



**Archaeological Field  
Evaluation**

For

**Stewart Player Esq**

Concerning  
**Land adjacent to Lo-Lands  
Castle Hill  
Kington  
Herefordshire  
HR5 3AH**

December 2017





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## 1 Executive Summary

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*Border Archaeology Ltd (BA) was instructed by Stewart Player Esq to carry out a programme of Archaeological Field Evaluation on land adjacent to Lo-Lands Castle Hill Kington HR5 3AH. The site is located within the setting of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Kington Motte.*

*A single trench measuring 20m in length and 2m wide was excavated to natural deposits in order to determine and record the nature and extent of any archaeological remains which may have been present on the site.*

*No deposits or features of archaeological significance were present within the trench. A number of sherds of later 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century pottery were seen in the topsoil at the west end of the trench. It was thought likely that the steep slope of the ground to the brook on the north side of the site may have precluded early occupation in this area.*



## 2 Introduction

Border Archaeology Ltd (BA) was instructed by Stewart Player Esq to carry out a programme of Archaeological Evaluation on land adjacent to Lo-Lands Castle Hill Kington (NGR: SO29186 56874) (fig. 1).

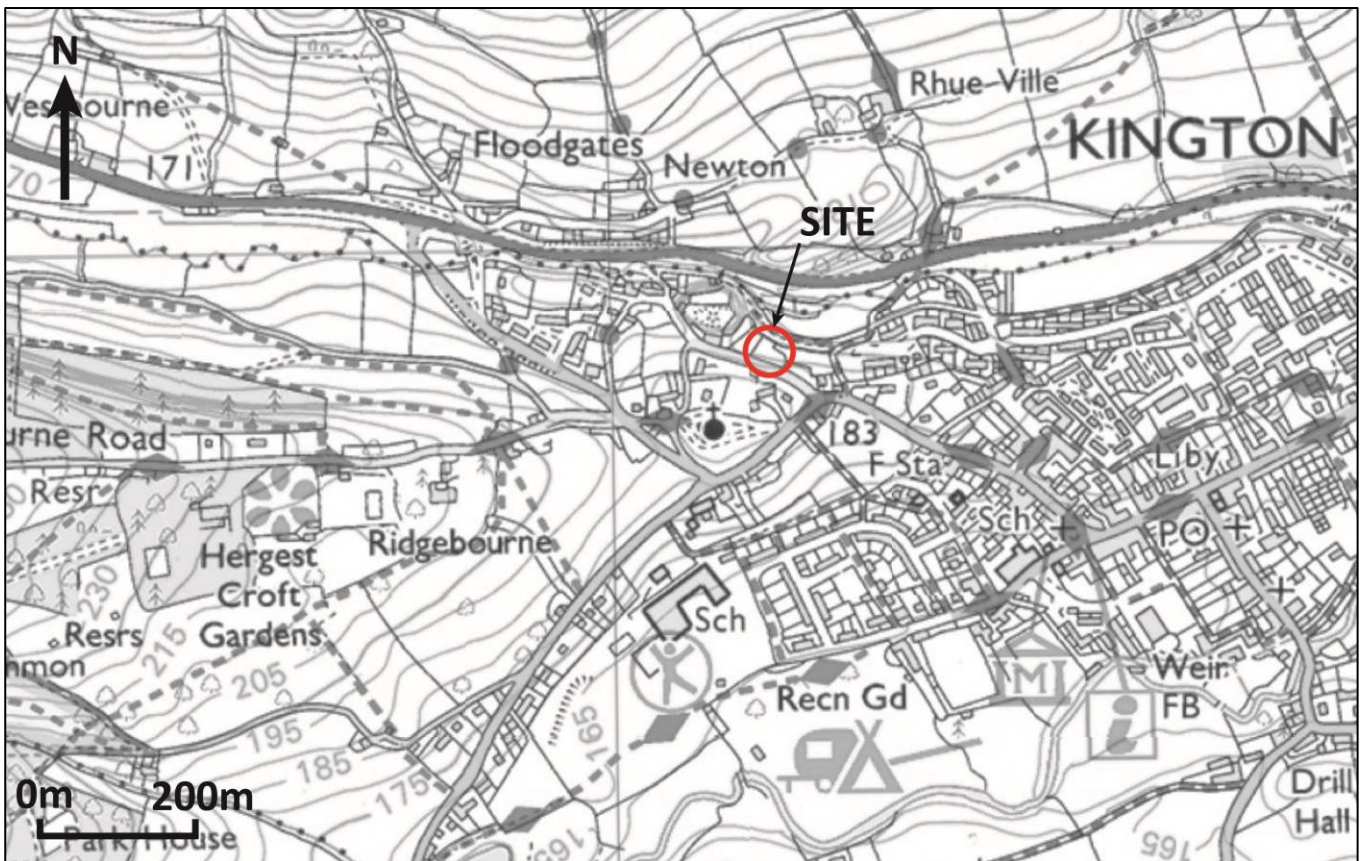


Fig. 1: Site location plan

## 3 Aims

The aims of the project were

1. To determine and record the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains threatened by the proposed development and to assess their significance in a local, regional, national or international context, as appropriate. In view of the site's location within 60m of the boundary of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Kington Motte, it was thought that significant archaeological deposits may be encountered.
2. To address, where applicable, some of the themes identified in *The Archaeology of the West Midlands: A Framework for Research* (Watt 2011). It was thought possible that there could be specific potential to contribute information in support of works of synthesis, with the aim of consolidating data and establishing clear baselines. It

is considered that such works of synthesis and comparison will provide essential tools for the interpretation of sites (Hunt 2011, 203). It is noted that priority is also given to the study of castles within their wider contexts, those of the manor and of the honour.

## 4 Site Description

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The site is located within the Kington Conservation Area and within 60m of the boundary of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Kington Motte (National Heritage List for England UID 1005339) and is considered to form part of the monument's setting. The castle platform stands to the S and some 18m above the Back Brook, a tributary of the River Arrow, with a substantial earth mound at its W end.

