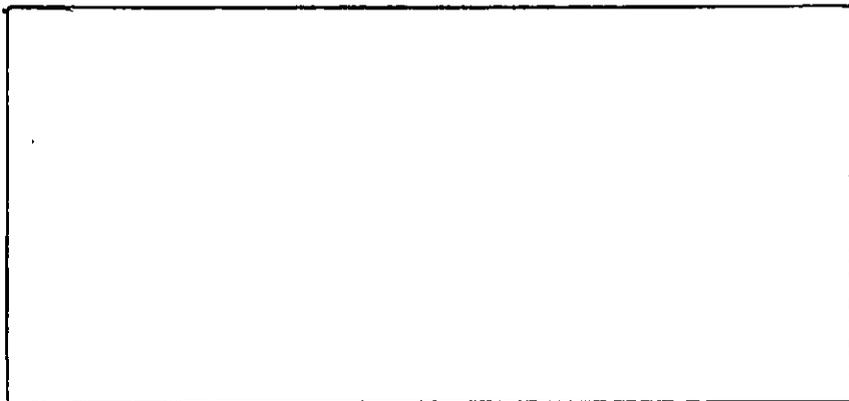


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**An Earthwork Survey at  
Kingshurst Hall - Solihull,  
West Midlands**

# An Earthwork Survey at Kingshurst Hall, West Midlands

## Introduction

The site of a motte and bailey castle and later house at Kingshurst (SP 18 NE 6), centred at SP 16678800, was surveyed at a scale of 1:500 by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) in October 1997 at the request of the West Midlands County Archaeologist. The earthworks, covering an area of 0.36 hectares, are located within a housing estate and appear to have been re-modelled. The bailey was later adapted as a country residence and farm buildings were established to the north.

## Historical Background<sup>1</sup>

The manor of Kingshurst is said to have belonged to the Montforts since at least the reign of Edward III (Dugdale 1730, 1020) and remained in the Montfort family until the 17th century. In 1447-8 Sir Edmund Montfort lived at Kingshurst when the area was also emparked. Kingshurst manor was sold by Edward Moutfort in about 1617-18 to Sir Robert Digby. The demesne lands at this time were extensive and extended into Coleshill Park to the north. The Digbys were, however, absentee landlords, since their major interest lay in Ireland, and Kingshurst was tenanted by the Bull family. This family appear to have been at the lower scale of the gentry class, appending the term 'Gent' to their names. From the 18th century the outlying lands of the Kingshurst estate were assimilated into Coleshill leaving the Bull's holding, Kingshurst Hall Farm Estate, occupying the land between the River Cole, Yorkswood and the Old Chester Road.

Kingshurst Hall, was reputedly built by William Bull (1638 - 1723). The house was built on the bailey and surrounded by a trapezoidal moat with an enclosing brick wall on stone footings. Little is known about the house; nevertheless, a sale catalogue in 1919 described it as 'spacious and substantially built ...', and it was constructed of brick with a tile roof. Internally there was a spacious entrance; a drawing room; dining room; other service rooms; and four bedrooms.

The Bulls were tenants at Kingshurst until the mid-19th century. Thereafter there were a number of tenants. The Townsend family occupied Kingshurst from 1879 until the house was demolished and the area re-developed in 1962.

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<sup>1</sup> The documentary evidence for this section is held by the West Midlands County Archaeologist.

## Previous Archaeological Investigation

In 1961 F.C. Johnson cut an archaeological trench across the mound and moat of the house (Anon 1962). He discovered that the mound was of two phases. In the first phase the mound was less substantial with no trace of a structure; there was, however, a slight revetted ditch and sand floor. In the second phase the mound was heightened and the width of the ditch increased; there was also evidence of an inner palisade and traces of large post-holes in the interior which were interpreted as a possible tower. Pottery from this second phase would suggest a date in the second half of the 13th century. The section was continued across the moat of the house and disclosed an enclosing stone wall of probable 14th century date.

## Earthwork Survey and Interpretation

The mound is a relatively steep-sided sub-circular feature measuring up to 32m diameter at the base and diminishing to 9m at the top; it stands to a height of 3m above the ditch (fig. 1). Surrounding the mound is a ditch which is up to 2m wide and uniformly 1m deep. On the north side of the mound, by the residential flats, is an elongated low mound measuring 8 x 1.5m and about 0.2m high. This mound is probably a recent feature, possibly the result of dumping. On the northern side of the mound, towards the bottom, wooden planking is exposed at a point where there is a break in the slope which was presumably used in the consolidation of the monument.

