

# Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

<b>Civil Parish &amp; District:</b> Marldon, South Hams	<b>National Grid Reference</b> SX 86612 64876	<b>Number:</b>
<b>Subject:</b> Archaeological Monitoring for Installation of Lightning Protection System at Compton Castle, Marldon		<b>Photo attached?</b> Yes
<b>Scheduled Ancient Monument:</b> 1020569	<b>List Entry Number:</b> 1324886	
<b>Planning Application no:</b> N/A	<b>Recipient museum:</b> National Trust Archive, Killerton	
<b>OASIS ID:</b> southwes1-350028	<b>Museum Accession no:</b> N/A	
<b>Contractor's reference number/code:</b> MCC19	<b>Dates fieldwork undertaken:</b> 5 <sup>th</sup> May, 6 <sup>th</sup> November 2019	

## Description of works.

Archaeological monitoring and recording were undertaken by South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) during the installation of a lighting protection system at Compton Castle, Marldon, South Hams, Devon. The work was carried out over several dates in 2019 in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Boyd 2019) drawn up in consultation with Historic England (HE), the National Trust (NT) and Devon County Historic Environment Team (DCHET).

Compton Castle is located c.1.8km north of Marldon in the base of a shallow valley. The soils of this area are the well-drained gritty loamy soils of the Crediton Association (SSEW 1983), which overlie breccias and sandstones of the Torbay Breccia Formation; superficial alluvial clays, silts, sands and gravels lie within the river valley to the east (BGS 2019).

Compton Castle was originally a fourteenth century manor house, constructed by the de Compton/Gilbert family. It has been extended and rebuilt in multiple phases. The house was fortified in response to French raids on the Plymouth coast in the 1520s. By 1800, the family had moved to Bodmin and the house fell into disrepair and was sold. In 1931 it was repurchased by Commander Walter Raleigh Gilbert. The Castle is Grade I Listed (no. 1324886), the barn to the north is Grade II\* Listed (No. 1108518) and an area of the surrounding gardens and park are designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM No. 1020569.) The lightning protection system includes ten groundings, which will be located within the SAM area.

The excavations were at most 0.4m x 0.25m and up to 0.25m deep. They revealed fairly consistent deposit models across the site, with the current ground surface (turf, stone or concrete slab), typically overlying a makeup/bedding layer and/or a mid-brown silt-clay topsoil. The bedding deposit/topsoil typically overlay a layer(s) of made ground, typically constituting stone rubble, lime mortar and slate fragments. Typically, the excavations were not deep enough to reveal what was below the made ground, but clean red clay silt (natural?) was seen in No's. 8, 9, 10, and 6. Each excavation is detailed briefly below.

1. Conductor 1 runs down a buttress attached to the gable end of the north-east tower, following the downpipe attached to the buttress before entering a narrow strip of lawn. A c.0.07m thick layer grass and topsoil directly overlaid a cobbled surface. In this pit, the surface was constructed from similarly sized (0.1mx0.1x0.06m) sub-angular stones bonded in a gritty red silt-clay. Below the cobbled surface was layer of made-ground, a grey-red silt-clay with occasional slate and stone fragments - this produced a single sherd of White Refined Earthenware. The cobble surface was to be expected given the gateway to the north and suggests that this was once a much more formal service area for the castle.
2. Conductor 2 runs down a buttress attached adjacent to the chimney stack of the pantry; this runs along the downpipe attached to the buttress before entering a narrow strip of lawn. The lawn and topsoil (c.0.1m thick) overlay a layer of made ground, a grey-brown silt-clay, containing common to abundant sub-angular to sub-rounded stones, slate and mortar fragments.
3. Conductor 3 runs down a downpipe on the gable end of the *Kitchen block* and into an area of lawn. The lawn and topsoil (c.0.1m) thick overlay a layer of made ground, a grey-brown silt-clay containing common to abundant sub-angular stones, slate and mortar fragments. Part of an iron horse bit was recovered from the rubble in this location.
4. Conductor 4 runs down in a corner abutment adjacent to the south-east tower into an area of lawn. The lawn and topsoil (c.0.1m) thick overlay a layer of made ground, a grey-brown silt-clay and containing common to abundant sub-angular stones, slate and mortar fragments.
5. Conductor 5 is adjacent to a stair turret, adjacent to the larder. A single concrete slab, c.0.05m thick was lifted, this

