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HOPTON CASTLE SHROPSHIRE:

a survey of the earthworks

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HOPTON CASTLE
SHROPSHIRE

A SURVEY OF THE EARTHWORKS

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NMR No: SO 37 NE 27

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Introduction

Hopton Castle (SO 367 779: NMR SO 37 NE 27) is approximately 10 miles west of Ludlow between the valleys of the Clun and the Teme (Fig 1). The castle itself lies in the bottom of a small valley at about 150m OD, at the point where the valley widens out into a substantial bowl, surrounded by hills. Here the brook is forced to turn sharply to the south to reach the Clun just above Leintwardine. The underlying geology of the valley bottom is gravel to a depth of more than 20m (Mr Williams, pers comm), while the valley sides are of Silurian strata below a very thin soil cover. These rocks have been extensively quarried.

Early settlement is represented by a pair of late prehistoric enclosures (NMR SO 37 NE 53 and 70), visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs (e.g. NMR 15167/17 and CPT 16878/335), to the south-east of the castle and a scatter of prehistoric stone tools, especially along the ridge to the north (NMR SO 37 NE 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 52).

With the exception of work by Curnow (1989) and Remfry (1994), little previous archaeological or historical research has been carried out at Hopton Castle.

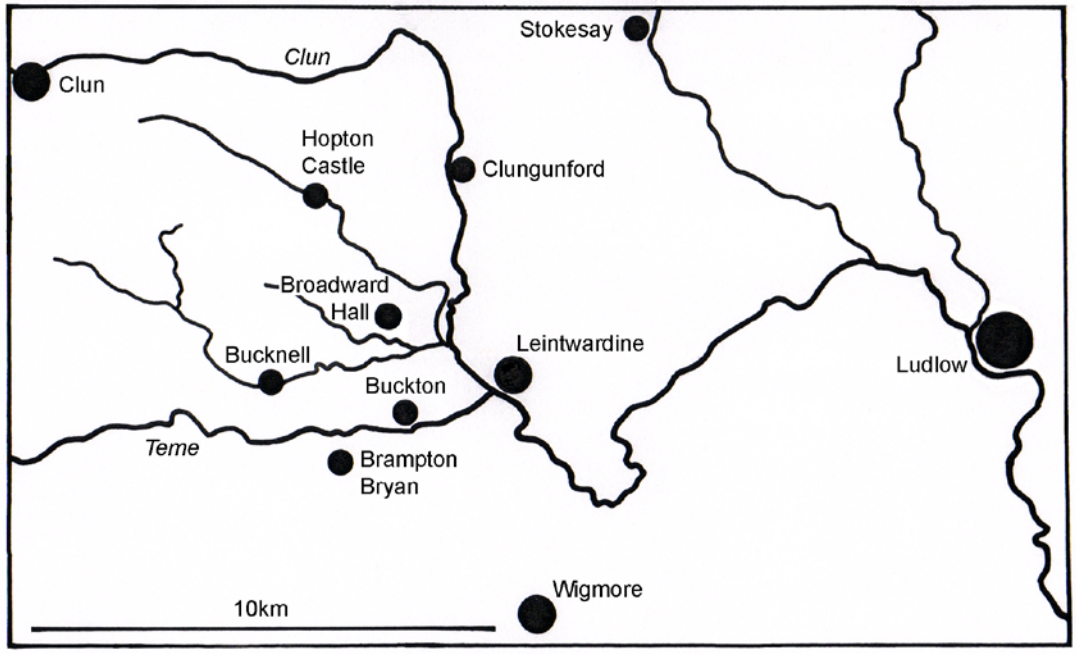

Fig 1: general location map

The village

Hopton is mentioned in Domesday as *Opetune* (Gelling with Fox 1990, 159) but whether this refers to a nucleated settlement on the present site is doubtful. The affix 'Castle' (first recorded in the 16th century - *ibid*) might suggest that this settlement is differentiating itself from another Hopton, now lost, or from a scatter of minor settlements within 'Hopton'. There were possibly settlements near Cresswell Farm (Bird 1977, 129) and near Broadward Hall (NMR SO 37 NE 41). The name was apparently recorded as 'Hopton on Clun' in the late 14th century (Gelling with Fox 1990, 159), so a position closer to the river might be indicated. On the other hand, it has to be considered whether either of these locations, beyond the narrow section of the tributary valley, is likely to have given rise to a 'hop' name. The tithe map (Shropshire Archives PF139/2) records a field name 'The Hope' to the south of the castle. It also has to be admitted that further survey has not yet confirmed the existence of a deserted settlement at either Cresswell or Broadward Hall (NMR SO 37 NE 41 and 59), though a possible moat has been noted near Cresswell Cottages (NMR SO 37 NE 74). However, it may be that settlement was largely or entirely dispersed in this area. Hopton Castle is a

hamlet rather than a village, and there is at present no nucleated settlement to the west of Hopton.

