

An Interim Report on Phase 1 Archaeological Evaluation at Hay Castle

Oxford Road, Hay-on-Wye, Powys

NGR SO 2292 4228

March 2016

CPAT Event PRN 142762



Scheduled Ancient Monument 17/1104/BR076

Grade 1 Listed Building 7405

Registered Historic Park and Garden Grade II PGW(PO)11(POW)

Castle NPRN 25593

Mansion NPRN 25592

County HER 440

Report prepared for Hay Castle Trust by Peter Dorling, BSc MCIfA
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Summary

This report presents the results of the first phase of an intended programme of archaeological evaluation which is being carried out in advance of the determination of a planning application for a major restoration scheme at Hay Castle. The first phase of evaluation was carried out in the ruined part (the eastern end) of the Mansion House. The work was carried out following a brief provided by Cadw in consultation with the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority.

The eastern end of the mansion house has stood roofless since a major fire in 1939. Lack of maintenance over the years has led to a gradual decline in the condition of the masonry remains of this part of the house.

Five test pits located for structural engineering purposes were excavated archaeologically to the top of significant archaeological structures or deposits. In three of the test pits, TPs 3, 4 and 11, substantial masonry structural remains were recorded. In TPs 4 and 11 these are interpreted as the medieval castle curtain wall. In TP3 remains of very similar construction and character may also be part of the curtain wall or a structure within the castle enclosure.

Test Pit 5 located in the area that would have been under the stairs of the Jacobean mansion contained a substantial flagstone floor and associated steps. What are thought may be later walls are the sleeper walls for timber panelled partitions that divided this part of the mansion house. These may be part of the 19th century room scheme. Further investigation of these remains is to take place in phase two of the evaluation to establish relationships between the various features and a sequence of construction.

Test pit 6 located to examine structural issues revealed a series of floor levels and surfaces. The earliest of these might be a construction surface associated with the foundation trench for the southern wall of the mansion. The later surfaces include a brick floor or subfloor immediately below the flagstone floor which can be seen in photographs of 1914 and that survived up until the 1939 fire. A clay deposit above the earliest surface contained substantial amounts of large animal bone and produced three sherds of late medieval or early post-medieval pottery.

Specialist analysis of artefacts and faunal remains will be carried out following completion of all the evaluation work. A final report will be produced covering the entire work carried out. One find worthy of specific mention is a lead powder box, or bandolier, top. This came from recent overburden in TP4 / 11. Its presence suggests activity (perhaps a garrison) at Hay Castle during the English Civil War. This is the first evidence that suggests that Hay played any part in that conflict.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In conjunction with a major Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid Hay Castle Trust submitted a Planning and Listed Building Consent (LBC) application for “Restoration and change of use of Hay Castle, the Manor House and the outbuildings to create a public venue for education and the arts as well as an event space, a cafe, ancillary office space and retail units.” Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA) Planning Application Ref. Nos: 15/13048/FUL and 15/13049/LBC respectively.
- 1.2 Through the ongoing development of the HLF bid Rick Mather Architects (RMA) has reported on works with the potential to disturb archaeological deposits and therefore requiring archaeological intervention (Anon, 2015b). These included access improvements to the approach to the medieval gatehouse from the market square, a new system of services and a series of structural trial pits within and adjacent to the mansion and its outbuildings.
- 1.3 In advance of determination of the Planning and LBC applications, and scheduled monument consent, Cadw and the BBNPA have asked for the results of an archaeological evaluation to be submitted. This report covers the results of the first phase of these evaluation works, focused on five engineering test pits within the ruined part of the mansion house. Test Pits 3 – 6 and 11 (figure 1).
- 1.4 The work was carried out between the 7th and the 30th of March 2016 in accordance with a detailed brief provided by Will Davies, Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Cadw. Document Ref. Cadw - BR076 - 2016-01-15 - Hay Castle - Brief for archaeological evaluation – Phase I evaluations, Will Davies.
- 1.5 This report should be regarded as an interim report. Analysis of artefacts and faunal remains will be carried out following the completion of further phases of evaluation work. The full results will be included in a final report.

2. Site Description

- 2.1 The visible remains of Hay Castle consist of a late 11th - early 12th century gate tower / keep and an adjacent length of curtain wall incorporating a simple gate probably added in the early 13th century, all of these were modified in the later 13th century. The tower was probably incorporated into a late medieval domestic building and retained within the double-pile mansion of the Gwynn family built in the first half of the 17th century, itself subjected to alterations in the 18th and 19th centuries and twice partly gutted by fire in the 20th. The gate and curtain wall were retained and repaired as garden features.
- 2.2 The present grounds of the house, comprising the terraced formal gardens of the 17th century to the north towards the town and a 19th century layout of lawns to the south, reflect the extent of the medieval castle and its former earthwork and later masonry defences. The development of the upstanding remains of the castle, the Jacobean house, ancillary buildings and the gardens are described in depth in recently

commissioned reports. These specifically studied The Castle (Mumby, 2015) and The Mansion House (Tyler, 2015). A standard Desk Based Assessment was also carried out to assess the wider archaeological and historic landscape potential of the site and surrounding area (Anon, 2015a).

3. Designations

- 3.1 The remains of the medieval castle are a Scheduled Ancient Monument of national importance. The scheduled area encompasses the surviving masonry and the approximate former extent of the defensive perimeter of the medieval castle, which corresponds to the grounds of the Jacobean and later mansion and its outbuildings which occupy the northern side of the site. Within the former curtilage of the castle, and incorporating some medieval fabric at its western end, the Jacobean mansion is a Grade I Listed Building and is excluded from the scheduled area, as are its associated stable block / coach house and outbuildings which are Grade II listed. Most of the present grounds are also designated as a Registered Historic Garden.

