

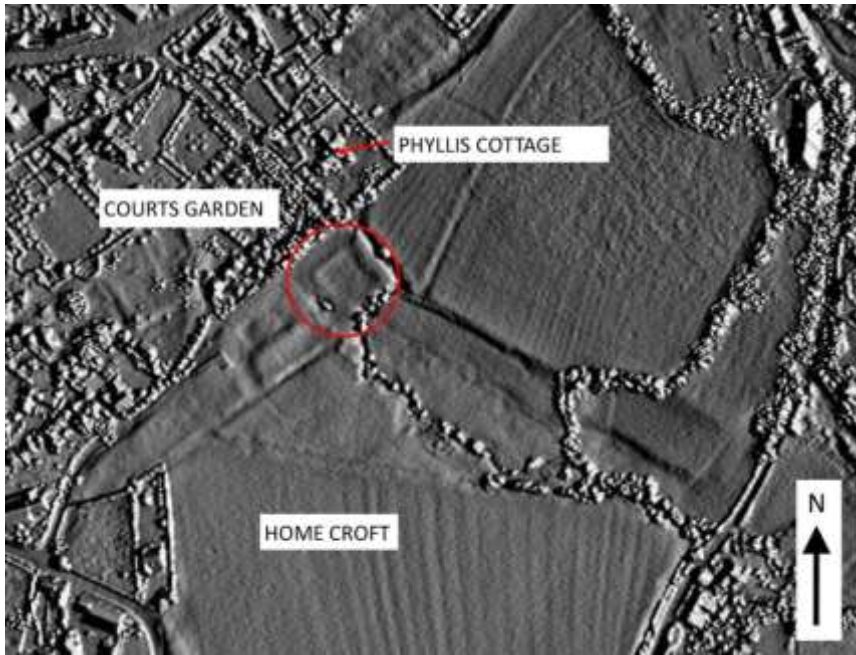


Bradford-on-Avon Museum Research Group

Holt Home Croft Report

Introduction

The Research Group's Interactive Landscapes Project aims to discover or confirm archaeological features in the landscape through the use of LiDAR images, field walking, geophysics, documentary sources and excavation in order to add to the existing knowledge of the history and archaeology of the Bradford Hundred. Examination of the LiDAR image for Home Croft field in Holt (fig.1) revealed what appeared to two distinct sides of a square feature together with the start of third side which could be interpreted as a moat approximately 36 m square, with the stream following two sides. This can be compared with the moated sites at Bratton (31m x 26m), Brook (35m x 33m) and Penleigh (56m x 44m). Holt Manor now lies one kilometre from the village centre and may well have been there when a deer park, which lies in front of the manor house, was recorded in 1316 (Cal Pat, p593). Its predecessor is likely to have been sited in the village and a moat would have been a visible status symbol for the de Holt family. Phyllis Cottage nearby was equated with Pile House by Draper (1999, p35), and the site was occupied in the late 12th C by Robertus de Pila (Stacey, 2009, p.206).



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Fig 1. LiDAR image with square feature circled

Resistance Survey

Permission to carry out a resistance survey was sought in January 2021 from the farmer who was a part owner of the site and confirmed with the other owner in June 2021. The COVID lockdown meant that the survey was delayed until the hay harvest was complete at the end of June. The area of the field south-west of the square feature shows uneven ground suggestive of earlier buildings on the site. The survey was therefore planned to cover the area between the stream, barn and ridge and furrow and was extended to include the track to the barn. Datum points were measured in at both ends of the fence which divides the field from the Courts garden. The survey area was divided into 20m by 20m squares with one reading per metre being taken in both directions.

Whilst carrying out the survey a sewer manhole cover was found in the eastern corner of the feature, suggesting that the north-eastern bank followed the line of a sewer pipe trench. No depression can be seen where the line of the north-west moat would be expected to be.

The data was analysed using Snuffler software and printed with black indicating high resistance. The results are shown in figure 2.

