank, which seems to have formed a second enclosure.

Archaeological monitoring was required because the site lies within a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Archaeological Investigations Ltd was contracted to fulfil the archaeological work. The fieldwork was carried on the 8th of August 2005.

3. Historical Background

The site is mentioned in the Domesday Book as a defended house, held by Robert from Roger de Lacy. The land did not pay tax or any customary dues nor did it lie in a Hundred. The site is known as a castle in 1183. However, it lay within the district in which the Barons Wars of the 1260's were waged. It was still in use by 1262, when it was plundered by the Welsh. In 1263 Roger de Clifford imprisoned the foreign Bishop of Hereford, Peter de Aquablanca here.

From 1272 the castle probably became the chief residence of the Baskervilles, before being taken over by the de Bohuns, who were Earls of Hereford and overlords of Eardisley up until 1372, when the earldom was passed over into the Crown. It seems the castle was ruined by 1374.

During the civil war (1642 – 46) the royalists burnt the castle to the ground and only one of the gate houses survives.

A salvage recording was carried out in 1990, which produced many medieval sherds of pottery as well as ironwork. The pottery was dated as 12th – 14th century and although historical evidence shows that the castle was still inhabited in the 17th / 18th century no finds of later date were covered.

Spearheads and armour have been found in the inner moat and a massive piece of masonry, which had probably formed part of an ancient drawbridge or sluiceway was also found recently.

4. Aims and Objectives

The main aim of the project was to record in detail during engineering investigations all the archaeological materials present. The primary intention is to make a quality record, through full archaeological recording and (possibly) excavation, of those archaeological materials existing in the location of the proposed works. The work aimed to record other relevant materials and features and result in the deposition of a satisfactory archaeological archive and production of a satisfactory report for publication.

The main objectives were to:

- a) Identify the presence of features/deposits and establish their date and nature.
- b) Record all ground disturbing operations.
- c) Produce a record of the features/deposits through more formal excavation where necessary.
- d) Assess, analyse, report and publish the findings of the work.

5. Methodology

Two small trial pits were hand dug directly against the house to establish how sturdy the foundations of the house were.

Four boreholes were also drilled around the property: two as a continuation of the trial pits and two in the lawn to a depth of approximately 3.0m. (Fig 2).

An archaeologist was present during excavation/drilling.

Full context recording was not deemed appropriate as no archaeological features or finds were present in the trial /bore holes. Instead site notes were taken during the work.

The engineering holes were photographed using colour film. A register was kept of the photographs.

The site was given accession number HFDMG 2005-107 in accordance with Herefordshire Heritage services accessioning procedure and this code was used to identify all documents associated with the site.

6. Results

Trial pit 1: A 0.25m x 0.35m trial pit was hand dug at the north western corner of the house up against the wall of the house.

Three un-diagnostic animal bones came out of this trial pit at a depth of about 0.70m but these were not retained.

A bore hole was drilled further down this pit where natural bedrock was reached at approximately 1.8m. and work stopped at a depth of approximately 2.7m.

As this area was so close to the foundation of the house, it is assumed the loose humeric soil was the fill of the foundation trench and was therefore quite disturbed containing no archaeological features.

Trial pit 2: A 0.30m x 0.40m trial pit was hand dug 6.60m from the north western corner of the house up against the wall of the house. At a depth of approximately 0.30m, 2 large stones blocked any further digging and boring was continued from here to a depth of 2.7m. Like pit 1, this pit contained the loose humeric fill of the foundation trench (which became moist at the bottom) and contained no archaeological features.

Borehole 3: A borehole was drilled 5.20m from the corner of the barn going south west and 1.6 m towards the south east. The diameter of the bore hole was 0.10m. The depth of the borehole was approximately 2.7m. Two 19th century pottery sherds were recovered but not retained. The soil observed was mid brown and was uniform in consistency throughout and may have continued beyond the base of the borehole.