On the north-east side of the mound is a flat trapezoidal platform surrounded by a ditch. The platform measures 25 x 27m and stands 1.5m above a surrounding ditch. The platform is revetted by a brick wall on the north-east and north-west sides. In the eastern corner the wall has stone footings (fig. 2). The ditch measures 3m wide and a slight berm, measuring up to 1m wide, separates the wall and ditch. On the south-western side the construction of housing has masked the form of the ditch. On the southern side of the moat there is a slight trench, probably a modern pipe-line trench, that leads from a car parking area to the moat.

Kingshurst Hall lay within a park from the mid-15th century and although it is known for its motte and bailey castle earthworks, it should not be forgotten that following the abandonment of the motte, a residence was probably constructed on the bailey, dating perhaps to the 14th century when the wall surrounding the moat was constructed (fig. 3). Further building occurred at Kingshurst in 1439 when a tiled building was constructed (SBT/37/73). In the late 17th or early 18th century the house, that was demolished in 1962, was

constructed on the bailey.

Whether the ditch separating the bailey from the motte is an original feature is unknown; nevertheless, it is clear that both the motte and bailey have undergone substantial alteration. Evidence of recent changes can be seen by examination of early maps. For instance, in the mid-19th century (Tithe Award map) the moat on the west side is more irregular and much wider (fig. 4); this shape persisted until at least 1937 (OS map, Warwicks XV.1, 1937) after which it was appreciably narrowed. On the east side the moat is straight, suggesting that this has also been modified. The motte itself has also clearly been re-modelled since the mid-19th century. The rather smooth profile of the monument, and lack of evidence of the excavation trench, would also suggest that it has been re-modelled since 1961.

Following the abandonment of the motte it seems likely that the focus shifted to the bailey where a residence was built and the surrounding moat revetted with a stone wall. The motte, and the area to the east of the house, probably became part of a garden with the motte forming a prospect, with good panoramas to the south over the River Cole and the woodlands to the west. A large earthwork depression (which was not surveyed) to the east of the house, that still partially survives, may also have been part of the gardens. By at least the 19th century, and probably much earlier, Kingshurst Hall was the centre of a mixed farming enterprise with farm buildings lying to the north of the house.

## Methodology

The survey was carried out over a period of two days by G. Brown and G. Kirkham and involved a base-line traverse between two stations. A profile was also taken across the monument. The survey was carried out using a Total Station instrument to establish the survey framework and points of detail, together with geographical features such as roads and buildings. Taped off-sets from the control framework were then used to record the archaeological detail. A further day was spent on limited documentary research.

The report has been written by G. Brown with comments by D. Field and edited by M. Bowden. The site plan was drawn by D. Cunliffe.

## Bibliography

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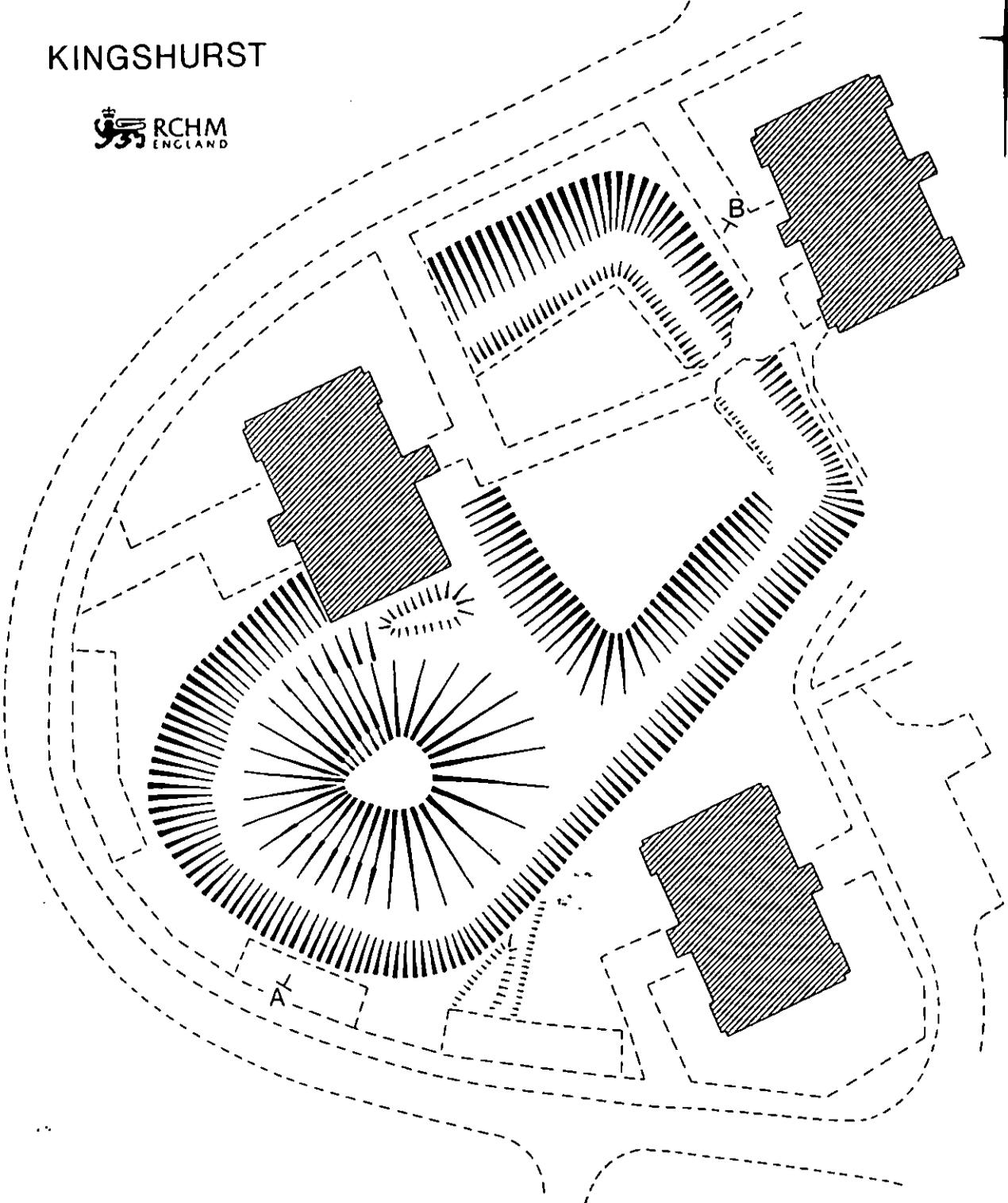
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# KINGSHURST