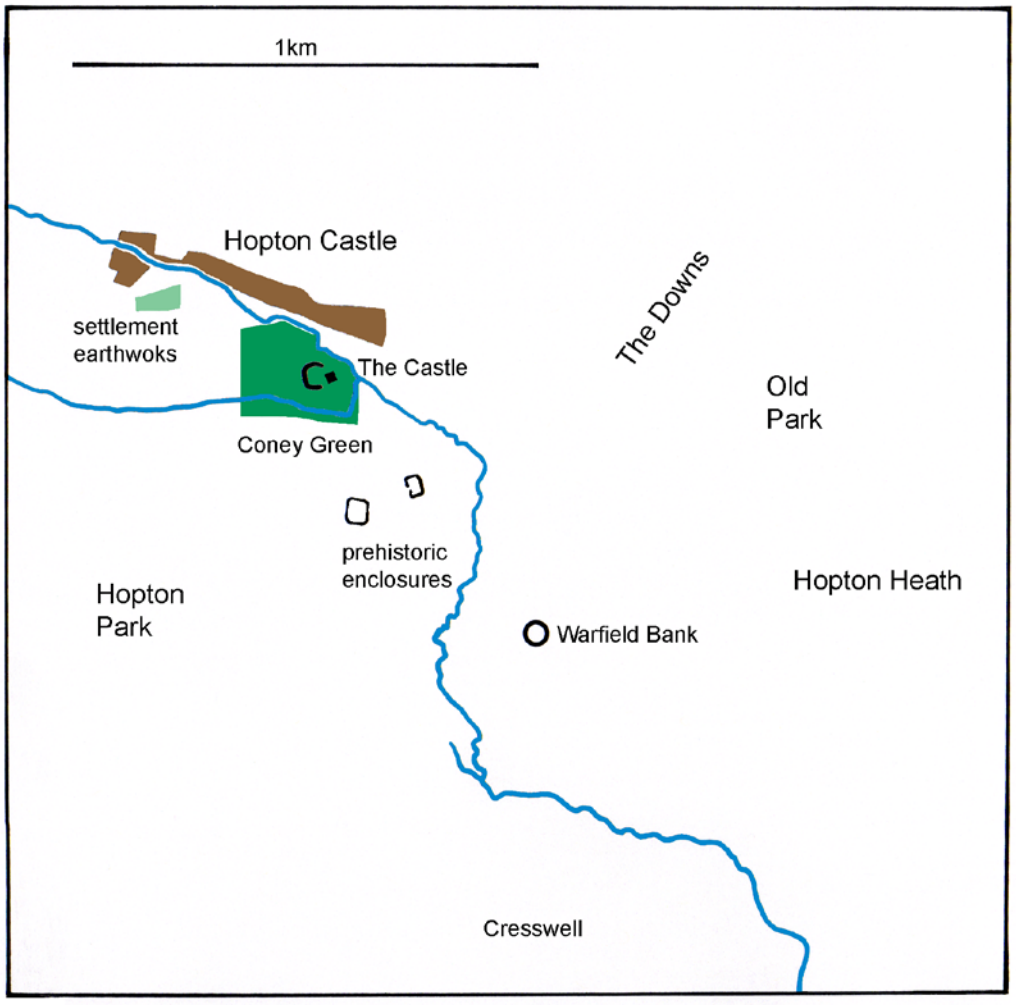

Fig 2: named places and archaeological features around Hopton Castle; north to top; the surveyed area is highlighted in dark green

Hopton was, in the medieval period, a chapelry of Clun and did not become a parish until comparatively late – the present church was built in 1871, though there was a predecessor on the site at least by the 1830s (tithe map). None of the existing buildings in the village apparently predates the 17th century, though there are earthworks at the western end of the settlement (in a former orchard to the south of the road – SO 363 781) that might suggest settlement shrinkage or shift (Fig 2). These consist of two or more sunken yards accompanied by slight platforms, possibly for buildings; they have not been surveyed. It is notable that the older houses are set back from the village street and slightly raised, well above the stream, whereas in at least one instance ancillary buildings have been built down the slope *in front* of the houses. This reversal of the expected pattern suggests both that flooding may have been a problem and that the brook might have been used as a power source for small mills on a domestic scale, though no evidence for this is now apparent. There are extensive traces of former ridge-and-furrow cultivation around Hopton Castle (e.g. NMR SO 37 NE 74 and 75), though much of this has now been ploughed out.

Interestingly, both settlement and roads are now confined to the north side of this part of the valley. This might reflect a natural preference for the south-facing slopes but it may also arise from the creation of Hopton Park on the southern flank of the valley above the castle. There was another deer park to the east (see below).

The castle

The castle is now dominated by the single remaining tower (Fig 3 - **A**). This building has perplexed architectural historians but current opinion seems to be that it is a structure of late 13th-century or early 14th-century date built to an archaic model (Curnow 1989). Curnow calls it a tower house but points out that it is not self-sufficient; it is a grand lordly residence but it relied on the existence of ancillary service buildings. He notes its similarities to the tower at Clun Castle, to Acton Burnell and to Wattlesborough. Its visual similarity to a Norman keep, which has fooled some (e.g. Pevsner 1958, 153), is perplexing when viewed from a traditional architectural historian's standpoint, but deliberately archaic building forms had resonance in the later medieval period, a time when the elite was constantly harking back to a – partly imagined and romanticised – past (Huizinga 1982, 39). The desire on the part of the builder, probably the ascendant Walter de Hopton, to make his new house look like a Norman *donjon* is very understandable in the terms of his own time. This also has implications for the form of the enclosure in which the tower sits. The tower was refurbished probably in the early 17th century by the then owners, the Wallops. A 'new brick house' is mentioned (Curnow 1989, 93-4). No certain trace of this has been identified but Samuel More's account of the siege implies that it was in the 'bailey' (and see below for a probable location). While the entrance to the tower is on the north, the principal approach to the castle will presumably have been from the east, from the direction of Ludlow, via the Teme valley. This is discussed further below.

The earthworks surrounding the tower are complex, and probably of several phases. First there is the mound on which the tower stands or perhaps, as Curnow suggests, in which it sits, the mound having possibly been, in part at least, thrown around the base of the tower. Again this would be a deliberately archaic element, emulating a motte. Curnow cites Skenfrith as a parallel in this respect. Lydford in Devon is another (Creighton 2002, 72) and Marshwood, Dorset, may be a further example (Bowden 2005). This is important if a motte is not just a form of defensive structure, but a symbol of lordship. It is worth noting, however, that the mound at Hopton is not of great substance. Though to the north-east it stands over 3m above the natural ground surface, such is the natural slope here that to the south-west the top of the mound adjacent to the garderobe chute is almost level with what would have been the original ground surface – the appearance of a mound being provided mostly by the excavation of a deep ditch. The possibility remains, nevertheless, that this is a motte which has been cut down and modified for the reception of the tower. The mound has also been disturbed by the Civil War siege operations, when the garderobe chute in the south-west turret, presumably originally screened from view, was exposed and used for ingress and the tower was undermined. The undermining might account for the damage to the base of the tower masonry, especially on the north-east or south-east angles; alternatively it might be represented by the cut into the mound at the south-west corner, immediately below the west-facing window which has subsequently been enlarged to a doorway.