Borehole 4: Several attempts were made to drill the 4th borehole but because the ground was full of small pebbles, this proved difficult. Eventually a borehole was drilled 9.1m from the north western corner of the barn. The diameter of the hole was 0.10m. There was a slight soil change at 0.6m, where the colour changed and became slightly darker. The depth of the borehole was approximately 1.0m. The stonier soil here is in contrast to that observed elsewhere and probably relates to the position away from buildings or the moat.

No archaeological features were found in either of the boreholes.

7. Discussion

Although the site lies in close proximity to the motte and baily, the engineering holes were too small to be able to show any archaeological features. As the present house was built in the 18th century, the ground around the house would also have been disturbed and therefore may have destroyed any archaeological features from the castle.

8. Conclusion

The aim of this project was to record, date and assess any archaeological features discovered during the excavation of two small test pits as well as 4 bore holes. However, no archaeological features were found during the excavation. Only three undiagnostic pieces of animal bone and 2 pieces of 19th century pottery were seen but not retrieved.

9. Bibliography

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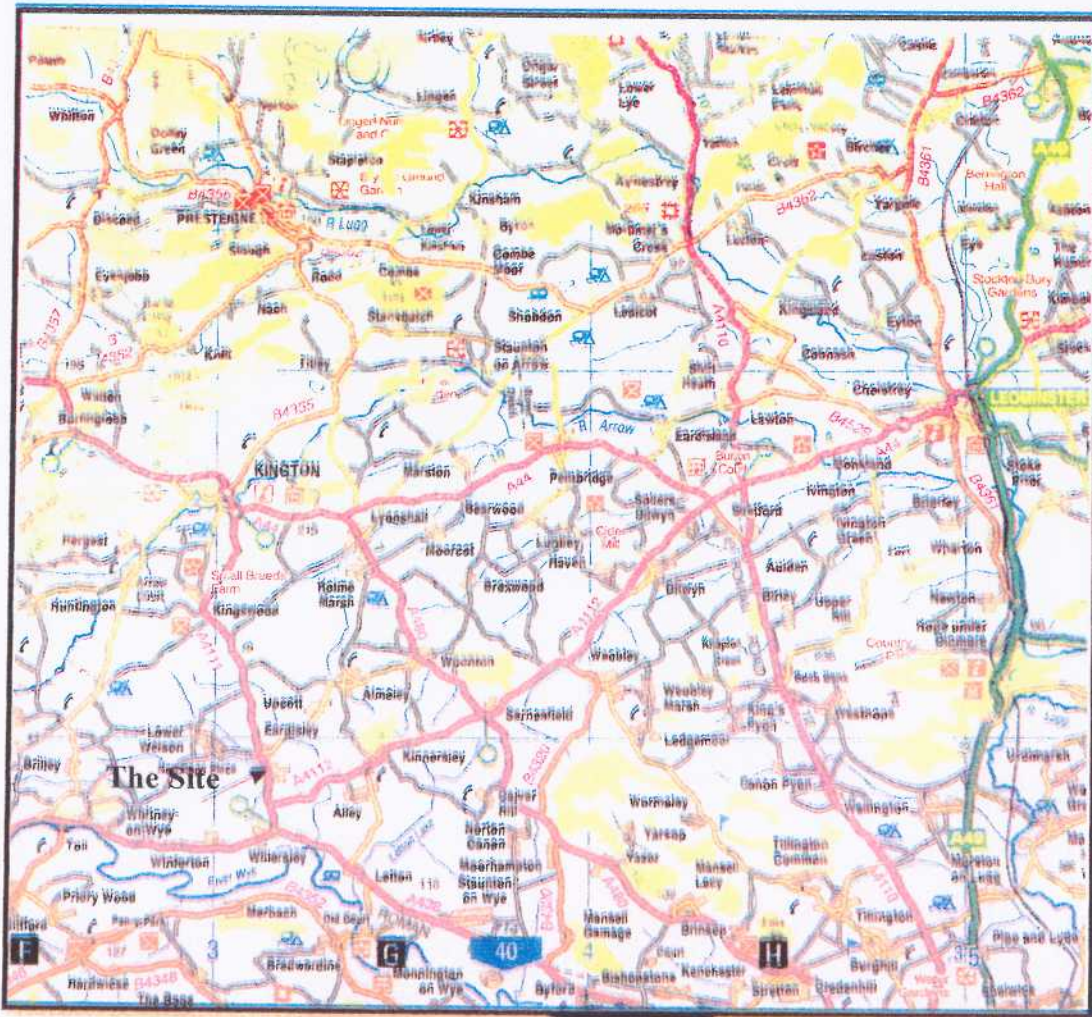
Wood, P; www.smr.Herefordshire.gov.uk/castles: *Eardisley Castle*

