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The Motte-and-Bailey Castle Near Apple Dumpling Bridge, Alver Valley, Gosport

An Analytical Earthwork Survey

Mark Bowden

Illustrations by Olaf Bayer

Archaeological Survey and Investigation

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Summary

A level 3 analytical earthwork survey of the motte-and-bailey castle at Apple Dumpling bridge, Gosport was undertaken by Historic England in February and March 2020. Survey results confirmed that the earthworks represent a modified and spread motte with elements of an enclosing bailey surviving to the south and east. A Second World War pill box is built into the southern part of the bailey bank.

Contributors

Fieldwork for this report was undertaken in February and March 2020 by Mark Bowden, Olaf Bayer and Jonathan Last (all of the then Historic England Archaeological Survey and Investigation Team, West). The report was researched and written by Mark Bowden. Illustrations were prepared by Olaf Bayer who also prepared the report for publication. Photographs were taken by James O. Davies. The project was managed by Wayne Cocroft who also commented on the final text.

Acknowledgements

The survey was undertaken as part of the Gosport Heritage Action Zone. The help of Michelle Lees and Fred Gibson of Gosport Borough Council who arranged access to the site is gratefully acknowledged.

Front cover image: Looking south towards Apple Dumpling motte-and-bailey castle [James O. Davies. © Historic England Archive. DP276078]

Archive location

The project archive is held at:

The Historic England Archive,
The Engine House
Firefly Avenue
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01793 414600

The archive number for this project is AF00449.

Date of survey

Fieldwork was undertaken in February/March 2020. Background research was carried out between April and August 2020. The report was written in September 2020 and prepared for publication in April 2023.

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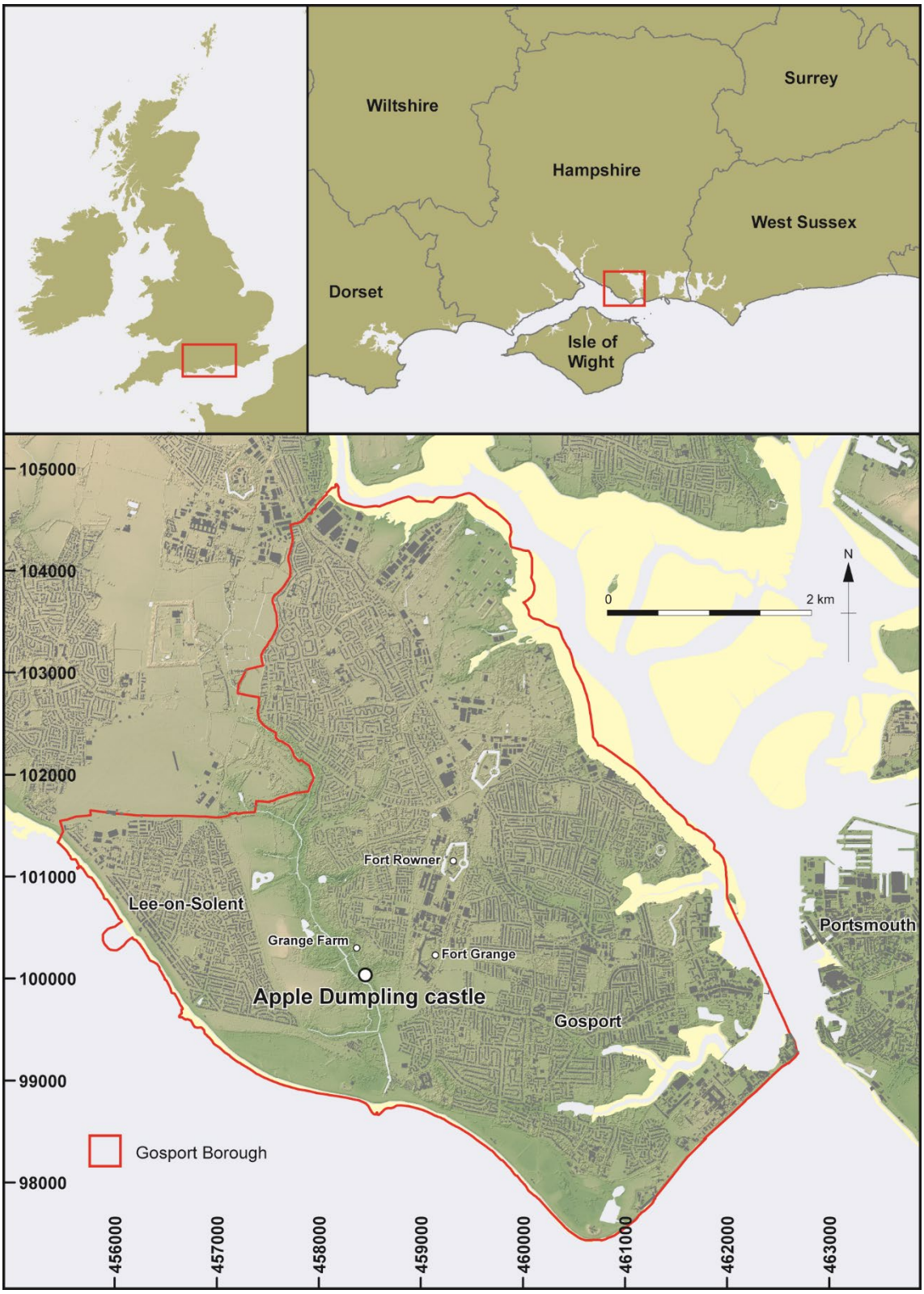