4. Previous Archaeological Work

- 4.1 A programme of archaeological test-pitting was undertaken within the grounds of Hay Castle prior to the erection of a temporary marquee for the 2001 Hay Festival. The purpose of the investigation was to assess the nature of any archaeological remains to a depth of 0.5m. The work included the hand excavation of six test pits, each measuring 1m by 1m by 0.5m deep. No archaeological features or deposits were revealed in the pits. Artefacts recovered were typical of urban garden contexts (Nash, 2001).
- 4.2 In 2014 the erection of temporary safety fencing was the subject of evaluation and a watching brief (Grant and Watson, 2014).
- 4.2.1 The evaluation was conducted in March 2014 and consisted of the excavation by hand of two evaluation trenches, one to investigate an area adjacent to the buttress adjoining the keep (3.5m x 1.2m) and the other positioned across the line of the curtain wall (8.0m x 1.6m).
- 4.2.2 The evaluation demonstrated that within the general locale of the two trenches there were no medieval deposits, surfaces or structures surviving up to a depth of 0.8 - 0.9m from the present ground surface. Within Trench 1, any evidence for the continuation of the curtain wall extending eastwards of the upstanding remains was considered to therefore lie below this level. The in-situ remains of an 18th/19th century garden wall (possibly constructed from material from the curtain wall) were recorded at the northern end of trench 1.
- 4.2.3 The excavations in Trench 2 have demonstrated that a continuous programme of re-landscaping (of 18th-20th century origin) on the north-side of the gatehouse has created an accumulation of silty overburden and general rubble up to a depth of 0.9m. Some of

the rubble has been used to underpin the buttress on the north side of the keep, suggesting a possible construction date for the buttress no earlier than the late 18th century.

4.2.4 The watching brief, also in March 2014, monitored ground works involved in the construction of a new fence to surround the structures to the east of the mansion, prior to their consolidation. A total of 35 post holes were excavated by hand by the contractors, only one of which produced any significant archaeology, consisting of part of a wall adjacent to the gatehouse.

4.3 More recently, as a preliminary part of the current evaluation exercise, small scale work was carried out in two areas of the mansion house. This preliminary work was of a scale and character that could be carried out without Listed Building or Scheduled Monument Consent (Dorling, 2015).

4.3.1 What appeared to be large masonry underlying a relatively late wall at first floor level, and which may have been part of the historic fabric of the masonry castle, was found on investigation to be a cast concrete lintel, presumably to support the overlying wall.

4.3.2 Investigation of deposits below flagged and floor boarded areas on the ground floor of the mansion house was prevented by the presence of a substantial concrete pad which apparently covers most of the ground floor area of the house. It was presumably laid down during repair work following a major fire in 1977 or later during work to install underfloor heating ducts.

5. Objectives of the Phase One Evaluation

5.1 It is anticipated that remains of the medieval castle and earlier phases of the later house may survive as buried archaeological features beneath the mansion, its outbuildings and grounds, in addition to archaeological remains associated with the later gardens. The principal objective of the required evaluation is to assess the impact of the proposals on the archaeological resource through prior evaluation and understanding of the extent and nature of any structures or deposits within the affected areas.

The following objectives were specified in the Cadw Evaluation Brief

- i) To identify and record archaeological deposits and structures within the proposed structural test pits (figure 1), specifically:
 - Structural remains of the medieval and Tudor ranges assumed to have occupied the same or a similar footprint to the present wing of the mansion
 - The line of the former northern curtain wall of the castle and its junction with the primary gate tower / keep (TP11, TP4, TP5, TP3).
 - The lower south-western angle of the keep, the upper stages of which were removed to accommodate the construction of the mansion (TP5)

- The depth of the buried cellar in the south-eastern corner of the Jacobean range (TP5 / TP6)
 - Floors and potential internal partitions of the mansion
- ii) to obtain artefactual and environmental evidence to enhance our knowledge of the monument, its extent, layout, construction and development;
- iii) to ensure the long-term survival of the information contained in such remains through archaeological recording;
- iv) to prepare an interim report and the subsequent deposition of a project archive; and
- v) to prepare an updated project design which details the second phase of evaluation taking into account the results of phase one.

Should any significant archaeological remains be identified, an additional set of aims will be to:

- i) Assess the nature, date, density, extent, function and state of preservation of the archaeological remains;
- ii) Assess their potential for answering questions about the development of the castle and successive houses;
- iii) Where remains are of sufficient importance, work with Cadw to formulate a strategy for further investigation or to determine the best method for redesign or mitigation, working on a first principle of preservation in-situ.

6. Methods

- 6.1 All trenches were excavated by hand to the top of structural or significant archaeological remains. Where possible the nature of deposits was tested by further sample excavation. All deposits and structural remains were recorded by photograph, written context record and where appropriate by drawing at a scale of 1:20.
- 6.2 All levels were related to a datum on the threshold of the door linking the extant manor house with the ruined eastern section with a height of 108.63mOD. Taken from RMA Drawing 19101, Existing Ground Level, dated June 2015, revised 16/12/15.
- 6.3 It was agreed during the course of the evaluation that it was unnecessary to backfill the excavated areas. Much of the material removed was of relatively modern accumulation and would need to be removed again.

