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Bredwardine: Church Orchard A Community Field Investigation

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Bredwardine: Church Orchard A Community Field Investigation

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Herefordshire Archaeology is Herefordshire Council's county archaeology service. It advises upon the conservation of archaeological and historic landscapes, maintains the county Sites and Monument Record, and carries out conservation and investigative field projects. The County Archaeologist is Dr. Keith Ray.

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Summary

Over the course of three days between August and October 2010 a field containing an Orchard known as Church Orchard was the subject of detailed and geophysical survey. The field is located to the north of St Andrews Church, Bredwardine and is under the ownership of Chester-Masters of Moccas Estate.

The site is of interest due to the visible earthworks and terraces that mark the northern end of a prominent ridge overlooking a ford across the River Wye to the east. It is of further interest due to its location in association with the medieval village and castle remains of Bredwardine to the south. Due to this association and prominent nature of the topography within the field it is likely that features relating to medieval land use as well as post medieval land use can be discovered.

The investigation also served as a training exercise for the Bredwardine and Brobury History Group with training and equipment supplied by Herefordshire Archaeology.

Introduction

This report discusses the results of a detailed topographic survey and a geophysical survey using a resistance meter over land to the North of St Andrew's Church, Bredwardine. Due to the sites close proximity to both the Church and the know area of medieval settlement to the south and west it has been assumed that this prominent site had been occupied but with no supporting evidence other than a 1772 Estate Map indicating the presence of a road/track and two structures.

Over the course of three days (25/08/10; 07/10/10; 14/10/10), the Bredwardine and Brobury History Group with training and equipment provided by Herefordshire Archaeology investigated the field that forms the northern end of a promontory overlooking the River Wye and bridge crossing to the east.

During the Anglo-Saxon and Medieval period Bredwardine became an important strategic position in light of the ford crossing and the favourable terrain allowing for suitable defence. Following the Norman invasion of 1066 the Manor was given to John de Bredwardine under who it was quickly strengthened to form part of the Marches line of defence against the Kingdoms of Wales. The castle was strengthened and rebuilt on numerous occasions until it is thought to have been abandoned as a defensive site and converted to a country home under the Vaughan family.

Figure 1: Excerpt from the 1772 "A Survey of the Manors of Moccas". The map indicates the presence of two structures and accompanying track to the left of Old Court and to the right of St Andrews Church. © WNFC.

It is likely that under the ownership of the Vaughan family that Moccas Estate came to include the area of Bredwardine. Prior to this Moccas was under the ownership of the de Fresnes and Bredwardine the de Lacys.



Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the investigation were to record in detail the topographic features of the field to the north of St Andrew's Church. This would include the recording by means of a measured plan of earthworks relating to past and current land use, such as walls, roads, earthen banks, ditches, hollow ways, quarries and platforms. The plan was drawn at a scale of 1:500, with the measurement made using a *Leica*, Electronic Distance Meter.

The second stage of the project was to carry out geophysical survey using a Resistance Meter within three separate areas of the field. The first area was located at the summit of the hill where there is a prominent level area highly suitable for settlement, be it military, religious or civilian or a mix of all three. The other two locations were determined by the 1772 Estate map that indicated two structures one to the east and one to the west of the ridge, both were supported by a track no longer visible. It was the intention of the geophysics to locate and shed-light on these features not visible from simple observations.

The overall results of these aims would contribute to our knowledge of the area and determine the course of future investigations.

Location and Geology

Located within the County Parish of Bredwardine, Bredwardine village is situated along the west bank of the River Wye within the Wye Valley. To the west of the village the topography rises sharply to form Merbach Hill, whereas to the east, beyond the River Wye (Brobury CP) the contours dictate a relatively flat fertile surface that forms the Wye Valley basin.

The village of Bredwardine sits at a cross-road with the main Hereford to Hay-on-Wye road running north-south (B4352) and a minor road that links the Roman Road at Staunton-on-Wye with the summit of Merbach on an axis of east-west. The two roads converge within the heart of Bredwardine village at the Red Lion Inn.