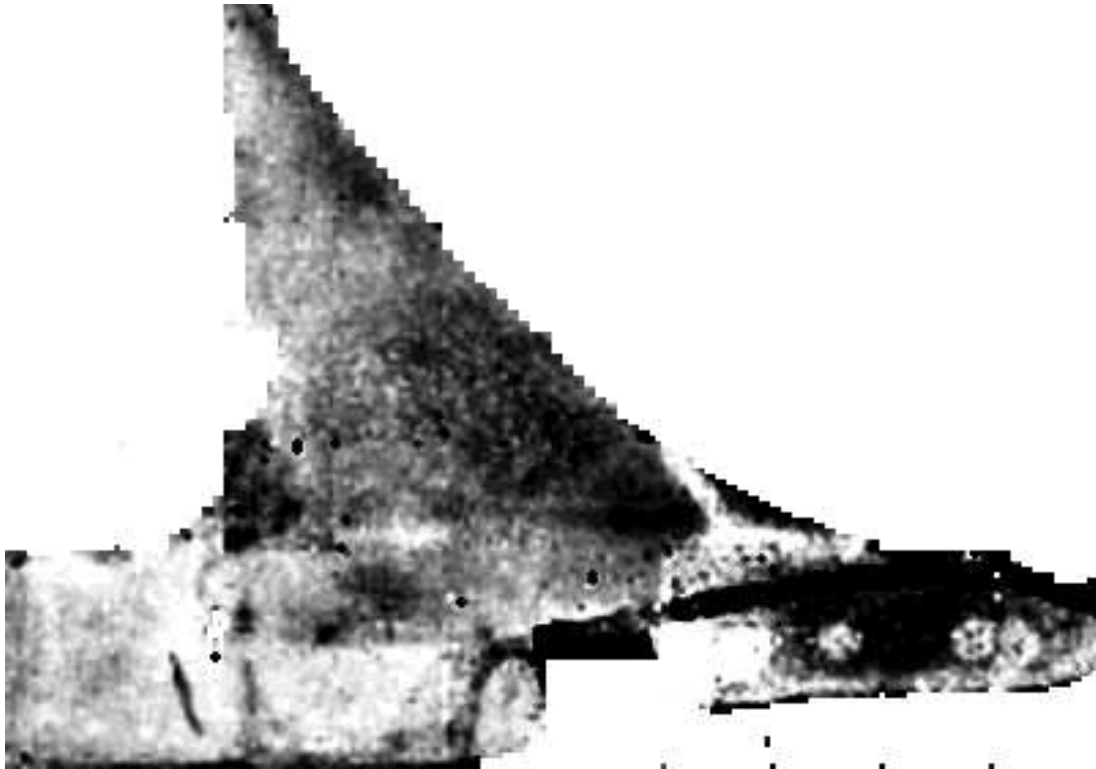


Fig 2. Resistance Survey results

These are shown superimposed on a map in figure 3, with visible and explicable features labelled.