overlaid a modern sand bedding (c.0.05m) which, in turn, overlaid a slightly grey-red silt-clay with occasional sub-rounded stones, slate and mortar fragments.

6. Conductor 6 is adjacent to the stair turret adjoining the Great Hall. A single large concrete paving slab (0.05m thick) overlaid a modern grey-yellow sand which produced a single modern iron 6" nail. The dirty bedding sand overlay a clean 0.03m thick layer of lime mortar (bedding for previous paving?). The lime mortar overlaid a clean firm red clay-silt which has been interpreted as *Natural*.
7. Conductor 7 is adjacent to abutment (of a stair turret to the Sub-Solar). A single concrete slab (0.05m thick) was lifted, this overlaid a 0.07m thick grey sand bedding, overlaying a 0.06m thick layer of clean red silt loam and overlaid a layer of demolition material in a slightly grey-red silt loam. The lime bonded stone rubble build footing for the demolished side entrance (into what would have been the Inner Court) was visible in the east section of the excavated (Figure 2).
8. Conductor 8 is adjacent to the entrance into the Sub-Solar. A large concrete paving slab (0.06m thick) overlaid a bedding of yellow-pea gravel and sand (0.04m thick). Below this was a concrete/derelict drain which had been crushed by later drain runs. This crushed drain overlaid a clean, moist, reddish-purple silt-clay (probably the *Natural*), although the top of the deposit was exposed within the limits of excavation.
9. Conductor 9 run along a downpipe on a buttress of the north-west tower (Boiler House). The modern gravel surface was 0.2m deep which overlaid a clean soft to firm red silt-clay (probably the *Natural*).
10. Conductor 10 is within the Court(yard), running along a downpipe adjacent to the chapel. A single 0.05m thick concrete paving slab was lifted, which sat on a 0.03m thick bedding layer of sand and mid-brown topsoil. The bedding lay directly overlying a clean moist firm to soft red silt-clay (probably the *Natural*).

#### **Finds**

Whilst most of the excavated holes produced CBM, slate fragments, lime mortar and stone - none of this was retained. Two small finds were retained from the rubble deposits: from conductor pit 1 - a single sherd of white refined earthenware (6g) and from conductor pit 3 - an iron buckle from a horse bit (14g).

#### **Conclusions**

The ten small excavated holes revealed that as was to be expected there is a degree of recent makeup of ground, particularly to the south and east of the Castle. The area of the courtyard and to the north and west of the Castle appears to have been subject to more substantive landscaping and below the modern surface and features in Conductor Pits 8, 9 and 10 the natural was encountered.

#### **Bibliography**

Boyd, N. 2019: *Compton Castle, Marldon, South Hams, Devon: Written Scheme of Investigation*. SWARCH WSI no. MCC19WSiv2.  
British Geological Survey 2018: *Geology of Britain Viewer*. [http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer\\_google/googleviewer.html](http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer_google/googleviewer.html)  
Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983: *Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales*.