10. Site Archive

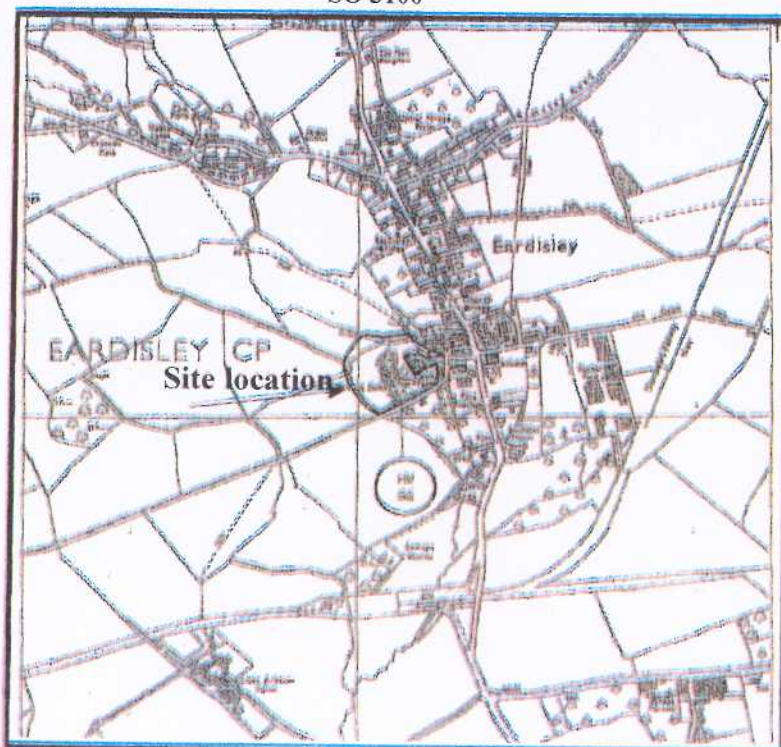
1. Document archive (notes from site note book, photo register and photographs)

The site archive is stored with Hereford Museum, Accession number HFDMG 2005 – 107.