880

880



50

0

50 Metres

A

B





*Fig. 1. The motte at Kingshurst Hall looking west.*



*Fig. 2. Stone and brick walling on the eastern corner of the platform at Kingshurst Hall*

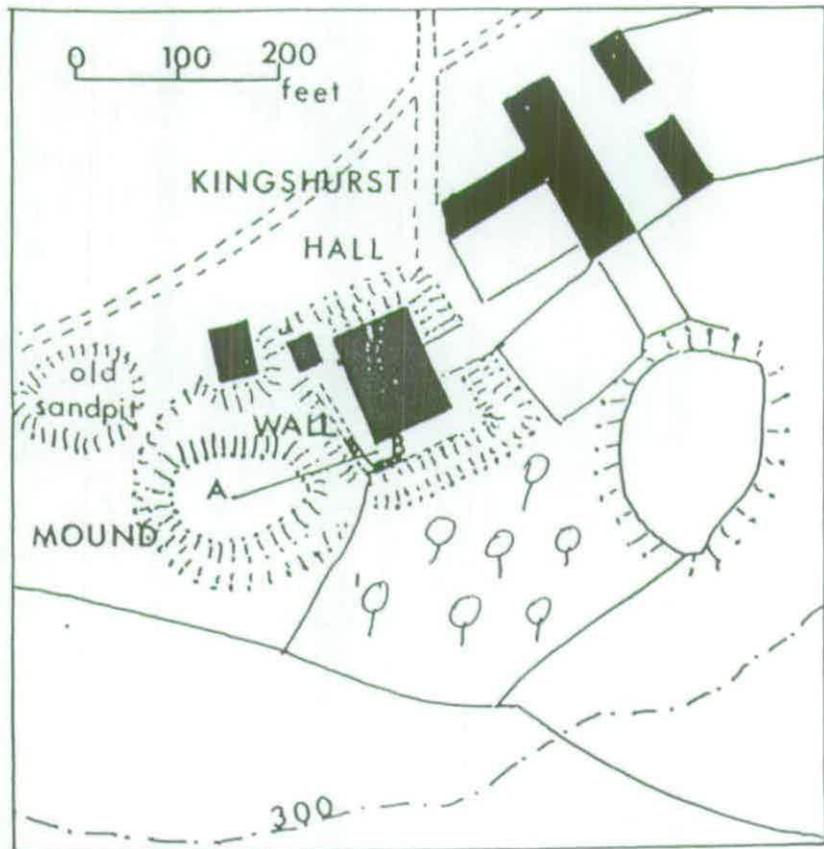


Fig. 3. A plan showing the line of the 1961 excavation trench



Fig. 4. A copy of the 1844 Tithe award map for Kingshurst Hall