The artificially steepened feature is surrounded by a ditch reused as a path. The mound has been identified as the remains of a motte but may instead represent the turf-covered remnant of the keep which survived the destruction of the castle by King John in 1216. The castle bailey seems never to have been completed, presumably due to the steeply sloping topography. The original extent of the castle cannot be easily determined due to land slippage and modern landscaping (Buteux 1996).

The site comprises part of the garden of Lo-Lands and consists of grass interspersed with fruit trees (*fig. 2*).

### 4.1 Soils and Geology

Soils are typical brown earths of the BARTON series (5411) consisting of well-drained soils over Silurian siltstone (SSEW 1938).

## 5 Historical and Archaeological Background

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Little evidence of prehistoric or Romano-British human activity has been recorded in the vicinity. A small flint assemblage and a shale blade were recovered during construction of the Greenfields housing estate to the E of the site in the early 1980s (Herefordshire HER No. 7402) and a stone axe of early Bronze Age date was found in Kington churchyard (Herefordshire HER No. 8375). A small quantity of coarse Romano-British pottery was also found during construction of the Greenfields estate (Herefordshire HER No. 7401).

The place-name 'Kington' is of OE origin, meaning 'royal manor or estate' (Coplestone-Crow 1989, 114). The earliest documented reference (*Chingtune*) occurs in the Domesday survey of 1086, in which it is listed as a manor of four hides in the possession of King William I, forming part of a group of royal manors listed as waste, suggesting that it had been ravaged either by the Welsh or English rebels between 1066 and 1086 (Remfry 1995, 1). Kington had been held by King Harold II before the Conquest and had probably existed as a royal manor or estate for some considerable time at that point.

At some time between 1096 and 1108, the manor of Kington, together with a substantial territory surrounding it (including the villas of Hergest, Rushock and Barton), was granted to Henry de Port (Remfry 1995, 1-2). Documentary

sources suggest the Castle (Herefordshire HER No 350; National Heritage List for England UID 1005339) (NGR: SO2914 5692) was founded towards the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. A fishpond is also mentioned.

Kington is described as the main castle of Adam de Port, son of Roger Port, sheriff of Hereford, but when Adam was accused of treason by Henry II in 1172 (Remfry 1995, 11), the castle was forfeited to the Crown and remained in royal hands until 1213, when King John granted it to Roger Clifford. It would appear that the castle subsequently fell to the sons of William Braose but when Reginald Braose refused to accept peace terms offered by the king in 1216, the latter destroyed both the town and castle of Kington. Whilst the town itself recovered, the castle site was abandoned in favour of a new location at Huntington.