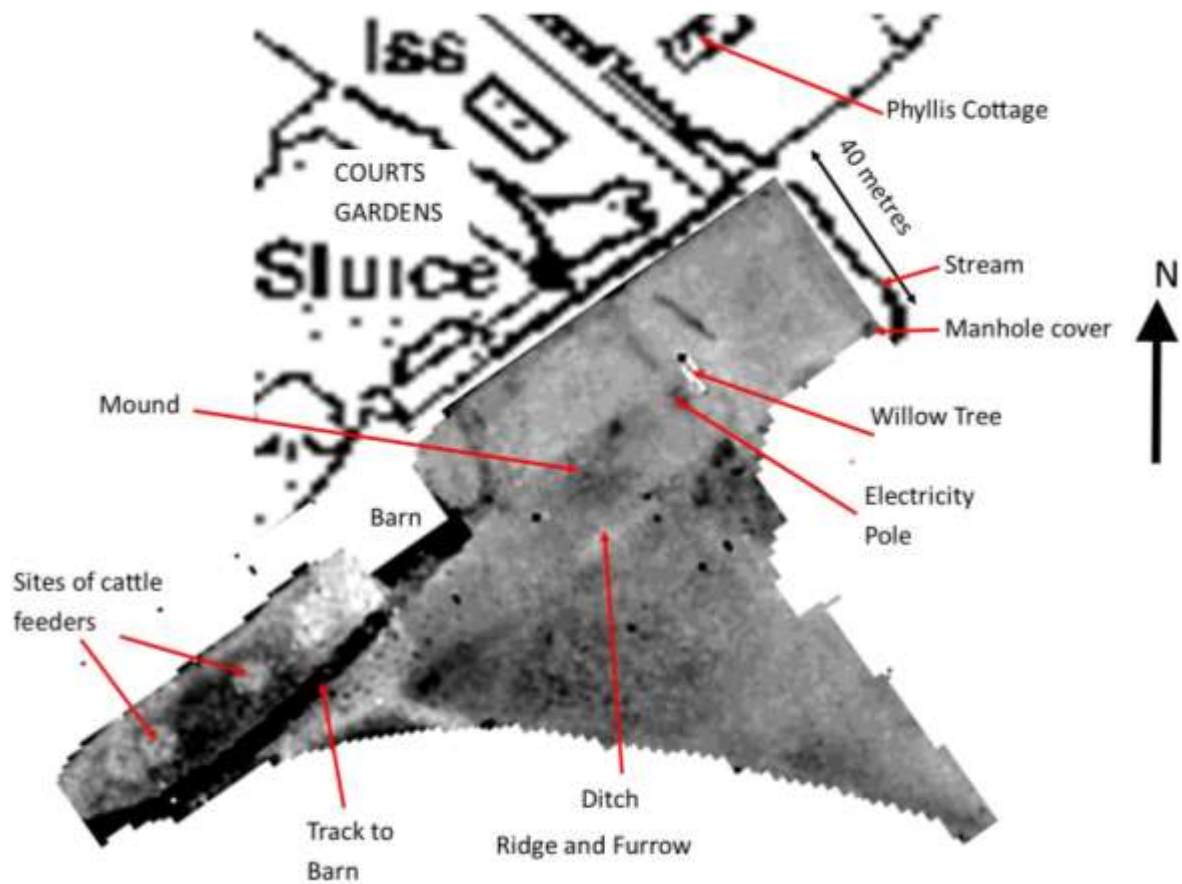


Fig 3. Survey results relative to map

Discussion of Soil Resistance Results

The appearance of the resistance survey image can be adjusted to reveal different features and the image in fig (3) highlights the farm track and hard standing in front of the barn. Figs (2) and (4) have increased sensitivity which emphasises the mound. The circular features to the south-west of the barn were confirmed by the farmer to have been the recent sites of cattle feeding troughs.