To the west of the tower is a heavily ditched and ramparted sub-rectangular enclosure (**B**) with rounded corners. It contains the remains of at least one corner tower (**a**), curtain wall (**b**-**b**), and internal buildings (**d**, **d2**). To the north its ditch is absent, ending abruptly at the north-west corner, possibly having been filled in. At the extreme north-eastern end of (**b**-**b**) is an enlarged terminal, perhaps a medieval tower or a Civil War work. This enclosure has generally been accepted as a bailey, on the assumption that the mound was a motte in origin. Even Curnow argues that the castle must have been founded by the mid-12th century, 'commanding, as it does, an eastward-running valley which opens south-eastward successively to the broad Clun and Teme valleys … it is only some four miles from Radnorshire' (1989, 83). While this is true, it is a very minor valley between the much larger and more open Clun and Teme valleys, and is perhaps unlikely ever to have been a major routeway. In any case, if Remfry's suggestion about Warfield Bank (see below) is correct, that would provide the earlier castle that Curnow believes is demanded by the situation. (There are other mottes, mostly diminutive, in the immediate area at Clungunford, Bucknell and Buckton, but even closer at Broadward Hall.) However, the assumption that a site at the end of a valley leading down from the Welsh border must have had a castle in the 12th

century is just that – an assumption. Therefore, though we can accept that this enclosure (**B**) could be classified as a bailey, or – in the absence of a real motte – as a ringwork, an alternative suggestion, that this enclosure is contemporary with the tower and its mound, and that it is another deliberately archaic element, is intriguing though it finds, as yet, no direct supporting evidence. Another way of looking at the same suggestion is to discount the military nature of this enclosure and to see it as the manorial *curia* with a substantial but not seriously defensive perimeter. Whether such a distinction would have been meaningful to the medieval mind is, however, doubtful (Coulson 2003, esp 162). The function of the buildings within this enclosure is unknown; the presence of service buildings and stabling is demanded by the form of the tower but the chapel of Hopton might also have been located here. (Curnow suggests, but without tangible evidence, that one of the corner chambers in the tower might have been a chapel (1989, 96).) However, the large rectangular – almost square – central depression (**d2**) does not sit comfortably within this enclosure, nor does its width suggest a medieval building. It is probably a later intrusion and could be the foundation and cellar of the 'new brick house' mentioned in early 17th-century documents, though there is now no visible sign of brick in its structure. This suggestion is strengthened by the clear indication from Samuel More's narrative that the 'new brick house' was within this enclosure (see Appendix). Also implied by this narrative is that the 17th-century steward's house was adjacent to the 'new brick house' and might therefore be represented by (**d**).

Beyond this enclosure, to the west and south, is a further, less well defined L-shaped space (**C**, **C**) that has been called an outer bailey. The designation is less convincing. The enclosure of this area may be unfinished. Alternatively it might be a garden compartment. A tower such as the one at Hopton demands, in the light of recent scholarship (e.g. Everson 1996; 1998; Taylor 2000), a contemporary garden and other ornamental landscape features (including a deer park or parks). A roughly rectangular space (**e**), slightly depressed, in the south-western corner of this area looks superficially like a building platform but this may be misleading; the very sharp embankment forming its southern side carries what appears to be a water channel and this feature might be an element in the complex water management aspects of the site. The depression itself could be a small pond. A mound (**e2**) in the angle of (**C**-**C**), butting the ditch of the bailey (**B**), might be a garden feature or a Civil War work, possibly the 'Brick Tower' mentioned by More.

The southern side of this space (**C**) is formed by a substantial earthwork hollow (**D**) that has had a gully cut along its base, carrying the small tributary stream that joins the main stream beyond the castle. This substantial earthwork must have had a function beyond canalising the stream. It is almost certainly an ornamental water feature. A detached earthwork (**f**) forms a suitably angular termination for this water feature and a spur (**f2**) marks the position of a dam dividing this from the depression (**E**), which would have formed another formal ornamental water feature at a slightly lower level. The steep southern flank of (**D**) may mark a change in underlying geology, as well as being of archaeological significance. The flank of Titterhill beyond is marked on historic and modern maps as 'Hopton Park'. Field name evidence from the tithe award shows that the park extended down to the flank of the castle, with an intervening warren ('Coney Green' – the field currently under arable immediately to the south of the castle.) This park extended to this earthwork and its continuation to the west (not surveyed). The top of this southern scarp is marked by the remnants of a hedge. Between this and the existing field boundary is a flat platform. The existing field boundary might be a replacement for the hedge at the top of the scarp or the two might originally have co-existed, emphasising the coherence of this high linear platform. The opposite, north, side of (**D**) is flanked by a raised bank, presumably a walk. At either end of this bank is a mound. These mounds (**e3**, **e4**) are now rather smoothed and amorphous but they might have supported garden pavilions or similar structures. The resistance data shows high anomalies on these mounds with moderate resistance along the bank between (information from Stratascan).