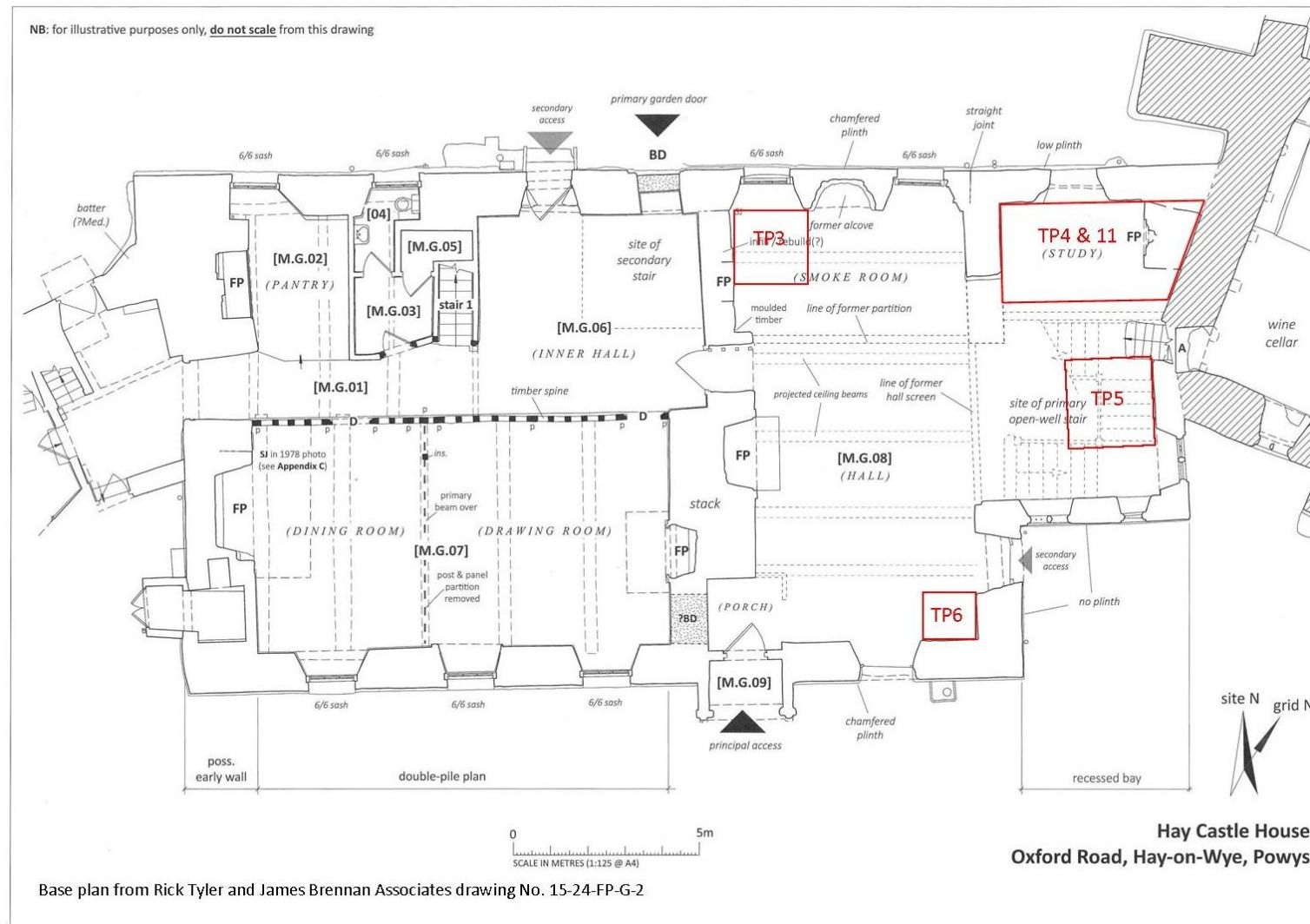


Figure 1: Test pit locations 3, 4, 5, 6 and 11. (to approximate scale only)

7. Evaluation Results

7.1 Test Pit 3

- 7.1.1 TP3 was located in the north-west corner of the derelict area (figure 1). It was approximately 2.00m by 2.00m and was required to examine the foundations of the north-south transverse wall and its junction with the main north wall of the Jacobean house.
- 7.1.2 In this area a concrete floor had been laid, presumably replacing the original flagstone floor. This probably took place in the 1950s or 60s. Two further layers are associated with this flooring, a layer of pea gravel (3003) below a clay levelling deposit (3002). The pea gravel was identical to the gravel filling the top of the area examined in TP5 (5002), the two events are likely to be contemporaneous.
- 7.1.3 Excavation of this test pit was prevented from proceeding below a depth of about 0.30m by a mass of masonry and solid lime mortar, clearly the top of a substantial wall or other structure (3006, figures 2 and 3). This was present in around two thirds of the area of the trench and extended beyond the southern, eastern and western sides of the trench. In the northern third of the trench there was a consistent deposit of dark red (2.5YR 3/6) silty clay marl. This clay continued under the transverse north-south wall (3010) to the west of TP3 and to the north under the main northern wall (3009). The former appears to have no foundations at all whilst the latter has a one course foundation recorded in section (figure 2).
- 7.1.4 The north side of the wall 3006 has an unfaced ragged-edge finish suggesting that it was built against the already in-situ clay marl. Excavation of a shallow slot through the clay to a depth of 0.40m confirmed that the top courses of the wall overlie the clay deposit which may be the natural subsoil or redeposited subsoil within an earthwork such as the early defensive rampart. Further work would be needed to clarify this. For further discussion of the wall see 7.2.4 below.
- 7.1.5 Two further deposits lay immediately above the masonry feature and the clay deposit. 3004 was a lime plaster and charcoal rich clay deposit. This may be post 1939 fire building debris, it contained modern window glass. 3005 was a clay deposit filling a distinct hollow in the top of the wall, this was probably an 18th or 19th century levelling deposit for the floor surface above. The clay contained clay pipe stems, coarse brick or tile fragments and a small sherd of yellow glazed earthenware.