Figure 1: Location map.
Topography derived from 2m height data ©Airbus Defence and Space Ltd; Bluesky International Ltd; Getmapping PLC. Other mapping derived from Ordnance Survey open data © Crown copyright and database right 2023.

Introduction

The motte-and-bailey castle situated at SU 5843 0011 near Apple Dumpling Bridge in the Alver Valley was surveyed and investigated as part of the Historic England fieldwork for the Gosport Heritage Action Zone. The fieldwork was undertaken in February and March 2020. The site is a Scheduled Monument (List entry number: 1008694 and Historic England Research Record (HERR) 234418).

History

The motte-and-bailey castle near Apple Dumpling Bridge lies on the north-east side of the River Alver within the ancient parish of Rowner, a narrow strip of land running north to south between Alverstoke on the east and Titchfield on the west. At Domesday the manor of Rowner was held in chief by William Mauduit, who had other estates in Hampshire. The manor was sub-divided at some time; part of a knight's fee was held by William de la Falaise in 1187 and by Elias de la Falaise in 1240. In 1247 Elias granted some land to Quarr Abbey (which already held some property in Cherque or Chark on the west side of the river) and this was confirmed by Henry III in 1266; this was presumably the land associated with Grange Farm. Grange Farm house (*see* Figure 1) retains a medieval cross wing (O'Brien *et al* 2018, 310). At his death in 1254 Elias held part of the manor in chief, providing one armed man for 40 days a year for the defence of Winchester Castle. His brother William, who also held part of the manor, apparently died in the same year. By 1277 the manor had escheated to the crown because of the felony of (another) William de la Falaise and was granted to William le Brune, chamberlain to the king, for 40 shillings a year. The manor remained in the Brune family until 1769 when it was acquired by a relative called Prideaux. There is supposed to have been a manor house near the parish church, which is 1.5km north of the castle, but the evidence for this is uncertain. (Information in this paragraph is taken from VCH 1903, 218.) The church itself dates from the 12th century with many later additions (O'Brien *et al* 2018, 309-10).

E. S. Prideaux-Brune, then Rector of Rowner, differed from the VCH in saying that the armed man to be supplied for 40 days a year by the manor of Rowner was for the defence of Portchester Castle, not Winchester Castle (1893, 344); however, this armed man seems to have been owed by one part of the manor only, so it is possible that the manor owed castle-guards at both Winchester and Portchester. William Mauduit, the Domesday lord of Rowner, was also lord of Portchester. Civil suggests that Browndown owes its name to the Brune family (1951, 41) but this is unlikely as Browndown is on the Titchfield side of the river and there is no reason to suppose that it was ever within the manor of Rowner, though it was later owned by the Prideaux-Brune family.