The large rectangular pond (**F**) to the south-east of the tower, while it appears to have been modified, is probably part of the original ornamental scheme, linking with the ornamental water features mentioned, (**D**) and (**E**). It is possible that this pond is shown on Buck's 1731 view of the Castle (Curnow 1989, pl 2). Its eastern end has been modified, perhaps to make it more suitable as a beast pond, by reducing the steepness of its banks and pushing out its

retaining dam to (**g**). This has also destroyed the original north end of (**E**). On the northern flank of (**F**) is a building platform (**g2**) with remains of walls on three sides. Conventionally this looks as though it is cut by the pond but this relationship is not entirely clear. The floor of (**C**) to the west of (**F**) is dished and it is possible that there was another pond here, mirroring (**F**).

To the north of the enclosure (**B**) are some enigmatic elongated mounds (**h**), partly overlying what would have been the ditch of enclosure (**B**). They contain much stone and they look superficially like dumps of discarded building material. However, their neat arrangement argues against this simple premise. Their sides are steep and sharp-edged, so they may not be of great antiquity. This suggestion is reinforced if this section of the ditch of (**B**) did exist and was later backfilled. As there is no sign of an entrance elsewhere through the earthworks of (**B**) and (**C**), it may well have been in this area and these earthworks are perhaps disguising the position of a gatehouse. They may, additionally, relate to the Civil War siege. Though they bear no relationship to the regular fieldworks that are expected in such circumstances, they might well be the result of a hurried effort by a small garrison to render an obvious approach to their stronghold more difficult for an assailant, as described in Samuel More's account (see Appendix). Alternatively, they might represent a building parallel to and butting against the bailey wall. The geophysical data do not appear to support the latter hypothesis (information from Stratascan).

To the east and north-east of the tower is a relatively flat area (**G**) bordered by a small river-cliff above the stream. This area has numerous slight earthworks, many of them representing drainage or other efforts at water management, perhaps relatively recent. There are, however, other features, notably possible building platforms (**j**, **k**), a slight counterscarp to the mound (**m**) and a circular feature (**n**), apparently the remains of a large stone-built structure. This has been interpreted as medieval corner tower, on the assumption that the 'bailey' once extended this far to the east (Remfry 1994, 7). The evidence for this is not especially compelling. An alternative explanation, to look for other symbols of lordship that we might expect to find at a place such as Hopton, is that this is the remains of a dovecote. It would be an exceptionally large one. A further alternative is that it is another of the outworks rather imprecisely listed by More, specifically the one designed to retain the garrison's access to the water. A further possibility, raised by the gradiometer data, is that it is an industrial structure (information from Stratascan).

The later medieval history of Hopton is obscure but the castle appears briefly in the limelight during the Civil War, when it was garrisoned for Parliament, and besieged and captured for the Crown in 1644 ((Bigglestone 2000, 162-4; Blakeway 1831, 216-20; Nichol 1972; see Appendix). The capture was succeeded by a brutal massacre of the garrison, which gave rise to the ironic phrase 'Hopton quarter.' The parliamentary commander was spared, being exchanged for a royalist prisoner. Another officer attempted to buy his life for cash but was stabbed to death. The soldiers were stripped naked and mutilated, and were thrown into a 'muddy pit'; their enemies threw stones at them whenever they attempted to arise, until they were all dead. The story is recorded with circumstantial detail that compels belief, even though it comes from a biased source. The officers were taken away from Hopton but the site of the massacre is not recorded. However, More's account makes it clear that the massacre took place within three hours of the surrender. As the castle is on free-draining gravel a 'muddy pit' was perhaps not conveniently to hand (but see below); it would be unsafe to assume that this mass grave is necessarily at the castle but it cannot far away.

Physical remains of this Civil War siege ought to be apparent. In the week before the siege the defenders had constructed an outwork of bricks (Curnow 1989, 93 n8) and other works (see Appendix); the besiegers attempted to undermine the tower and may have constructed other fieldworks. Either of these activities could have left traces but neither is likely to have been substantial. The garrison consisted of only 20 or 30 men and the mining only occurred at the end of the operations.

There might have been previous, unrecorded, attempts to improve the defences of the site (especially as the Castle had been carefully provisioned) but More would probably have

mentioned them. Civil War activities might account for the two approximately triangular low platforms to the east of the castle (**p**, **q**) though these might also be ornamental features. Both show as areas of moderate resistance (information from Stratascan). The northern side of the upper part of (**p**) appears to have been a continuation of the steep flank of the canal (**D**). This alignment is continued intermittently to the west (not surveyed) along the field boundary. The line may mark the junction between gravel and bedrock along the valley side but it has been artificially enhanced and stands in places as a very substantial lynchet. As noted above, this is probably the boundary of the deer park.

A number of mature trees surrounding the castle give a park-like appearance to the site. This appearance is seen in the Buck engraving of 1731 and is presumably the legacy of the Wallops and of Thomas Beale, the owner at the time of the Bucks' depiction, and of subsequent owners of the site.

Other earthworks

To the west of the castle are further earthworks consisting of a leat (**r**-**r**), some low spread banks (**s**, **t**, **w**) and at least one track (**x**-**x**). This track is shown on the 1st edition OS map leading to a ford across the stream almost opposite the road to Twitchen. This track and ford were not marked on the 2nd edition map but the gate in the hedge where the track passed into the field to the south is still visible and aerial photographs (e.g. CPT 6034/570) show the track still in use intermittently until the end of the 1980s. Another route, diverging from this one, runs slightly further to the west (**y**-**y**). Both routes are apparent in the geophysical data, as well as in the earthworks. The leat (**r**-**r**), which was clearly intended to bring water from the stream to the west, appears to be unfinished, fading out at its southern end, but this may be deceptive – the resistance data, at least, suggests its continuation (information from Stratascan). The low banks (**s** and **t**) are probably plough headlands and possibly mark the boundary of arable against the land reserved to the castle. Bank (**w**) might also be an, earlier, headland but it is narrower and slighter than the others. Ridge-and-furrow is faintly visible on the ground (and rather more clearly on aerial photographs, e.g 540/631 4056 & 4066, taken in 1952) to the west of these banks but has not been surveyed.