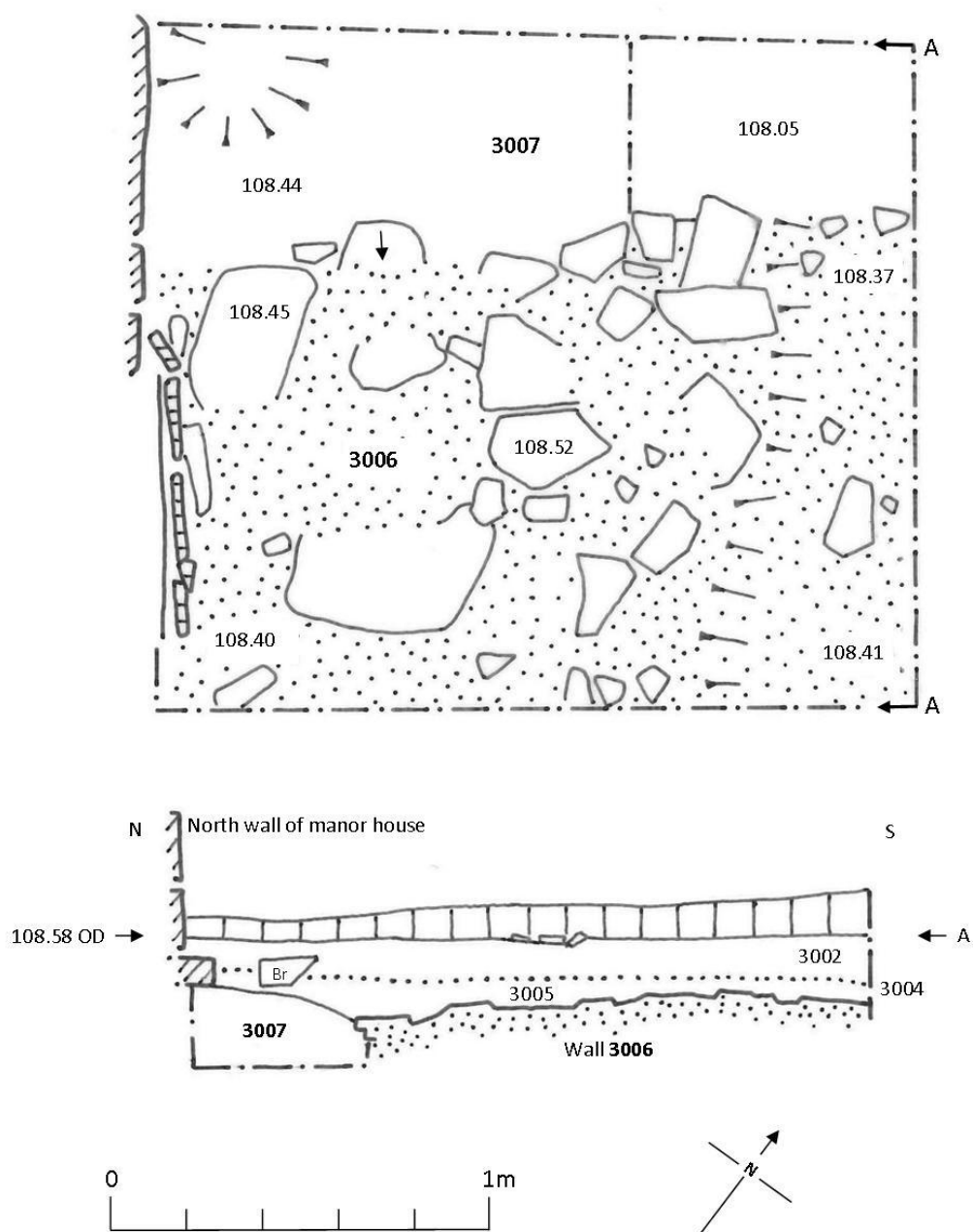


Figure 2: TP3 plan and section, heights are in metres above OD. Br = Brick.



Figure 3: TP3, wall 3006 on the left (south) and the clay deposit 3007 to the right, the scales are 2 metres

7.2 Test Pit 4 / 11

7.2.1 Test pits 4 and 11 in the north-eastern corner of the area were amalgamated to include the whole of the northern part of a room designated as “The Study” in the Country Life floor plan (figure 1). A lift was planned to be installed in this area to allow access to the lower levels of the gatehouse / keep. The size of the trench was originally 3.8m east-west by 2.00m north-south. The area was subsequently increased with small extensions to the south and the removal of the 19th century chimney breast and stack at the eastern end.

7.2.2 Modern debris and post 1939 fire material (4001) was removed to reveal that the whole of the original excavation area was occupied by a mass of masonry and solid lime mortar similar to the masonry in TP3 (4002, figures 4 and 6). It continued under the north wall of the manor house (4008) and under the transverse north-south wall to the west (4009), in both cases serving as a foundation for those walls. The top of wall 4002, where it acted as a foundation below wall 4009, was between 0.36m and 0.27m above the general level of the surviving wall top elsewhere (figure 6).

7.2.3 A small extension to the south exposed four to five courses of the face of the wall to a depth of about 0.60m (figure 5), further facing was buried below building collapse /

demolition rubble (4004). The wall face at this point was well constructed of large dressed sandstone blocks up to 0.60m by 0.15m set in lime mortar. An extension to the east and the subsequent removal of the chimney stack (4007) confirmed that this wall was built butting up to the gatehouse / keep tower.

7.2.4 Given the size of the wall, at least 3.50m wide, and the angle and relationship with the gatehouse / keep this must be the 13th century castle curtain wall. It is interesting that there is a low plinth on the outside of the north wall of this bay of the manor house, the only place where this occurs, and this may be a remodelling of the underlying curtain wall.