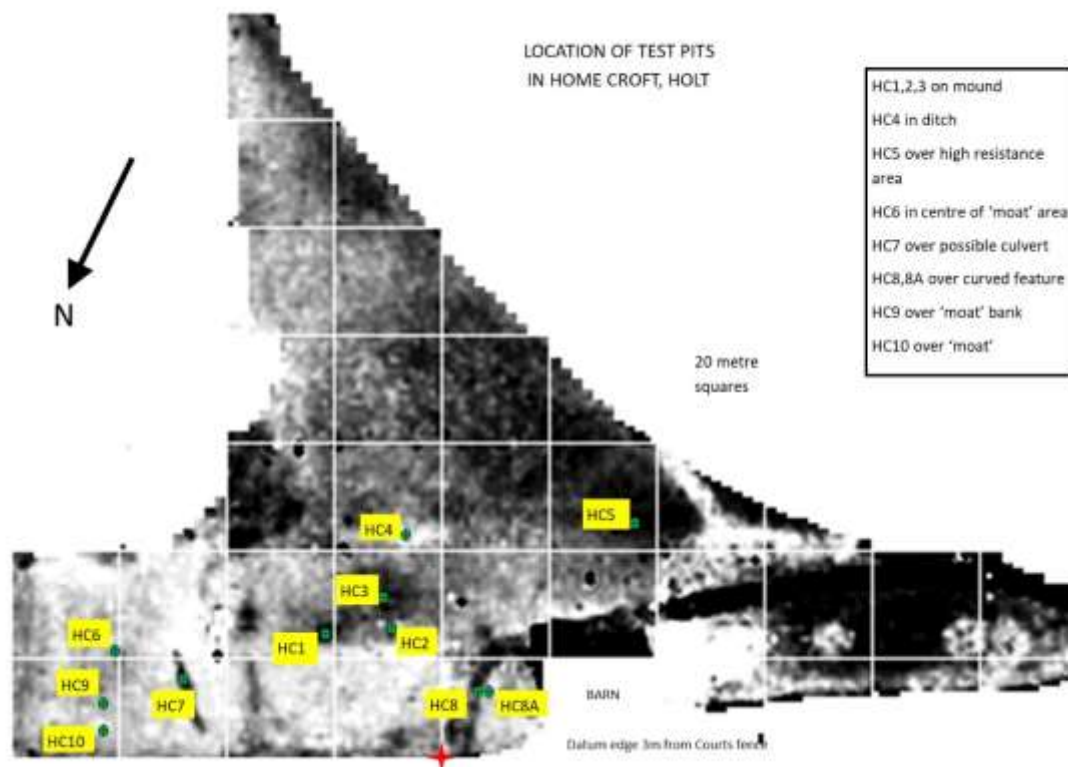


Fig 4. Test Pit Locations

Test Pits

Test pits 1 to 9 were dug in late August 2021 to investigate areas of interest and high and low resistance features. Test Pit 10 was dug in February 2022. The locations of these are shown in figure 4. HC1 was located over a high resistance feature and HC2 and HC3 were located on the mound shown in figure 3. HC4 was located over an area of low resistance in the ditch shown in figure 3. HC5 was located over a high resistance area in front of the barn. HC6 was placed in the middle of the square 'moat' feature seen in the LiDAR image in figure 1. HC7 was placed over a line of high resistance corresponding with a bank on the LiDAR image. HC8 and HC8A were sited over the curved feature near the barn. HC9 was placed on the north-west bank of the 'moat' feature. HC10 was placed where the north-west moat would be expected to be based on the LiDAR image. Turf thickness varied from 100 to 200mm. The test pits were dug down to what appeared to be the natural geology. It was agreed with the farmer that test pits would be reinstated at the end of each day.

Test Pit Findings

Discussion of Test Pit Results

Buildings from the medieval period were generally timber framed, with padstones being used under some timbers and the discovery of any stone walls was thought to be unlikely. The small area (5 square metres) excavated meant that postholes were also not likely to be found. HC1,2,3 and 7 showing high resistance were found to be natural surfaces made up of small stones (Photo 1). HC4 (the ditch) which showed low resistance contained some clay and was wetter (Photo 2). The soil in HC5 contained no stone but was very dry and densely packed, giving the high resistance signal. HC6 and HC9 contained some stones with HC9 yielding the two biggest pieces of stone found (Photo 3). These were not big enough to be padstones and were lying horizontally rather than vertically which would be consistent with packing stones for a post. HC8 and 8A which showed high resistance revealed a very rough stone surface which may have been the floor of an agricultural building or yard (Photo 4). HC10 revealed a clay layer at 200 to 250 mm depth above stone free subsoil over natural Cotswold brash at 700 mm depth (Photo 8). The level of the stream bed nearest to HC10 was measured and found to be 630 mm below the ground level at HC10. This is only 70 mm above the Cotswold brash layer. The depth of the stream on the day the measurement was taken was 100 mm but building a weir below the site could have raised the water level in the stream to say 500 mm. This would then put the water level in the moat above the clay layer. The section revealed in HC10 did not appear to have been created by a gradual filling in of a moat and the definition of the clay layer indicates that it was not backfilled in one operation which rules out the existence of a moat.