Recorder: S. Walls

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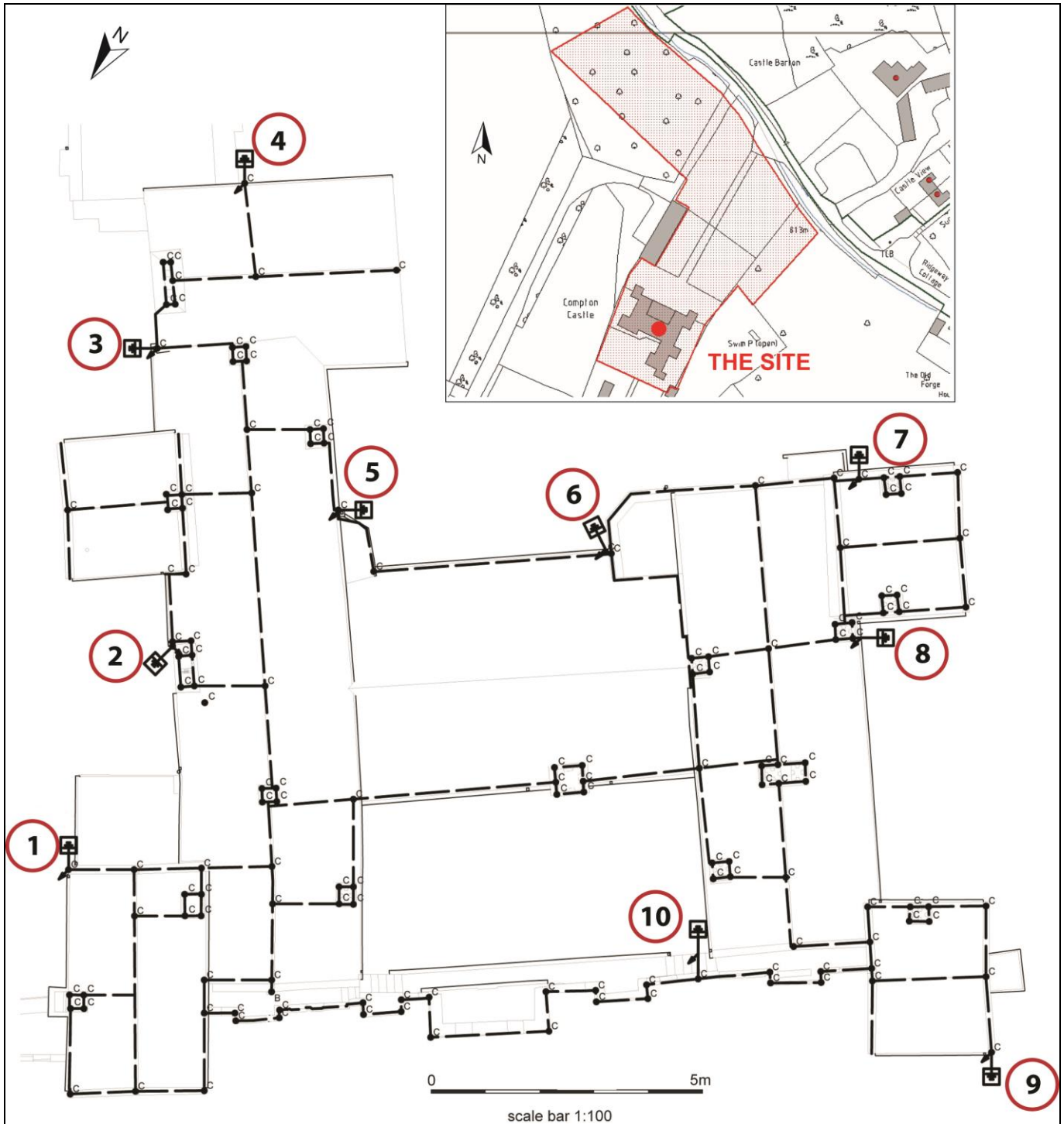


FIGURE 1: LOCATION PLAN, SHOWING THE NUMBERED CONDUCTOR EXCAVATIONS.



FIGURE 2: CONDUCTOR PIT 7, SHOWING THE THRESHOLD STONE AND RUBBLE FOOTINGS TO THE DEMOLISHED ENTRANCE; VIEWED FROM WEST (1M SCALE).



FIGURE 3: CONDUCTOR PIT 8; VIEWED FROM THE WEST (1M SCALE).