7.2.5 It is by no means certain that the masonry features in TP3 (3006) and TP4 / 11 (4002) are the same structure. They have the same character / build but given their proximity and the angles of the front of the wall of 4002 and the rear of 3006 it is difficult to reconcile the physical relationship between the two. If they are both sections of the curtain wall there would have to be a very sharp turn to accommodate these angles. It remains possible therefore that 3006 is part of a building or structure within the curtain wall and that 4002 continues west to the north of TP3.



Figures 4 and 5: TP4/11, Wall 4002 from the south and detail of the wall face, the scales are 2m, 1m and 0.5m (black and white)

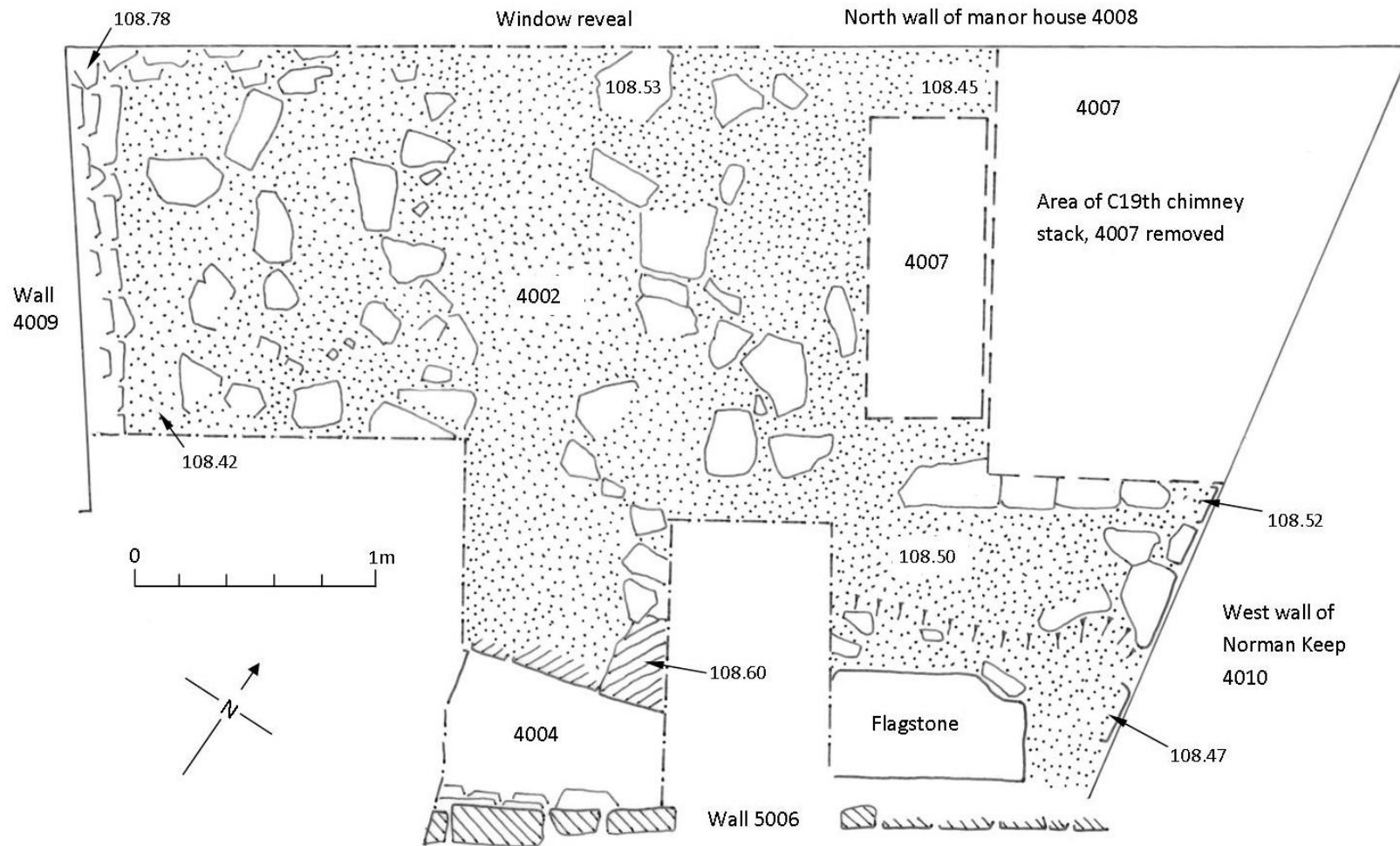


Figure 6: TP4/11, curtain wall 4002.