The latest features on the site are a number of broad circular gullies about 3m in diameter, mainly in the angle between (**x**-**x**) and (**y**-**y**) – the sites of animal feeding troughs.

Further earthworks beyond the area of the current survey also need to be considered. The possible signs of farmsteads at the western end of the current settlement have already been mentioned. A circular enclosure on a locally prominent knoll at Warfield lies only 700m from the castle. Remfry, seizing on a document of 1264 which mentions 'castles' at Hopton, suggests that this is a ringwork (1994, 3). While this is possible it is by no means certain – a single documentary reference with the word 'castles' in the plural may be an error or a mistake in copying – but it is not unusual for an early earthwork castle to be replaced by a later one in a more congenial location and this may be what has happened at Hopton. A Norman ringwork at Warfield, which incidentally would look over the site of the supposed settlement at Cresswell, might have been replaced by Hopton Castle and the transitional period might be represented by the documentary reference cited. Alternative explanations for the Warfield earthwork are that it is a Civil War emplacement constructed by the royalist besiegers of Hopton Castle or that it is a tree planting ring of 18th - or 19th -century date. Unfortunately it has not proved possible during the current survey to visit this site on the ground and the existing aerial photographic evidence is inconclusive.

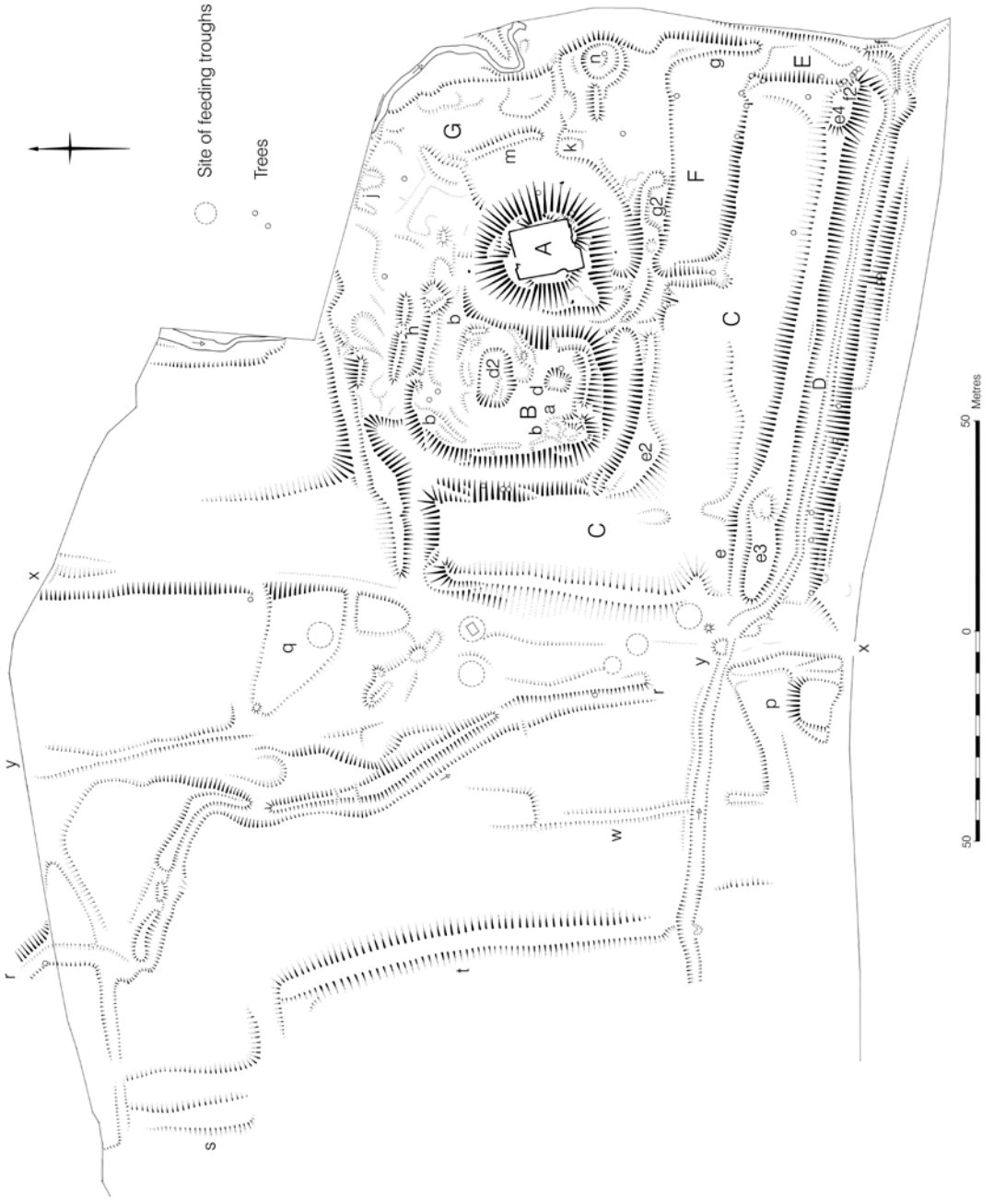

Fig 3: survey plan, reduced from original at 1:500

Discussion

There are three possible origins for Hopton Castle. It may have been built in the late 11th or 12th century as a motte-and-bailey castle. It may, alternatively, have originated at the same period as a ringwork. However, it may have been built *de novo* in the late 13th or early 14th century, incorporating deliberately archaic elements in its plan-form as well as its architecture. What is visible on the site now is probably best described as a very substantial manorial complex, with considerable architectural pretension, a *nouveau riche* castle of the late 13th century indicating pretensions to ancestry. This is not to belittle the place: it is an extremely interesting example of building in a deliberately archaic, chivalric style by an upwardly mobile late 13th -century official. The similarity of the tower to a Norman keep – which gave Curnow, in jocular vein, the excuse to present his paper about it to Allen Brown (1989, 81) – is highly significant. The Hoptons were establishing a position in a changing society, where symbolic reference to a heroic past was already becoming important (Huizinga 1982, 39). The possibility remains that there are the remains of a genuine Norman motte-and-bailey castle here, the motte having been cut down and modified to form a suitably raised platform for the tower. If this mound was built anew for the tower the other possibility remains, that what is now seen as the 'bailey' (**B**) originated as a ringwork. There is a further possible refinement to this scheme: in the fields to the south of the castle and within 500m are the remains of two rectilinear late prehistoric enclosures with rounded corners, now visible only as cropmarks (NMR SO 37 NE 53 and 70)) – the enclosure of Hopton Castle could be occupying the site of, and deriving its size and form from, a third prehistoric enclosure. Such an enclosure might have been seen as embodying a former seat of lordship (see, e.g. Bowden *et al* 2005, 36-7).

Three Walter Hoptons, father, son and grandson, succeeded each other as the most prominent members of an active family in and around Shropshire in the 13th century. Unfortunately it is difficult from the existing records to separate their lives but their activities have been summarised, not without contradiction, by Remfry (1994, 2-6) and by the *Dictionary of National Biography*. The *DNB* attributes all references to Walter Hopton II, while Remfry is inclined to divide them between Walter Hopton II and III. Between them they were: in 1256 coroner; in 1258 one of four Shropshire knights appointed to investigate grievances in the county under the Provisions of Oxford; in 1267-9 sheriff of Shropshire and Staffordshire; before 1270 knighted; in 1271-6 Justice of general eyre