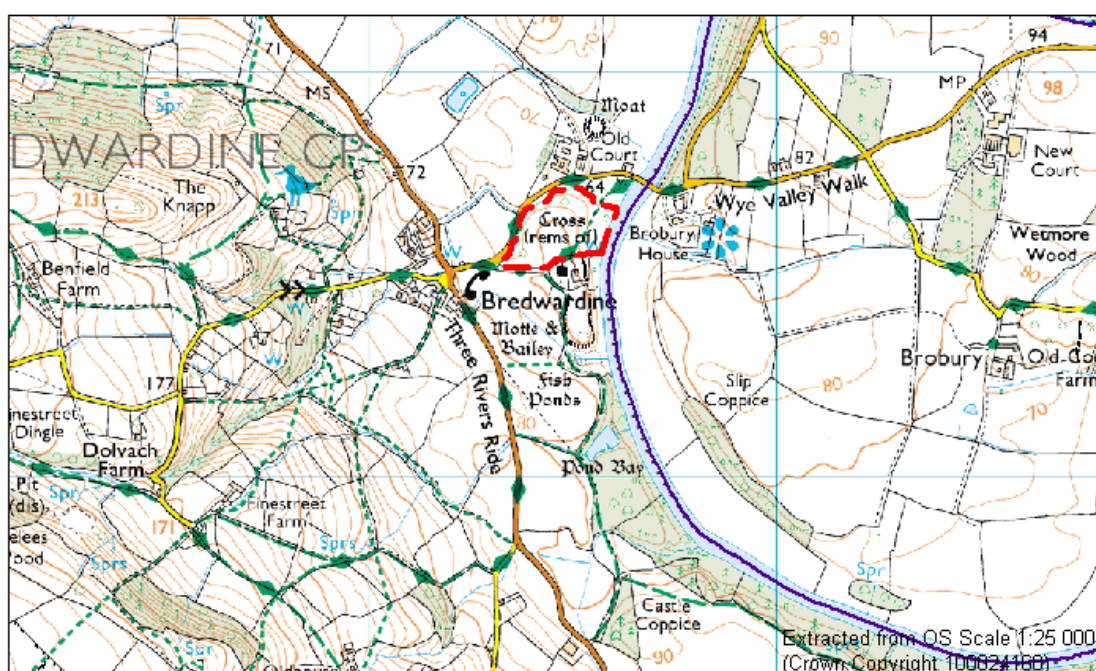


Figure 2: Scale 1:25 000 extract highlighting the location of the area of investigation. (OS crown copyright 100024100 & Herefordshire Archaeology)

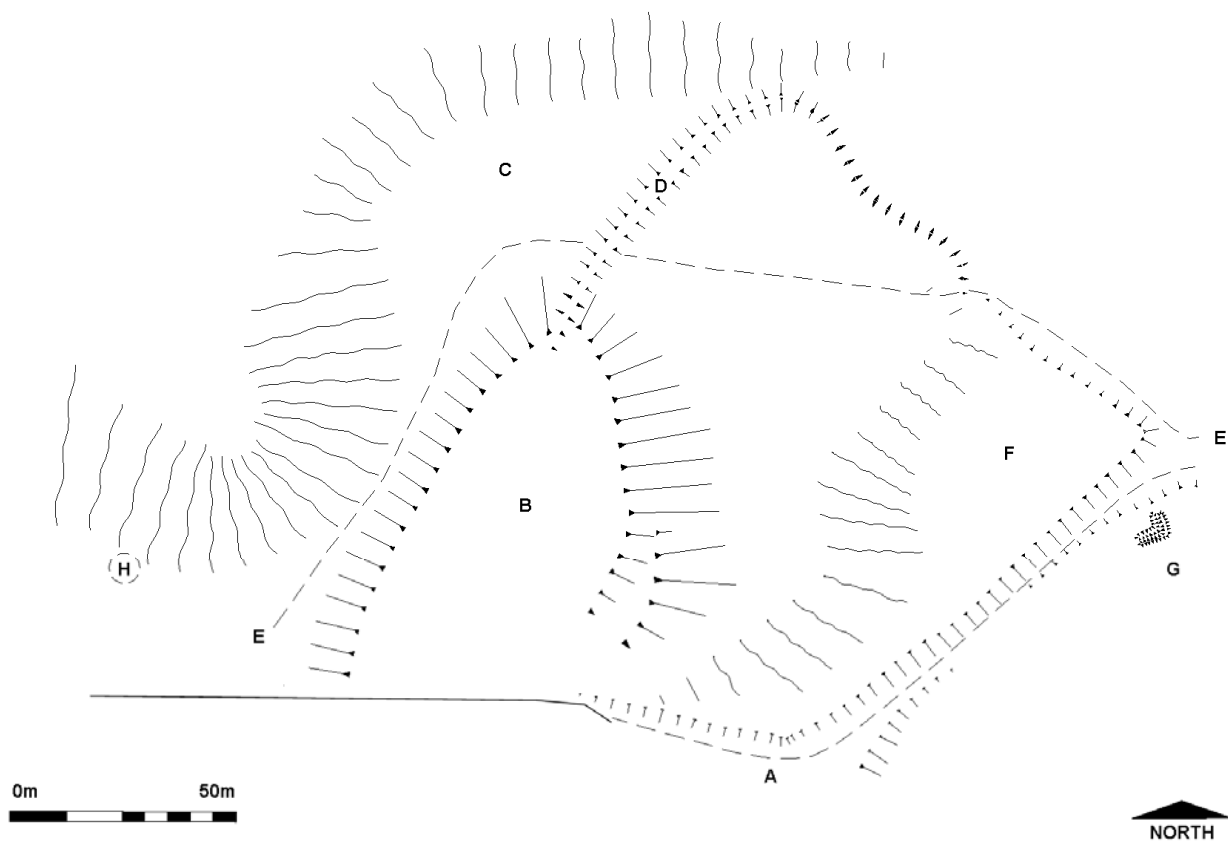
The area of investigation is located along the northern end of a narrow north-south aligned ridge (c.70m OD) that overlooks the River Wye. The field supports an apple orchard and pasture. Within the east of the field running up slope from the bridge toward St Andrew's Church to the south is the course of the Wye Valley Walk.