7.3 Test Pit 5

- 7.3.1 TP5 was located against the eastern wall of the derelict section of the mansion house where on the outside of this wall there is the junction with the south-western corner of the Norman gatehouse / keep tower (figure 1). Whilst it is not clear exactly what alterations have taken place it appears that this corner of the keep was removed when the Jacobean house or an earlier predecessor was constructed. Along with the lift (see 7.2.1 above) it is planned to create access to the cellar by a set of steps and landings along the southern and eastern walls of the mansion house.
- 7.3.2 TP5 was located to test the implications of providing that access. Given that the cellar floor is 2.5m below the current floor levels of the eastern derelict area there was a high probability of encountering archaeological deposits or structures, including perhaps the lower surviving courses of the corner of the keep. Immediately before the 1939 fire the area examined by the test pit would have been below the Jacobean staircase.
- 7.3.3 Removal of recent debris / overburden and deliberate backfilling revealed a number of different masonry and structural elements (Figure 7). The earliest of these may be the substantial flagstone floor (5008) associated with a set of two stone steps (5007) rising to the north of the floor. The upper (most northern) of these has been cut through on the north by later steps descending into the cellar (5009).
- 7.3.4 The sunken lower area, “cupboard under the stairs”, is defined on the west side by a low wall (5004) which is plastered on the eastern internal side. It stands a maximum of 0.78m high above the flag stone floor level. A wall of similar construction, a possible return of 5004, was revealed to the north running east to west (5006) this consists of only three courses of regular walling set on three or four courses of foundations which in turn sit on earlier demolition / collapse rubble (4004). These are likely to be sleeper walls for the former staircase and partitions separating the cellar access and the “Study” in the north-east corner from the main hall area, these are shown in the 1914 Country Life photograph (figure 8).
- 7.3.5 A remnant flagstone floor (5005) was recorded butting up to the wall facing stones of both the north-south wall (5004) and the east-west wall (5006). This floor is at the same level as the surviving pre 1939 flag floors within other parts of the derelict area.
- 7.3.6 The angle of the lower floor level flags 5008 and the steps 5007 do not correspond to either the eastern mansion house wall or the internal partition wall 5004. Whilst they appear to be later than the main east wall it is possible that they were laid in reference to an earlier internal arrangement not now apparent within the later layout. Further work is planned in Phase 2 of the evaluation to investigate the extent and nature of these features.
- 7.3.7 The lower area had been deliberately infilled – architectural stones, lintels and capping stones from the gables had been carefully stacked in the base and these had subsequently become covered by a mixed soil and rubble deposit (5003) containing modern glass. The final layer was a pea gravel layer (5002) this was retained at the north end by a rough dry stone wall (5011) just to the south of the cellar steps.

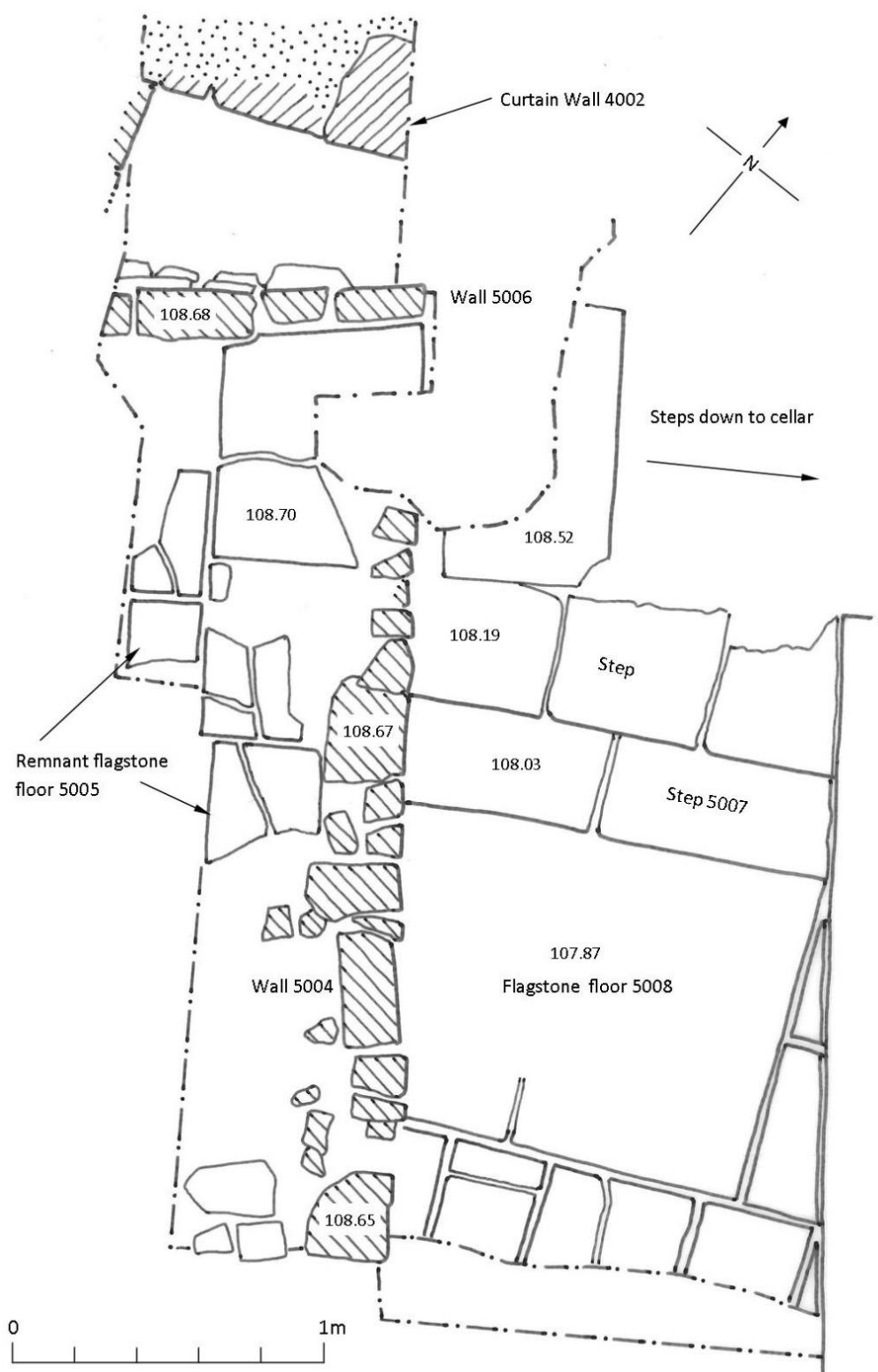


Figure 7: TP5 plan.