in Herefordshire, Staffordshire and Worcestershire; in 1274 a Baron of the Exchequer; in 1274-8 a Justice of the King's Bench; in 1278 Justice in Eyre in Kent and Hertfordshire (Remfry) and one of the justices of a court established to deal with litigation in Wales and the Marches (*DNB*). The Hoptons were at the same time increasing their holdings in the Marches. They held land of both the fitz Alans at Clun and the Mortimers at Wigmore. It was Walter Hopton II (*DNB*) who in 1282 or 83 married Matilda Pantulf, Baroness of Wem. In 1284 he was sent to Ireland by the King on a commission to audit accounts; in 1285-9 he rejoined the general eyre in Essex and in 1290 was appointed to a special commission to hear complaints against the royal officials in London. The careers of both latter Walter Hoptons were marked by trouble, however: accusations of cattle rustling in 1264 and complaints of biased judgements in the late 1270s. In 1290 Walter Hopton II (*DNB*) was convicted of judicial misconduct, imprisoned in the Tower of London (according to Remfry) and fined 500 marks and he seems to have been widowed at about the same time. Upon Hopton's petition the King agreed that the money he had already paid towards his fine should instead count towards a fine to secure the wardship of the lands of his late wife. He was engaged in litigation in 1295 but dead by September 1296 (*DNB*). In 1301 Walter Hopton III was Sheriff of Herefordshire (Remfry). At about this time he was accused of illegally taking away arms, chapel ornaments and furniture from Wem Castle and of cutting down over 1000 oak trees in Wem barony. He died in 1305 and his lands were granted to Robert de la Warde, ending the brief ascendancy of the Hoptons. The castle subsequently descended through the Corbet family to the Wallops.

The robbing of Wem Castle and barony might well, as Remfry suggests (1994, 6), have been linked with the building of the tower and other structures at Hopton. The desire to furnish the castle with (perhaps somewhat antique) artefacts from Wem – if that is how we can interpret that documentary reference – adds to the symbolism that Walter Hopton was trying to establish. Armour and ornaments from a chapel are at least as likely to have had symbolic as practical significance (Huizinga 1982, 70-1).

Hopton is one of a group of substantial new houses in Shropshire built in the generation after Edward I's conquest of Wales: other examples include Acton Burnell, Stokesay and possibly Wattlesborough. Its probable date also coincides with the construction of new accommodation at Ludlow and Clun castles.

Understanding of the site at Hopton hinges very much on the question of water flow and management. The free-draining nature of the underlying gravel might suggest that the site has always been dry (Mr Williams pers comm). Against this is the proximity of the stream and its tributary, and the existence of the pond (**F**), which was retaining some water even at the time of the present survey, towards the end of summer. A higher water table in pre-modern times may have made this site a relatively wet location, the ditches around mound (**A**) and enclosure (**B**) (especially if clay-lined) could have held water and the low-lying area to the east of the castle may even have been a marsh. Aerial photographs show what may be drainage channels in this area and further leats on the slopes above (e.g. 540/631 4065 & 4066; 73 069/608 & 609). The purpose of the very substantial leat (**r**-**r**) must also be considered. It is not part of a water meadow because none of the other necessary components are present. It might be intended to supply a mill at some unknown location but in order to create a useful head of water this would have to be some distance below the castle to the east, and there is therefore no obvious advantage to this course. It may have been an attempt to divert the brook around the west side of the castle to prevent flooding in, or help to drain, the lower lying area to the east of the castle. It is more probably, however, intended to supply the ornamental ponds (**D**, **E** and **F**). The subsidiary stream to the south was dry at the time of survey; a reliable supply of water during the summer would have been absolutely necessary for the success of the ornamental scheme represented by the ponds around the south side of the castle.