EARDISLEY CASTLE HOUSE



Grid Ref
SO 3100



Grid Ref:
SO 4900

Fig. 1
Site Location

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EARDISLEY CASTLE HOUSE

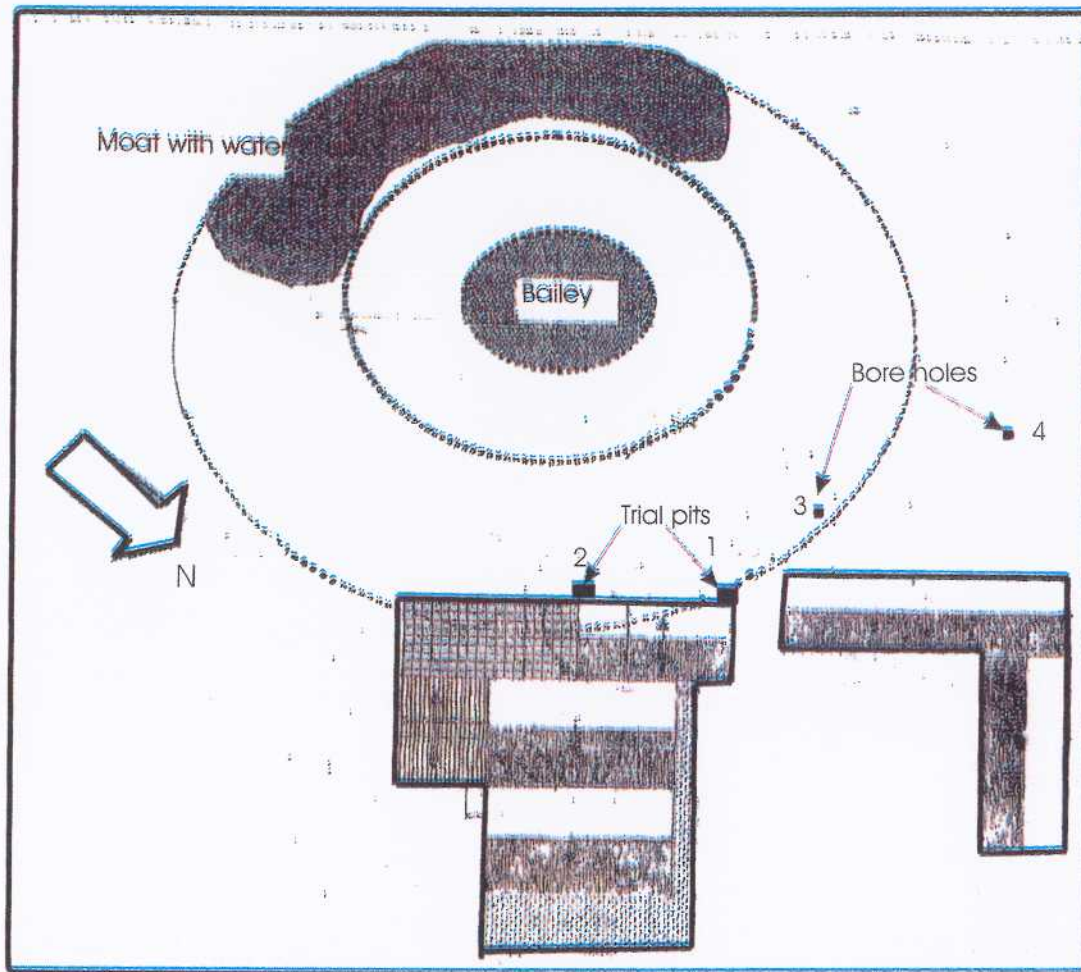
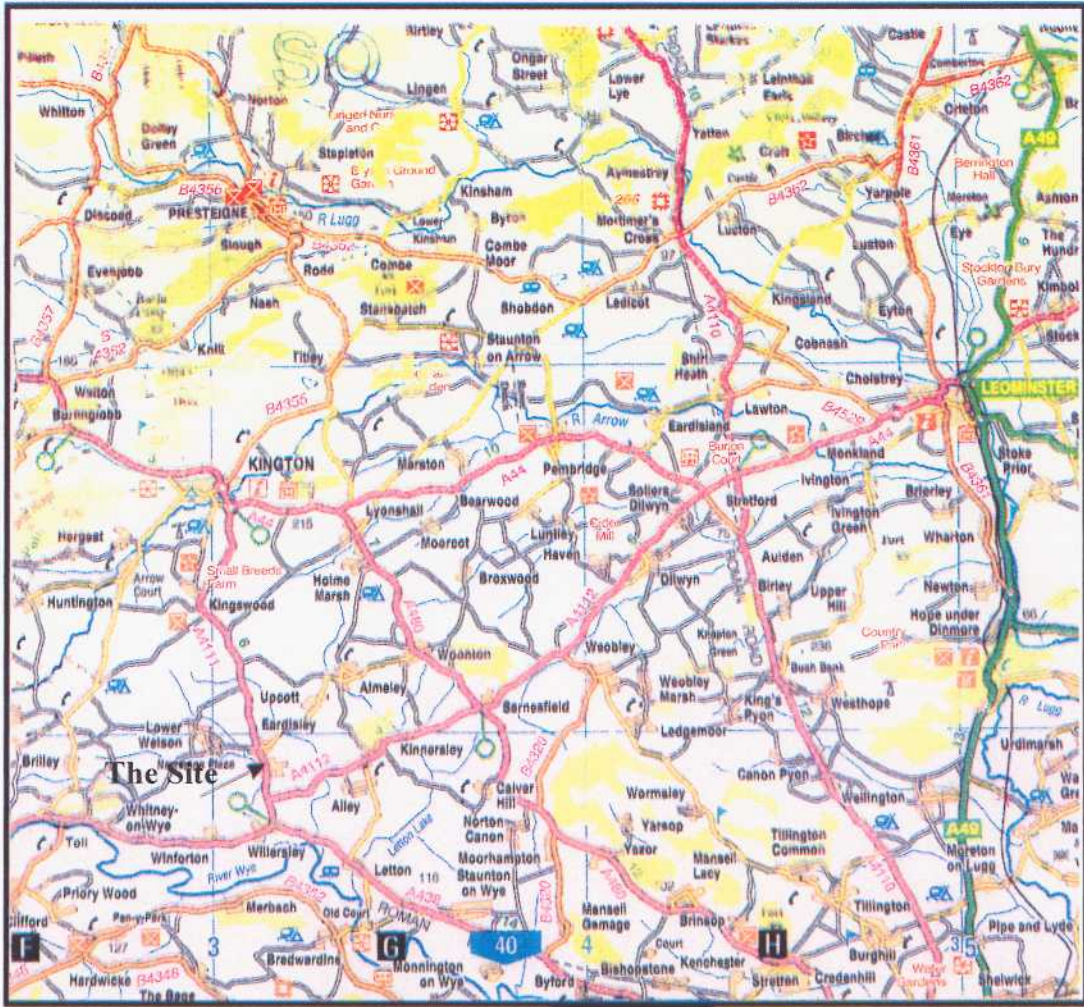