Figure 8: TP5 showing wall 5005 on the left, flagstone floor and steps 5008 and 5007, the scales are 2m and 1m

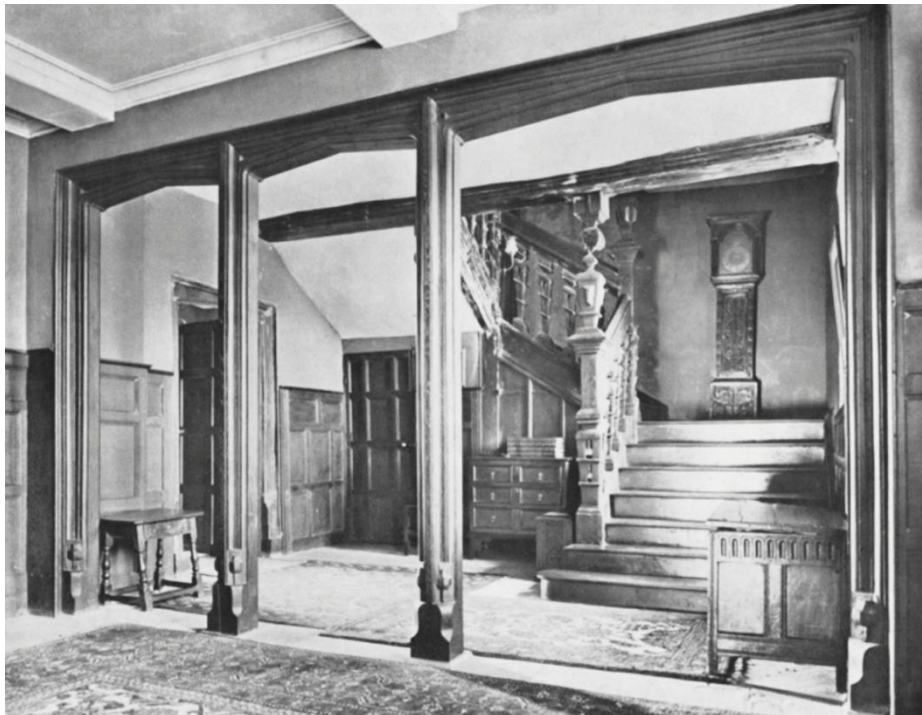


Figure 9: Jacobean staircase and adjacent partitions, these are probably supported by the walls in TP5

7.4 Test Pit 6

- 7.4.1 Located in south-east corner of the western bay of the derelict area (figure 1) TP6 was placed to investigate the foundations of the south and the east wall of the manor house and the reason for the large crack in the wall to the east.
- 7.4.2 The earliest deposit recorded, some 0.50m below current floor levels, was a densely packed layer of sub-angular sandstone rubble in a matrix of firm clay (6013). This was overlain by a semi cemented compact layer of fine gravel and sand (6009). Context 6013 was cut into by the foundation trench for the southern wall of the manor house however it is not clear if 6009 was also cut by the trench or simply faded out (the relationship was only investigated in the small slot shown in figure 10).
- 7.4.3 There is a possibility that this deposit might represent a construction level or surface and be associated with the erection of the wall 6012. The surface of the deposit sloped significantly towards the trench, suggesting that the trench may have been open at the time of deposition. The character of the foundation wall was good quality faced clay bonded sandstone blocks (figure 12). The quality is better than might be expected for foundations and it is possible that this might be an earlier wall later utilised as a foundation for the southern wall of the Jacobean mansion.
- 7.4.4 The foundation trench was backfilled with a firm silty clay with sandstone fragments (6010) which overlay 6013 and part of 6009. The clay deposit above this (6008, see section drawing below) was a charcoal and mortar flecked clay marl containing a significant quantity of large animal bone, it also produced the occasional oyster shell, three sherds of unglazed pottery and a perforated stone roof tile.
- 7.4.5 Above the clay deposit 6008 two layers of grey green silty sand (6004 and 6007) were separated by a horizon of lime mortar with a sandy clay matrix (6005). The upper sand layer 6004 was a levelling deposit for a brick floor or sub-floor that lies immediately below the partially surviving flag stone floor which is believed to be 19th century. The earlier sand layer 6007 may relate to a previous floor that lay at a slightly lower level and the intervening mortar layer may represent a construction, alteration or demolition event.
- 7.4.6 The inner side of the east wall at this point is clearly an addition to an existing wall. Its foundations are minimal, consisting of one course of squared sandstone blocks (figure 10, section).