The present town of Kington was established to the N of the crossing of the River Arrow and SW of the old hilltop site (referred to as 'Castle Hill' on Bryant's 1835 Map of Herefordshire) at some time during the early 13<sup>th</sup> century (Buteux 1996, 2). Evidence of a planned medieval settlement is clearly indicated by the T-shaped street plan (Herefordshire HER No.19363) focused on the junction of High Street and Duke Street (running roughly E-W) with Bridge Street running SE down to the Arrow. Church Street, which forms a link between the old settlement on Castle Hill and the High Street, is also likely to be of 13<sup>th</sup> century date (Buteux 1996, 4).

In terms of surviving remains, the site is generally described as an irregular knoll with evidence of artificially steepened sides and slight traces of a mound; a small portion of what may have been a rampart with scarping is noted on the S side. The feature is surrounded by a wide shallow ditch re-used as a path. Modern landscaping and the construction of paths is considered likely to account for much of the scarping around the summit. There are no traces of masonry. In spite of its strong defensive position, the RCHME questions the identification of the site with Kington Castle (1934, 91).

St Mary's Church (Herefordshire HER No. 6929) and the churchyard (Herefordshire HER No. 19246) lie to the S of the castle. The earliest surviving masonry appears to date to c. 1190 but the church was probably built between the foundation of the Honour of Kington in 1108 and its suppression in 1173. It has been suggested that the church, and by implication the early borough, may have been enclosed within the castle defences (Stirling-Brown 1989, 10) and its situation on a small hill would make it easily defensible. It is further suggested that the tower, which is earlier than the rest of the church and the first masonry structure on the site, may represent a castle keep or may have been built from the ruins of the keep.

## 6 Methodology

The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The Project Managers' Guide* (MoRPHE) (Lee 2015) and with practices set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) in *Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014) and *Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (CIfA 2014).



A single evaluation trench measuring 20m × 2m was opened by machine and toothless bucket (*fig. 2*). Soil was removed in successive, level spits down to natural deposits. In the event, it was necessary to move the W end of the trench slightly to the N in order to avoid rooting from nearby trees.

No archaeological features or deposits were present and recording was carried out using BA's standard trench recording sheets.

A high-resolution digital photographic record was made. Each photograph contained a scale and all photographic records were indexed and cross-referenced to written site records. Details of subject and direction of view were recorded in a photographic register, indexed by frame number.

No deposits suitable for palaeoenvironmental/palaeoeconomic sampling purposes were identified and no finds recovered.



Fig 2: Plan showing location of trench.

## 7 Results

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	100		Deposit	Topsoil	Moderately compacted mid-greyish-brown silty clay; occasional gravel & pottery; 0.24-0.30m thick, trench-wide. Overlying (101).	-	✓	-	-	-	Modern pottery-not retained
2	101		Deposit	Subsoil	Firm mid-yellowish-grey clay; abundant gravel; thickness 0.30m (W), 0.10m (E), trench-wide. Underlying (100), overlying (102).	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	102		Deposit	Natural	Firm mid-yellow clay; frequent gravel; >0.20m thick, trench-wide. Underlying (101).	-	-	-	-	-	Brighter in colour & less stony than subsoil.

## 8 Discussion

No archaeological features were present in the evaluation trench and no finds were recovered from the site. Late 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century pottery was noted in the topsoil at the W end of the trench but was not retained.



*Plate 1: View S of N-facing section at W end of trench.*

It is thought likely that topography may have precluded activity on the site, the ground sloping steeply to the N towards the Back Brook. It has been suggested (Buteux 1996) that the steeply sloping nature of the ground may have prevented development of a bailey. It should be noted, however, that the identification of the mound with Kington Castle has been disputed (RCHME 1934, 88) and it is possible that this may account for the absence of archaeological features.

The downward sloping topography had led to slippage, with subsoil (101) noticeably thicker at the W than at the E end of the trench. Natural deposits of undisturbed yellow clay were seen in the trench base. No evidence was seen for more recent disturbance, for example, that associated with the construction of 'Lo-Lands'.



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