Fig. 2: Location of trial pits and bore holes

EARDISLEY CASTLE HOUSE



Grid Ref
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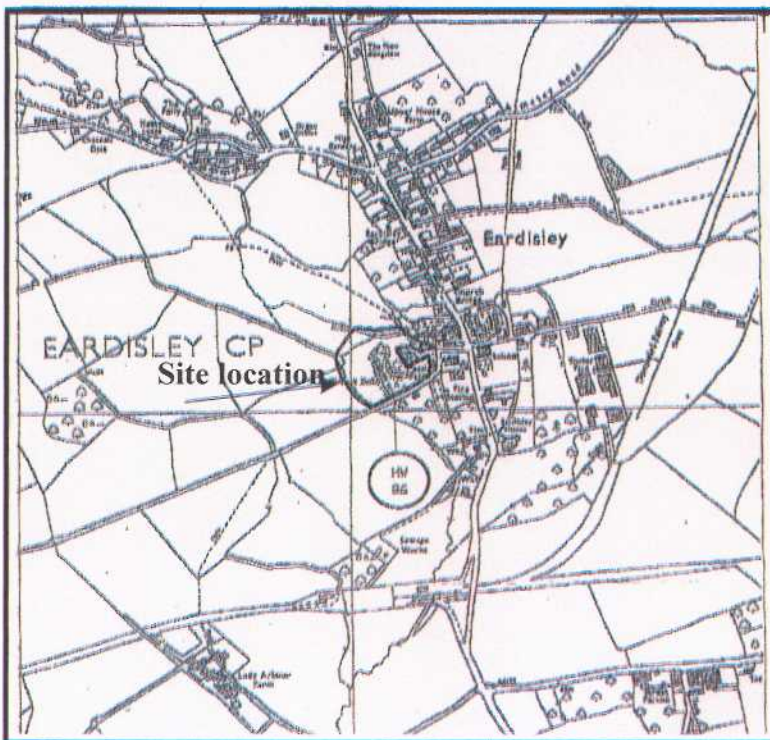


Fig. 1
Site Location

Grid Ref:
SO 4900