The area around the motte-and-bailey appears to have been common land for much of its history, under marsh, woodland and pasture. The area to the east of the site is named Alder Moor on early OS maps. Grange and Rowner Forts (*see* Figure 1) were built from 1857 as part of the landward defences of Gosport and the area to their front was kept clear for military purposes. In the early years of the 20th century the area west of Fort Grange became an airfield (HERR 1395756). During the First World War it was an advanced training base for the Royal Flying Corps. It was here that the pioneering Major Robert Smith-Barry developed his flying training practice (Winter 1983, chapter 3; Levine 2009, 75ff) which later became world famous as the 'Gosport System'. Gosport features in the memoirs and biographies of many First World War pilots who were trained there (e.g. Bowyer 1977, 42; Grinnell-Milne 1966, chapter 1; C Lewis 1977, 27ff; GH Lewis 1976, 14-15). The airfield was maintained after the War as a torpedo bombing development and training base and expanded in the late 1930s. During the Second World War it was used briefly by RAF 11 Group during the Battle of Britain (HERR 1395756, Authority 4) and later in the War by the Royal Navy for experimental and training activities (Delve 2005, 111-12). Shortly after the Second World War the airfield was de-commissioned and developed by the Royal Navy for housing.

The motte-and-bailey lay on the south-western edge of the airfield but was separated from the flying ground by an area of marsh and rough heathland with some trees. Nevertheless, military use did impinge on the site, with a Type 26 variant pillbox being built into the southern bailey bank during the Second World War (HERR 1422249), defending the approach to the airfield from the south across the River Alver. Early post-War mapping also shows a small rectangular building to the immediate north-east of the motte. The site currently lies in lightly managed woodland maintained for public recreational use.

Previous research

The motte-and-bailey was not recognised as such by early antiquarian commentators. The motte's identification as a windmill mound, shown on several Ordnance Survey map editions, probably results from an error following the work of Prideaux-Brune, who noted a medieval document referring to a windmill belonging to Quarr Abbey (1893, 343). In fact the document seems to mention only a 'mill' without specifying its motive power, and suggests that it was in Chark on the west side of the river. The VCH then conflated this to refer to '*the windmill mound … probably the one belonging to the Grange Farm of Chark*' (1908, 218), and the OS followed. This was then repeated by G Civil, who wrote that the windmill mound overlooking '*Dead Man's Hollow*' was '*suspiciously near the edge of an obvious old gravel digging*' and quoting references to the mill belonging to the monks of

Quarr (1951, 42). The mound is indeed close to former gravel pits but perhaps only ‘obviously’ so because the OS had mis-identified the east side of the bailey as being an old gravel pit. The gravel digging appears to have been to the north of the motte, as shown on some later OS editions and still visible on the ground today. Civil seems to be suggesting the possibility that the mound is the upcast from gravel extraction but this is not the case – it does not in the least resemble quarrying upcast.

When the site was first recognised as a motte-and-bailey is unclear but it is correctly labelled on an OS Archaeology Division record map of OGS Crawford, unfortunately undated (HERR 234418, Authority 2); Crawford was Archaeology Officer at the OS from 1922-1940. It was first correctly described by the OS Field Investigator, D Smith, in 1956 (HERR 234418, Authority 6). Unfortunately Smith’s survey drawing is missing from the Archive but later map depiction must reflect his work; his survey was sufficiently diligent that neither Alan Phillips nor John Barton felt the need to amend it when they visited the site later (HERR 234418, Authorities 7 and 9). The later 25-inch maps show the motte as an ovoid mound with its long axis lying east to west, within a horseshoe-shaped enclosure formed by a bank to the south-west, south and east. (Curiously the 1:1250 mapping of the site of the same era shows the site rather differently in detail, with the motte depicted as a more generic circular mound.) David Cathcart King visited the site while compiling his comprehensive inventory of English castles but he was not entirely convinced by it, describing it as an ‘*Ill-marked mound, suggested motte*’ and classifying it only as a ‘*possible*’ castle (1983, 195).

