

Court House Farm, Lingen

Archaeological Investigations Ltd was commissioned to carry out archaeological surveys on a small plot of land between Court House Farm and the Royal George, Lingen, Herefordshire. The work was carried out in two stages during September and October 1998. Four methods were employed on this project; documentary research, earthwork survey, magnetic (fluxgate gradiometer) survey and resistivity survey. The documentary assessment indicated that the site has not contained buildings from the early 19th century to the present time. Field names imply that this may also have been the case in the 18th century. The presence of earthworks along the west side of the site suggest that structures are likely to have existed here in the medieval period as they lie along the line of the road which led to the medieval motte and bailey castle. The results of the earthwork survey show that the above-ground remains form well defined and regular features, also indicative of buried structures, and the results of this survey are useful in helping interpret the geophysical survey. The results from the geophysical surveys provide an accurate location plan of anomalies beneath the earthworks which lie along the west road frontage, as well as locating features of interest across other parts of the site. These include the locations of possible structures and the identification of other features such as a possible trackway leading from the main street into the site. The site comprises a small field bounded to the north and west by roads, to the south by the land of the Royal George and the east by pasture which leads down to a north-south running brook. Further to the north lies the site of Lingen motte-and-bailey castle with the manor being held by Turstin under the Mortimers at the time of the Domesday Survey indicating a medieval date or earlier for the settlement. Some visible remains lie within the site, mainly within the westernmost 20m adjacent to the north-south road. These comprise earthworks of regular rectilinear form truncated by a hollow about halfway along their extent. The entire area of the survey lies on relatively level ground within rough pasture adjacent to a stream valley on the east. The underlying comprises Silurian rocks described as Undivided on the Geological Survey of 1990. To the east lies grey mudstone of the Coalbrookdale Formation (also Silurian).

Cartographic evidenceThe earliest map looked at for the site was the 1842 tithe map. This was used in conjunction with the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club field name survey to identify names associated with fields both on the site and in its environs as in some cases the names given to fields reflect their previous use or ownership. The site itself lies within what was called Birds Meadow which included the fields to its east between the site and the stream. To the south of this field is a field called Mill Meadow which could indicate the presence of a mill down stream as mills commonly owned land containing the water course which fed them. On the other side of the stream from Mill Meadow lies Oldcastle Wood which might be taken to indicate the presence of an earlier archaeological site, such as a hillfort (Shoesmith 1996, 161). Between these two areas is a thin strip of land running the length of the stream called The Plock probably referring to a small plot of land. To the south of the site, the land behind the Royal George Inn and the next property is referred to as cottage garden. The field to the west across the road was called House, Garden and Meadow which probably refers to the existing building on that plot. The next map is the 1891 edition Ordnance Survey (surveyed in 1884). This does not show any buildings on the site and neither does the Ordnance survey 1904 map.

Historical SurveysThe Domesday survey records a manor at Lingen which implies the village was settled prior to the Norman Conquest. No other information was obtained relating to the site itself.

Miscellaneous informationAlfred Watkins describes a medieval pottery waste dump near Lingen in Ridges Wood, Birtley (Watkins 1930). A further similar site was visited by Marshall below Deerfold Farm in March 1945 (County Archives - K38/Cd/6 Box2). The earthwork survey

The main features identified in the earthwork survey are three platforms adjacent to the road on the west side of the site separated by hollows. The southernmost of the platforms measured 10m by 5m and lay within a slight hollow and was clearly rectangular in shape orientated north-south in line with the road (Mound A). To the north of this Mound B was of similar shape and dimension but lay at right-angles to the first. This was separated from the third by a much more pronounced hollow. The third mound (C) was much larger and less well defined in shape than the other two. All three mounds lay in a slight dip with the ground levelling off to their west.

Resistivity SurveyIt is important to consider whether the geology is likely to have any affect on the resistivity data prior to interpreting potential archaeological features. From the British Geological Survey the solid appears to comprise Silurian mudstones. In this area the formations are complicated but in general it is not likely that a great degree of diversity would be observed between the resistivities of different mudstones and therefore the underlying solid is unlikely to account for variations in resistivity. Variations in drift geology also need to be accounted for. In this case as the formations are normally periglacial or post glacial differences between boulder clays and sands and gravels are likely to also manifest themselves in the relief of the site through differential deposition/erosion. In this case the site is relatively level and there is little to indicate likely changes in the subsurface geology. Two areas within the data comprise high resistance anomalies with reasonably well defined rectangular form (1 and 2). These correspond well with two of the earthwork mounds (A and C). Other discrete areas of high resistance area also notable within the site (3 and 4). A low resistivity anomaly (5) runs north-south through the site. There is also a notable correspondence between areas of low resistance and hollows which is likely to be caused at least in part by differential drainage caused by the site topography.

Magnetic Survey With the exception of numerous isolated responses discussed below there are two anomalies of note in the gradiometer data. Around Anomaly 1 in the resistivity data is an unusual array of short linear and isolated anomalies. Also following the line of Anomaly 5 is a very faint negative anomaly. It is noticeable that the isolated responses appear to cluster around Anomaly 1. These isolated responses can be caused by pits, hearths, ovens, small kilns and/or small iron artefacts. In the case of this survey there is difficulty in distinguishing between the responses but at least some of those which fall on or around Anomaly 1 may possibly be due to burning.

Discussion- It appears from the results of the work that a number of phases of activity are represented within the information obtained. The most obvious case is that of Mound C. In the case of Anomaly 1/Mound C the areas of high resistance stop at the edge of the earthwork possibly implying that the earthwork and its underlying features have been truncated at some point. This argument could be further supported by the less rectilinear form of the

mound. When compared to Mound A the area of the possible structure defined by the resistivity survey lies within the area of the earthwork mound. Further evidence for later alterations to the site can be seen in the form of Anomaly 5. Here a linear feature matches the line of a break in slope on the ground, but also cuts through the corner of a high resistance anomaly. It is possible that this represents a relatively recent drain or pipe run. Apart from the two most probable structures within the site (1 and 2) there are a number of other high resistance anomalies. These are less easy to interpret as they do not relate directly to earthwork mounds, and where they do they lack definition. Anomaly 4 could well be a single feature which has been later truncated by Anomaly 5. The most significant feature observed within the site is probably that of Mound C/Anomaly 1. Here there appears to be a partially eroded mound containing evidence for a structure (from the resistivity survey) and associated with a large amount of magnetic activity. On the other hand Mound A/Anomaly 2 would appear to be the most well preserved feature within the site. The cartographic evidence suggests these features predate the 19th century and their situation on the probable north-south road leading to the castle supports a probable medieval origin for the proposed structures.