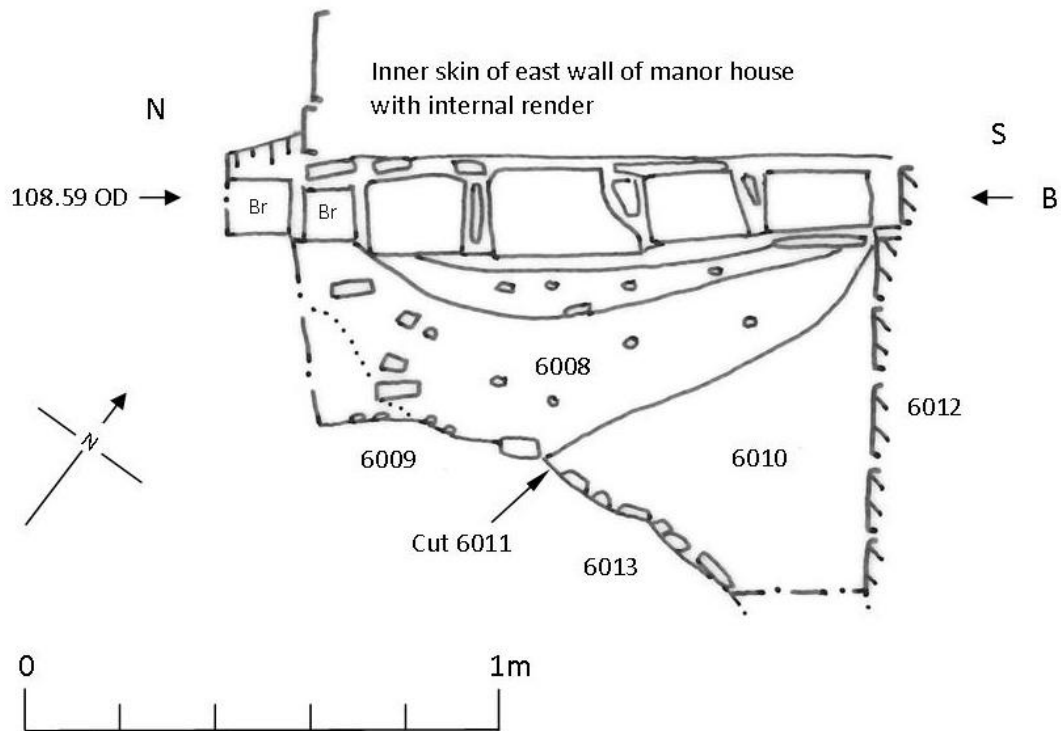
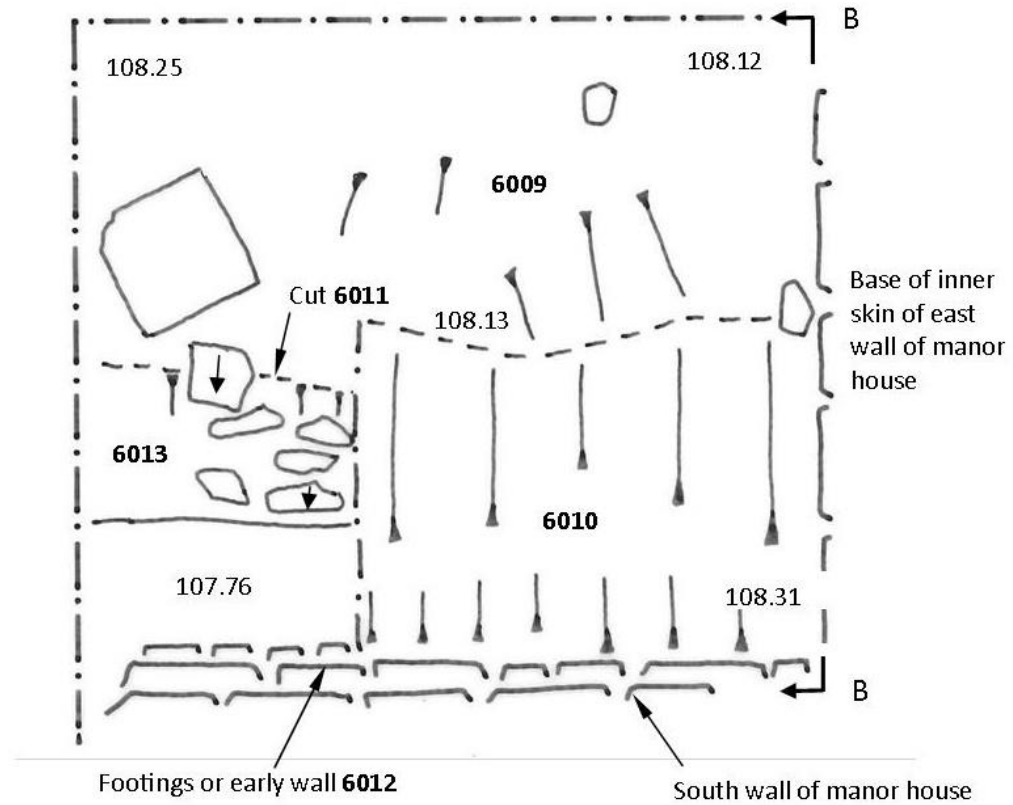


Figure 10: TP6 plan and section, Br = Brick.



Figure 11: TP6 from the west, context 6009 on the left, the clay fill of the foundation trench 6010 and the underlying rubble deposit 6013 can be seen. Scales are 1m and 0.5m



Figure 12: TP6 from the north showing detail of the wall build and the offset wall above. The brick floor can be seen on the right underlying surviving flagstones. Scales are 1m and 0.5m

7.5 Conclusions

- 7.5.1 The evaluation has clearly confirmed that, in this part of the mansion house at least, there are substantial and well preserved structural remains surviving just below Victorian floor levels. The earliest of these is the medieval castle curtain wall probably constructed in the 13th century. Other structures such as those in TP5 relate to various phases of the later mansion house although the exact date of these is not clear.
- 7.5.2 The limited size of the test pits precludes definitive interpretation of a number of other archaeologically significant deposits but probable occupation and construction deposits were also recorded including potentially part of the Norman defensive rampart.

8. The Finds

- 8.1 Finds that might be of significance to the dating or interpretation of specific contexts have been mentioned in the text above. However there is a lead object that was recovered from the junction of the Norman gatehouse / keep tower and the later curtain wall during removal of the modern debris that could be significant in the history of the castle in the 1640s. This is a lead powder box, or bandolier, top. These objects have been specifically associated with English Civil War garrison or skirmish sites and the presence of one here suggests a garrison at Hay Castle at some point during the Civil War.
- 8.2 There are no finds that are in need conservation treatment. A small amount of pottery will need specialist identification (five sherds at present) and it is considered that the animal bone, mostly from the same context as the majority of the pottery, is also worth specialist identification. Publication of finds will be within the final evaluation report.

Acknowledgements

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My thanks also to Peter Reavill, Will Hughes and Graham Webb for information and comments pertaining to the Civil War powder box top and its historical implications.

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Appendix 1

The project archive consists of -

38 Context sheets

10 Field drawings

203 digital photographs (jpeg & Raw/Tiff) to be selectively reduced

29 Bags of finds

Context register (Excel file)

Drawing Register (Excel file)

Photographic register (Excel file)

This report