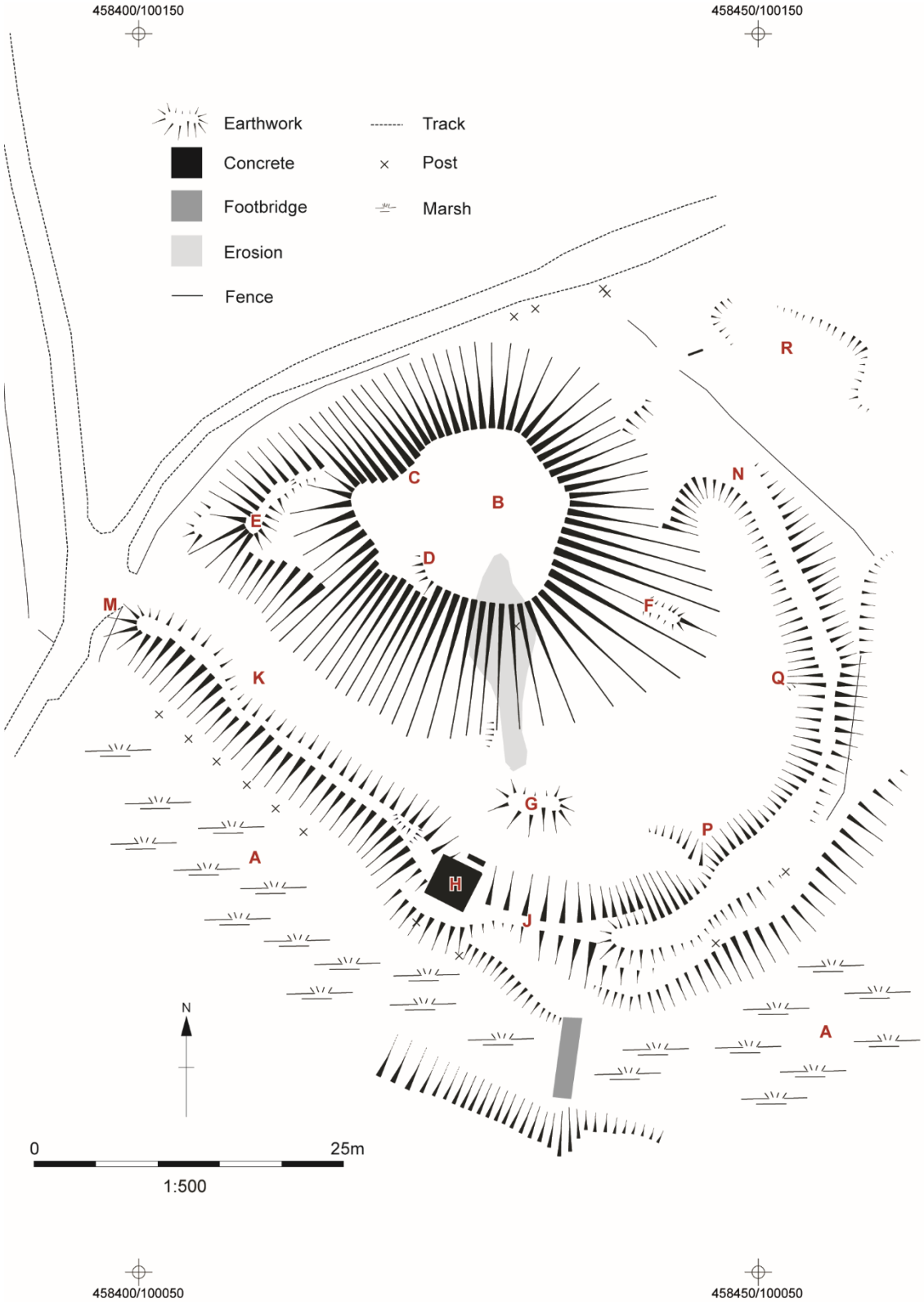

Figure 2 The analytical earthwork survey.
Scale 1:500 [© Historic England Archive. AF00449/D001]

Description

The earthworks lie on the north side of an elongated marshy hollow (**A**-**A**), probably a former channel of the Alver. This feature was apparently known at some time in the past as '*Dead Man's Hollow*' (Civil 1951, 42).