Fig 4: view to the Castle from Hopton Park, across 'Coney Green'

The date of these ornamental features requires discussion. They are probably contemporary with the tower. They are coherent with it, in that they could be viewed from the private apartments on the south side of the tower and would form an important element in the view *to*

the tower from the deer park (Fig 4). However, the fact that they are not in precisely the same alignment as the tower would normally be thought to indicate non-contemporanaiety. Special pleading is therefore required if they are to be regarded as part of a coherent scheme. It could be argued, for instance, that the tower is set at a slight angle so that it does not present a flat face to any of the possible walks set out alongside the ponds or the northern arm of (**C**) and that three of the corner turrets are visible, maximising the apparent size of the building, from the most prominent viewpoints. There is nothing in the known later medieval history of the Castle to suggest that such gardens might have been added then. However, the construction of the 'new brick house' in the early 17th century would form another occasion for the laying out of gardens. As this was undertaken by the absentee owner Robert Wallop, 'a linchpin of the parliamentary war effort' (*DNB*) and a man of puritan persuasion, an element of 'quietism' engendered by fishing ponds might be an appropriate element in the design of such gardens (Everson and Williamson 1999, 147-50)). This probably does not explain the origin of the ponds; the scale of them fits the magnificent 13th or 14th-century tower, not the apparently rather modest 17th-century house. However, it could explain the retention of at least one of them, (**F**), when the others had been drained (**D**, **E**) or allowed to silt up (**e** and possibly elsewhere in **C**).

As noted above, the principal approach to the castle was probably from Ludlow along the Teme valley and then through the gap between Warfield Bank and the ridge to the north followed by the modern road. On the tithe map (Shropshire Archives PF139/2) this ridge is called The Downs and a number of fields on its eastern side are called Old Park, indicating the presence of a second deer park here. Fields to the east of this have 'Inclosure' or 'New' names, emphasising the previously open nature of Hopton Heath. The approach to the castle from the river will have been, therefore, across 'wild' open ground, partly flanked by a deer park to the north, before a view of the castle in its watery setting, with another park beyond, was obtained on passing through the gap past Warfield Bank. With the higher hills rising to the west, the castle and its carefully designed surroundings will have appeared as an oasis of civilisation in a wilderness. The question then is how the immediate approach for elite visitors was arranged. It could have been along the raised walk to the south of (**D**), between the warren and the garden, and so around the west side of the complex to the entrance in the north, making an almost complete circuit of the castle (as, famously, at Bodiam Castle, East Sussex (Everson 1996, fig 1)). Alternatively, this walk might have been part of the private space and the approach might have been more direct to the north side. The 'correct' approach to a castle was a matter of significance in the high medieval period (Everson 1996; 2003, 26).

If the low-lying area in the elbow of the brook to the east of the castle was formerly a marsh or even held standing water, this has implications for two phases of the castle's history. It would form a wider suitable watery setting for the Hoptons' chivalric house, especially if the principal approach was as suggested above, though it would also constrain the possible routes very much to the line of the present road. It would also explain partly the difficulty faced by the royalist besiegers in taking the place in 1644. If the eastern side was covered by wet ground, this would support slightly the very tentative suggestion that the banks at (**h**) and the platforms (**p** and **q**) are Civil War works, as they are then on the only practical approaches for an attacker. It also makes it more likely that the 'muddy pit' in which the soldiers of the defeated garrison were murdered was in, or close to, the castle.

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Method of survey

The site was surveyed during September 2005 by Mark Bowden, Nicky Smith, Graham Brown and Amy Martin. Control was established by a three-legged traverse surveyed with a Leica 'total-station'; this fixed the position of all hard detail (boundary fence, the tower, earthfast stones, concrete elements of drainage and the most significant trees on site) and a number of temporary survey markers. The archaeological detail was supplied within this control framework by a combination of plane-tabling with a Wild RK1 self-reducing alidade, and tape-and-offset methods.

Appendix: The siege of Hopton Castle

Brampton Bryan Castle was a parliamentarian stronghold which the royalists had attempted, unsuccessfully, to seize in 1643. The knowledge that they would try again, and that they wished to secure Hopton as a preliminary step, led to the garrisoning of the castle at the beginning of 1644 (Nichol 1972, 19). This narrative is taken largely from the account written by Samuel More, the parliamentarian commander of the garrison, (Blakeway 1831, 217-20), supplemented by material from a parliamentarian broadsheet (Bigglestone 2000, 164).

Samuel More was appointed commander by Mr Robert Wallop, the owner of Hopton Castle, and Lieutenant Wright, commander of Brampton Bryan Castle. More went to Hopton on the evening of Sunday 18th Feb 1644. Mr Phillips arrived on Tuesday 20th 'to help to advize the making some works, in which we were as industrious as men could be for the short time.' Amongst these works were the 'Brick Tower', which they made in the first week 'as a work to front the out wall, and so to the Castle on the other side, from the Castle to the out wall, another to keep the water to us.' [The 'Brick Tower' should be a projection from the bailey wall or beyond its ditch; the use of the term 'tower' is unexpected when the more normal structure at this time would be some form of bastion, but perhaps that is what he meant. The rest of this passage is somewhat obscure but suggests that they built works of some sort on the other (east or north-east?) side of the Castle (meaning the medieval tower), between the Castle and the bailey wall (i.e. within the bailey – this is the one that trapped the attackers during the second assault) and towards the stream (on the east or north-east?) to retain access to the water.]