Field Observations and Survey

The survey was centred within a field on the northern end of a low ridge overlooking the River Wye that lies to the east. The primary aim of the survey was to identify any visual earthworks that would indicate past land use such as settlement and agriculture.

With the exception of two areas overgrown with scrub, observations within the field were largely un-restricted due to the open nature of the orchard and the seasonal grazing that takes place.

Figure 3: Results of the detailed survey at Church Orchard. The plan was drawn at 1:500 Scale. © Herefordshire Archaeology



Key features (relate to plan):

Feature A

Underlying the stile within the south of the field and running east down slope parallel to the wall of the Rectory is the sunken track way relating to the now abandoned continuation of the original main street that served medieval and post-medieval Bredwardine (What remains of the lane is the road that supports St Andrew's Church). The hollow measures 3m wide by 0.2m deep from where it enters the field. As the hollow extends east it becomes more pronounced measuring 4m wide and 1.2m deep. After approximately 45m the course of the hollow realigns north. It then traverses the eastern slope of the ridge taking a gentle decline to the flood plain.

Prior to the track way levelling with the flood plain at the base of the ridge the hollow runs as an east-facing terrace. On reaching the flood plain it reverts to being a hollow way where it measures a maximum of 5m wide and 0.5m deep. The hollow way is truncated within the northeast corner of the field where it has been eroded due to river bank collapse. Prior to the establishment of the bridge, the hollow way in question led to a ford across the river.

Feature B

Feature B represents an area at the summit of the ridge. Though the height of the ridge is natural it is clear that its form in numerous locations has been manipulated and landscaped over time. Feature B is one such area. The site is highly suitable for settlement be it military, religious or civilian due to its level nature, access to the ford and commanding views to the north, south and east. The area measures a maximum of 45m east-west by 78m north-south, it is roughly triangular in plan running to a point in the north. The limits of the area are delineated by a sharp, steep slope that drops c.3m to the west and c.5m to the east. The sharpness of the slope is due to human activity, likely linked to the formation of level terrace area 'C'. From the northern point of the summit is a broad bank aligned north 'D', it measures 8m wide at its base and 3m wide at its summit, the bank stands 0.6m high.

Feature C

On the decline from the summit ('B') the ground levels to form a terrace that encompasses the entire northern end of the ridge. The terrace is widest to the north and northeast and narrowest to the west. The decline from this terrace is apparently natural due to the gentleness of the fall in comparison to the sharp edge steep fall of area 'B'. Access around this terrace was hampered within the northeast due to an area of dense scrub that included brambles, thistles and nettles. Evidence for settlement within this area came from a study of the 1772 Estate Map of Moccas that indicated two structures within the confines of the field as well as the course of a track that had previously been unknown. According to the

Estate map one of the structures was situated on terrace 'C' close to the northwest corner, however no platform or depression suggests the past presence of a structure today.