Figure 3: Looking north towards Apple Dumpling motte-and-bailey castle.
[James O. Davies. © Historic England Archive. DP276077]

The principal feature is a mound (**B**) which is 3.5m high to the south and 2.2m high to the north. It is oval in plan, measuring at the base about 44m east-west and 32m north-south; at the summit it is 14m north-south and 17m transversely. A re-entrant in the northern top of the mound at (**C**) and a scarp in the southern side at (**D**) suggest that the mound may originally have been circular and has later been modified and spread. Banks on the sides of the mound to east and west (**E** and **F**) suggest further modifications; they are no more than 0.5m high at maximum. There is no trace of a ditch surrounding the mound, except on the eastern side where the gap between the foot of the mound and the enclosing bank

(below) gives the appearance of a ditch. At the southern foot of the mound is a small raised area (**G**) about 0.5m high. Above this the southern side of the mound is currently being eroded and this erosion is affecting (**G**) as well (*see* Figure 3).

On the south-west, south and east sides of the mound is an enclosing bank. The bank is a well preserved and sharply defined feature except where it has been cut for the construction of the pillbox (**H**) and immediately to the east of this (**J**) where it has been eroded by a footpath crossing a small wooden footbridge over hollow (**A**-**A**). The bank has also been disturbed at (**K**) where it seems to have been cut back on its inner side for a distance of about 5m; this is not a recent disturbance. At its west end the bank now has a distinct terminal (**M**) by the track that leads from Apple Dumpling Bridge but this is probably not its original end. At its other end, immediately to the east of the mound, it fades into the natural topography (**N**); however, in this area it is masked by a stand of holly and could not be closely observed. There are also slight disturbances to the bank caused by paths cutting across it at (**P**) and (**Q**). To the south and south-west the bank stands up to 1.6m above the hollow (**A**-**A**). Internally it is 0.7-0.8m high. To the east it is up to 1.2m high both externally and internally but the ground drops away from it to the east. The bailey enclosed is a maximum of 53m east-west and 33m transversely but the area amounts to no more than 670sq m and is an awkward shape.

To the north-east of the mound is a disturbed area (**R**), creating sharply defined scarps up to about 0.5m high. This could be the result of surface quarrying. However, an early post-Second World War OS 25-inch map shows a small rectangular building in this area, so it could be the result of military activity. This area is heavily overgrown and there could be more features that were not observed during the present survey.
To the north of the mound and beyond the track is an extensive disturbed area of surface quarrying (not surveyed) prominent enough to have been shown on OS 25-inch map editions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, though it was subsequently edited out. On the maps this area has a roughly rectangular outline but it appears more irregular on the ground today. However, this area is also heavily overgrown and close observation of the ground surface is not possible.

The pillbox (**H**) is a Type 26 variant, built of concrete with brick shuttering. It is about 3.5m square externally, so slightly larger than a standard type 26 structure, and it now stands up to a maximum of about 1.4m above current ground level; ground level on the north side may originally have been lowered for access, or it may always have been a low ‘crouch-down’ entrance. Building into a pre-existing bank was a common practice, to lower the effective profile of the structure and make it less visible; in this case the mound behind would also have prevented the pillbox from being ‘sky-lined’. The entrance (now blocked)

is on the north side and there are loopholes in all four faces, only that to the west remaining unblocked. The brick-built blast wall covering the entrance is free-standing and does not ever seem to have been integrated with the main structure to form a porch. In common with other airfield defences, this pillbox will have been built between 1940 and 1942. (Comparative and contextual information in this paragraph has been taken from the website of the Pillbox Study Group.)