On Monday 26th Royalist troops arrived, horse first followed within an hour by foot, who approached 'the out walls (we not being able to hinder them, because the work did not flank, being an old wall made round).' [This description would fit the walls of the 'bailey', enclosure (**B**).] The royalists then 'burnt the lodgings where Richard Steward lay – They brought ladders to scale the walls, but upon our killing of three, of which, one on the place [?].' The royalists then demanded the surrender of the castle but More refused to listen to a message sent without formality of 'drum or trumpet'. On Friday 2nd March the royalists 'retreated and went out of the town' but left piquets of horse and foot to watch the castle. At this time the garrison numbered 16, including More and Mr Phillips. [It is not clear whether this also includes Harry Gregory, Mr Wallop's elderly steward, or the two (or more) women who were in the Castle.] Reinforcements from Brampton Bryan, though some were intercepted, brought the numbers up to 31. The enemy 'let us alone, save for some alarms in the nights' until Friday 9th (?) when about 500 royalist horse and foot entered 'the town'. They sent a summons by drum, which More refused, and 'that night they approached part of the wall above two hours before day, where they burnt Richard Steward's chamber, and at the back of a chimney they with pioneers made a breach, which, our centinels discovering, gave the alarm, and there we fought with the enemy at push of pike, throwing stones, and shooting; and they us; after some of them, reported being two hundred, got more of them through the breach, but not within our works, but as in a pinfold in the circumference of their burnt lodging, where we killed many, amongst the rest one Captain Vaughan … then we repulsed them and took six muskets, ten pikes and clubs, which they called round heads, boards many, and six or eight ladders.' Two days later the royalists marched away, but only as far as Clungunford, and again kept guards just out of musket-shot of the castle, 'and so we were quiet almost a week, save for some alarms; then they came again in a full body and entered the town.'

On the next day (Saturday 17th?) there was another inconclusive parley. On the Sunday some royalist artillery arrived and at 8 o'clock on the Monday morning the royalists once again demanded the surrender of the castle 'the which, if we did not yield before the shooting of one piece of ordnance, we must not expect quarter.' Again More refused and the royalists immediately opened fire and continued shooting from 9 o'clock until 5 o'clock, firing 96 shots against the 'out wall and made a breach; but we, on the other side, did work as fast as we could, and placed boughs of trees and earth to hinder their entry. About five o'clock, they approached the breach, which we defended for the space of two hours at least; we fought at push of pike, muskets, and clubs, so that we gave them a repulse with the loss of one man that was killed with a common shot, and three or four that were hurt: but they lost, as they afterwards said, one hundred and fifty of theirs; some said two hundred.' More doubted they

had hurt so many, though he saw many fall, and wagon loads of wounded men were brought into Ludlow, according to one witness. On the next day the royalists, by agreement, collected their dead.

That evening (Tuesday 20th) the royalists 'came to the Brick Tower, and set it on fire.' Being unable to prevent this and apparently feeling that the bailey was now untenable, the garrison 'set Gregory's house on fire; which burning, took hold on the new brick house, and burnt it.' More continues, 'Then we set to make up the door of the Castle, which the enemy perceiving, shot their ordnance and killed one man, and hurt two more. We made up the door, but they brought broom faggots to fire the porch. We threw water to quench it; but for all we could do, the porch burnt, and the door began to fire, which we did not perfectly know till we came out. Our men, weary of working all night, and not out of their clothes for a fortnight's time, and the enemy gotten at us through an house of office on the south side, it was moved we should desire a parley.' This was done and the royalists asked their conditions for surrender. More and Phillips proposed to march out with their arms and ammunition but this was denied – 'we should have no conditions, but yield to the Colonel's mercy.' The garrison consulted together 'and saw so much household stuff with provisions were in the room below and another above, so that we had no space to countermine, and the stairs were made up. Being close to the door where the barricado was, and removed Mr Gregory's provision and stuff, both Mr Phillips, myself, and six more, did plainly hear them working under us; and as the enemy told us, when I was in prison, they had blown us up in two hours.' The garrison agreed to yield 'upon quarter for our lives.' The answer to this was that no other conditions would be yielded to 'but to be referred to Colonel Woodhouse's mercy.' The garrison decided it was better to yield on these terms that to be blown up, expecting only to be made prisoners.

So the garrison surrendered on those terms, asking only for a safe conduct from the violence of the soldiers. They 'came out and stood in order.' More and Phillips were committed to the charge of two officers. 'So whilst the soldiers and Harry Gregory and the rest were tied, we all staid, and then we were bid march. So I went and thought the rest had followed, till I went over the water by Richard Steward's house, and then I looked back and saw none follow.' He was surprised but assumed they were to be examined separately. Only later did he find that they were kept behind. More was questioned by Sir Michael Woodhouse about the number of men in the garrison and their arms and ammunition, and why they had fought. He was then taken, under command of Lieutenant Aldersea, 'to one Glassbrook's house in the upper end of the town.' About an hour later another officer came to ask him what money was hidden in the castle. More said there was none, but the officer threatened him and told him that Phillips had admitted that there was some. More denied any knowledge of it and the officer went away. Later, about three hours after the surrender, Lieutenant Aldersea asked More how many of his soldiers he thought were sent to Shrewsbury. More replied that he supposed all of them but Aldersea told him none were. More was relieved, thinking he meant that they had all been released, but Aldersea 'answered with an oath, they were all killed.' More was fed and given a bed, and in the morning taken to Ludlow where he remained a prisoner until exchanged some time later.

The question about money in the Castle arose because Phillips offered his captors £20 to save his life. They took him into the Castle to get the money but he told them that he would have to send to Brampton Bryan to get it. 'They swore at him and stabbed him. Presently all the rest, being twenty-eight in number, were killed with clubs and such things, after they were stripped naked. Two maids they stripped, and cut them, but some helped them to escape.' A parliamentary news-sheet records that 'the twenty-four soldiers [were] tied back-to-back, and then some of them had their hands cut off; some with a hand, part of an arm, and the rest cut and mangled both on hands and arms, and then all of them thrown into a muddy pit where as often as any of them endeavoured to raise themselves out of the mud, striving to prolong their miserable lives, they were straight by these bloody villains beat down into the mud again with great stones and in this sad manner lamentably perished.' There are differing versions of the massacre and a number of unsubstantiated stories arising from it (Nichol 1972, 20).

Robert Wallop, the owner of the castle, later claimed to have lost over £50,000 through the war (*DNB*).

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