Finds Discussion

Test Pit	Size Metres	Medieval Pottery				Post-Medieval Pottery			
		Count	Weight (g)	Depth (mm)	Distinctive Feature	Count	Weight (g)	Depth (mm)	Distinctive Feature
1	0.5 x 1.0	0	0.00			1	11.02	100-120	Slipware
2	0.5 x 1.0	1	0.71	100-120		0	0.00		
3	0.5 x 0.5	1	11.72	100-160	Rim	0	0.00		
4	0.5 x 1.0	0	0.00			0	0.00		
5	0.5 x 1.0	1	1.16	175-250	Very worn	0	0.00		
6	0.3 x 0.3	0	0.00			0	0.00		
7	1.25 x 0.75 (max)	0	0.00			2	1.42	200-350	Blue & white
8	0.7 x 0.35	0	0.00			0	0.00		
8A	0.4 x 0.2	0	0.00			3	8.26	130-240	
9	0.5 x 1.0	3	3.72	350-400	Very worn	1	9.26	120-350	Green glaze
10	0.5 x 2.0	0	0.00			0	0.00		
TOTALS	4.93	6	17.31			7	29.96		
Pottery Density g/sq.m			3.51				6.08		

Table 1. Pottery Finds

Three pieces of the medieval pottery were not distinctive. The rim from Test Pit HC3 (Photo 5) was identified from photographs as a jar rim typical of the 12th or 13th C by Lorraine Mephram of Wessex Archaeology. The fabric of one of the pieces found at the base of the north-west bank of the square feature is very similar to Kennet 'A' fabric which dates to the 12th C (Photo 6). The post-medieval

pottery was typical of finds from a field or garden locally, with the slipware showing characteristic Bristol/Staffordshire decoration (Photo 7).

Test Pit	Size (metres)	Animal Tooth	Animal Bone	Flint/Chert	Welsh Slate	Charcoal / Coal	Clinker	Glass	Iron objects	Ceramic Building Material
1	0.5 x 1.0	1		5	1	1	2	1		4
2	0.5 x 1.0	1	2	3						1
3	0.5 x 0.5			2		2				1
4	0.5 x 1.0		2	2					1	
5	0.5 x 1.0			10						
6	0.3 x 0.3					3	1	2		12
7	1.25 x 0.75 (max)			6		1		2		
8	0.7 x 0.35							3		
8A	0.4 x 0.2								1	3
9	0.5 x 1.0		1	11		23	1			4
10	0.5 x 2.0						1			4

Table 2. Other Finds

The other finds are again typical of what might be found in the topsoil of a garden or field locally. The low medieval pottery density (3.51 gsm) is what would be expected from manuring scatter rather than occupation, where over 100 gsm is typical, and can be explained by the site's proximity to Phyllis Cottage. As expected from the resistance survey, no signs of buildings were found. This indicates that if there were structures then they were made of wood and that any padstones or wall bases have been completely robbed out. Three of the four fragments of CBM in HC10 were found below the clay layer with a total weight 2.21 gms. Since there were visible vertical worm shafts in the subsoil these fragments were felt to have come from the surface rather than from the filling in of a moat.

Conclusion

The apparent undisturbed section of HC10 does not suggest that there was a moat there. The finding of medieval pottery under the north-western 'moat' bank suggests that the north-western bank is post medieval and the north-eastern bank is likely to have been created when the sewer pipes were laid or when the stream was scoured. These three findings, combined with the low medieval pottery density, suggest that the LiDAR feature is not a medieval moated manor house site.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Andy Beck and John Moody for permission to access the site, and to Rick Buettner, Phil Thornton, Sue Grier, Judith Patterson and Janet Slack for carrying out the survey and digging the test pits.

Photographs



1. HC3 natural surface of small stones



2. HC4 Ditch with clay soil



3. HC9 (1m x 0.5m) with biggest stones



4. HC8 Stone surface



5. HC3 12th-13th C jar rim



6. HC9 Possible Kennet 'A' fabric



7. HC1 Bristol/Staffordshire slipware



8. HC10 Section with clay layer at 200 mm

References

Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1313-17

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Stacey.N, 2006, Charters and Customals of Shaftesbury Abbey, Oxford University Press

Rob Arkell

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