The site has also been partly enclosed in the past by a concrete post-and-wire fence, presumably part of the perimeter of Gosport aerodrome; at least nine concrete posts remain *in situ* along the southern edge of the site. More recently a timber rail fence has been built around the northern sides of the site but this only partly survives. Two posts placed close together at the northernmost corner, adjacent to the track, appear to have held a notice or information board, now lost.

Figure 4: Looking south towards pillbox (H).
1m scale [Mark Bowden. © Historic England Archive. AF00449/P001]

Discussion

As noted above, the status of this site has been in considerable doubt. Civil seems to have suggested that it might be entirely the result of gravel extraction, with the mound being a waste heap, though ultimately he accepted the prevailing view that it was a windmill mound (1951, 42). The 'suspicion' mentioned by Civil can be dismissed; although there are disused gravel pits in the area, and particularly to the north of the site, the mound and enclosing bank are deliberate constructions, not accumulations of waste material.

The idea that this site is a windmill mound seems to derive from an error by Prideaux-Brune, as noted above. It is probably too large and high to be a windmill mound and this interpretation would not explain the existence of the partly-enclosing bank. A windmill mound is unlikely to be more than 30m in diameter at the base (Taylor 1974, 39); windmill mounds also tend to have a low, flat profile (Ordnance Survey 1973, 149). A search of the HERR records of 20 randomly selected windmill mounds in southern English counties shows that they measure between 10m and 30m in diameter and between 0.25m and 2.0m in height, with most falling between 15m and 20m in diameter and between 0.5m and 1.5m in height.

The Hampshire Historic Environment Record (HER) record states that the mound is the 'site of a round barrow' (HER Record ID 22561) but gives no source for this idea. It may be a misinterpretation of a remark by Civil that the mound 'resembles a round barrow' (1951, 42). It is not impossible that the mound originated as a barrow but it would require excavation, or at least coring, to prove.

Therefore it is almost certain that this site is, despite the doubts of Cathcart King mentioned above, a small motte-and-bailey castle, as recorded in the HERR; it is Scheduled as such. The lack of any documentary reference to a castle here is of no significance, as small earthwork castles of early date are rarely documented. The date of construction is, of course, unknown but probably lies between the late 11th century and the end of the 12th century, though in a few instances mottes are known to have been constructed at later dates (Welfare *et al* 1999, 59-60). It is therefore likely that the castle was built by members of the Mauduit or Falaise families at some time between the Norman Conquest and 1200. William Mauduit held ten manors in Hampshire as tenant-in-chief and a further three manors in Berkshire as sub-tenant at Domesday (information from the Open Domesday website). He was therefore no more than a middle ranking landholder but it is noteworthy that, as mentioned above, one of his other manors was Portchester, which he held in 'sergeanty' (Cunliffe 1977, 2), or in exchange for some specific service to

the king. There do not appear to have been castles on any of his other manors. It is possible that the motte-and-bailey here was built by Mauduit as an outpost to Portchester, covering an approach from the sea. By the 13th century his family had risen to prominence as hereditary chamberlains of the exchequer (Mason 1976). William of Falaise held 25 manors in chief at Domesday, mainly in Devon, Dorset and Somerset (Open Domesday website). However, the members of the Falaise family who later held Rowner, if they were his descendants, seem to have been more modest landholders. As noted above, they lost the manor due to a conviction for a felony.

The position of the castle, close to, or perhaps directly on, a river bank is typical for such sites (Higham and Barker 1992, 201). More precisely, its location here on the north-eastern bank of the River Alver close to Apple Dumpling Bridge has led to the suggestion that it is strategically placed to command a significant crossing point (HER 22561). This is possible and, if '*Dead Man's Hollow*' (**A**-**A**) does represent the course of the river at the time the castle was built, a crossing point here would have been within bowshot of the castle and therefore directly 'controlled'. This is possibly reinforced by William Mauduit's connection with the royal castle at Portchester, as noted above. However, study of the locations of small earthwork castles elsewhere in the country emphasises that they are the constructions of minor feudal lords with restricted holdings who built their castles where it was convenient for them, rather than as part of an over-arching, centrally controlled strategic design (Walters 1968; Lowerre 2005; Bowden *et al* 2018, 78-9). These castles were manorial centres and symbols of lordship. They are rarely in such a clearly 'strategic' location as this example. A curiosity of the location of this castle is its distance from the parish church, which as noted above, lies 1.5km to the north, at the far end of the parish. Castles and churches are often found in proximity. In this case there was apparently a manor house close to the church (VCH 1908, 218). This may have been a replacement for the castle or the two may represent separate sub-manorial centres.

The size of the mound is well within the very wide range of dimensions for mottes but towards the smaller end. It would be dwarfed by the largest mottes, such as Thetford, Norfolk, which is over 95m in diameter and 19.6m high (Everson and Jecock 1999, 99), but in a Hampshire context it is more typical. There are very few mottes in the county but Oliver's Battery motte is 46m in diameter and 1.9m high, Bentley is 52m in diameter and 1.8m high while the very diminutive motte at Southwick was recorded as just 18m in diameter and 1m high at the beginning of the 20th century (HERR 240149, 243764 and 238535). The bailey enclosed by the bank is very small and would appear to provide limited accommodation but this is not unusual; many rural castles have extremely small enclosed areas and even a large urban castle such as Shrewsbury had a much smaller inner bailey than now appears because of the original width of the motte ditch (Nigel Baker

pers comm). The location of the entrance to the castle is unknown but was probably at the west end between the motte and the bailey bank, as suggested by D Smith (HERR 234418, Authority 6). The access to the motte top, whether by ladder, stair or bridge, was probably from the south within the bailey; it is possible that the small raised platform (**G**) at the foot of the motte is the remains of an access structure.

The motte is not in its original state. As noted above, it has perhaps been lowered and spread from a circular mound to its present shape. As part of this modification or in a subsequent phase the slight banks (**E** and **F**) have been raised on the flanks of the motte. These resemble to some extent the 'wing walls' that are sometimes found on mottes, connecting the defences of the motte top to the bailey defences; however, it is somewhat doubtful if that is what these features represent as they are very insubstantial. The date of these modifications is unknown; they could have taken place during the medieval period but they might be much later and connected, for instance, with the 19th and 20th century military activities in the surrounding area.

The motte top would have had a diameter of about 14m originally if it was at its current height, but this would of course have been less if it was higher. Very little is known about the buildings and defensive structures on mottes but timber towers could have been substantial structures up to 15m high (Wyeth 2018, 147); excavations at Hen Domen and elsewhere have demonstrated just how complex, densely packed and frequently replaced buildings both on the motte and in the bailey could be (Barker and Higham 1982). The apparently simple earthwork remains of these small early castles mask considerable sophistication.

Methodology

Fieldwork comprised a level 3 analytical earthwork survey (Historic England 2017, 33-5). Due to the wooded nature of the site field survey utilised a combination of digital and analogue techniques. The majority of the survey was conducted using a survey grade Global Satellite Navigation Survey System (GNSS) receiver and a robotic Total Station Theodolite (TST). A Trimble R8 survey-grade GNSS receiver connected to the Ordnance Survey's GNSS correction network (OSNet) via the Trimble VRS Now service was used to establish the OS coordinates of 2 control points outside wooded areas. The location of each control point was adjusted to the OSTN15 National Grid Transformation with a final accuracy of +/-0.01-0.015m (Historic England 2016a). Using a Trimble S7 TST these points were then used to establish a traverse of survey stations covering the majority of the survey area (Historic England 2016b, 19-20). Most earthwork features were mapped using the TST referencing these survey stations. In the few areas where dense vegetation precluded the use of digital survey techniques, detailed survey was completed using tape and offset techniques (Historic England 2018, 7-15), referencing temporary control pegs previously located with the TST.

Digital survey data were adjusted, and field codes processed, in Trimble Business Center software before being exported to ArcGIS 10.8.1, combined with digitised field drawings and output at scale. The survey drawing for this report was completed at a scale of 1:500 using digital drawing techniques in Adobe Illustrator software.

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