Feature D

The terrace is divided by a bank that runs north from the summit of the ridge before redirecting east where it demarcates the north-eastern edge of the terrace before it peters-out at a probable early entrance on to the terrace. The bank is a maximum of 8m wide at its base and 3m wide at its summit, the bank stands 0.6m high; as the bank aligns east it measures 3m wide and 0.4m high. It can be difficult to trace this feature due to the dense scrub within this area. This boundary is largely associated with the eastern half of the terrace 'C' as it clearly follows the terraces northern edge until the natural slopes are pronounced enough not to warrant the presence of a boundary. It is likely to have enclosed an area of grazing as well as an orchard demarcating it from possible settlement to the west as indicated by the 1772 Estate Map.

Feature E

Location 'E' on the survey plan indicates the possible course of the secondary track through the field as indicated by the Estate Map of 1772. According to the map a track follows the western edge of the ridge linking with the structure on terrace 'C' and continuing east where it links with hollow way 'A' at the river crossing. It is assumed that the course of the track follows the western edge of 'B' where it levels into terrace 'C'. At this point the terrace is at it's narrowest but suitable to support a track leading from the church to the south. As the terrace ('C') widens to the north the course of this track is lost and likely cut by the boundary 'D' indicating that the boundary was constructed after the production of the 1772 Estate map.

Within the northeast corner of terrace 'C' there is a break in slope indicative of a track way. This is perhaps the continuation of track 'E' from where it runs down slope east as a hollow no more than 0.1m deep and 3m wide. The tracks southern edge is paralleled by the northern edge of a relict field terrace whose eastern edge also forms the western slope of hollow way 'A'. Externally to the northeast corner of the field 'F' both tracks 'A' and 'E' converge.

Feature F

According to the 1772 Estate Map the second structure recorded resides in this field close to the eastern edge overlooking the hollow way 'A'. Observations however indicate no earthworks to support the presence of a past structure. The eastern and northern edges of the field consist of a terrace where as the western and southern edges are marked by a break in slope where the foot of terrace 'C' levels to form field 'F'. The interior of the field slopes gently to the east.

Feature G

To the east of hollow way 'A'; overlooking the river crossing is the site of a World War II Home Guard 'L'-Shape trench. The trench had been dug with the intention of providing defensive views both up stream from the bridge and down stream from the direction of Hereford. Soil and turf from the trench was piled to form a low area of defensive cover to aid in observations and protection.

The trench measures c.1.5m wide, 0.3m deep. The upturn defensive cover measures 1-2m wide and up to 0.4m high. When first constructed during the 1940's the features would have been considerably deeper. Erosion and loss of definition has been caused by flood waters.

Site H

During the survey and the recording of terrace 'C' observations made on a Rabbit Warren led to the retrieval of numerous fragments of medieval pottery. They were all dark grey/black in colour indicating they were fired in a reduced atmosphere condition, this means that oxygen within the firing process was limited. Inclusions of grit are visible within the fragment sections; the grit acted as a bonding agent to strengthen and support the clay during the firing process. The broken edges are relatively sharp indicating that there has not been a substantial amount of ground disturbance and that the pot has not travelled. The location of the pottery is close enough to the original medieval lane through Bredwardine to suggest that the finds may have come from the rear of a house plot, perhaps a midden.

Evidence for structures associated with the medieval settlement are likely to line the southern edge of the surveyed area adjacent to the church lane/medieval road.

Geophysical Survey

Through the combination of the survey results and the 1772 Estate Map two areas were identified for further investigation through geophysical survey. Site 1 was located at the western edge of the summit of the ridge and extended down slope for a distance of 40m to cover terrace 'C' and track 'E' (see survey plan). The survey extended 60m to the north and consisted of 5 survey grids each measuring 20m squared.

Site 2 was located within the east of the survey area overlooking the Hollow Way 'A' to the east and located on a terrace which is presumably the site where a structure was recorded on the 1772 Estate Map. The area measured 40m north-south by 20m east-west and was made up of two survey grids.

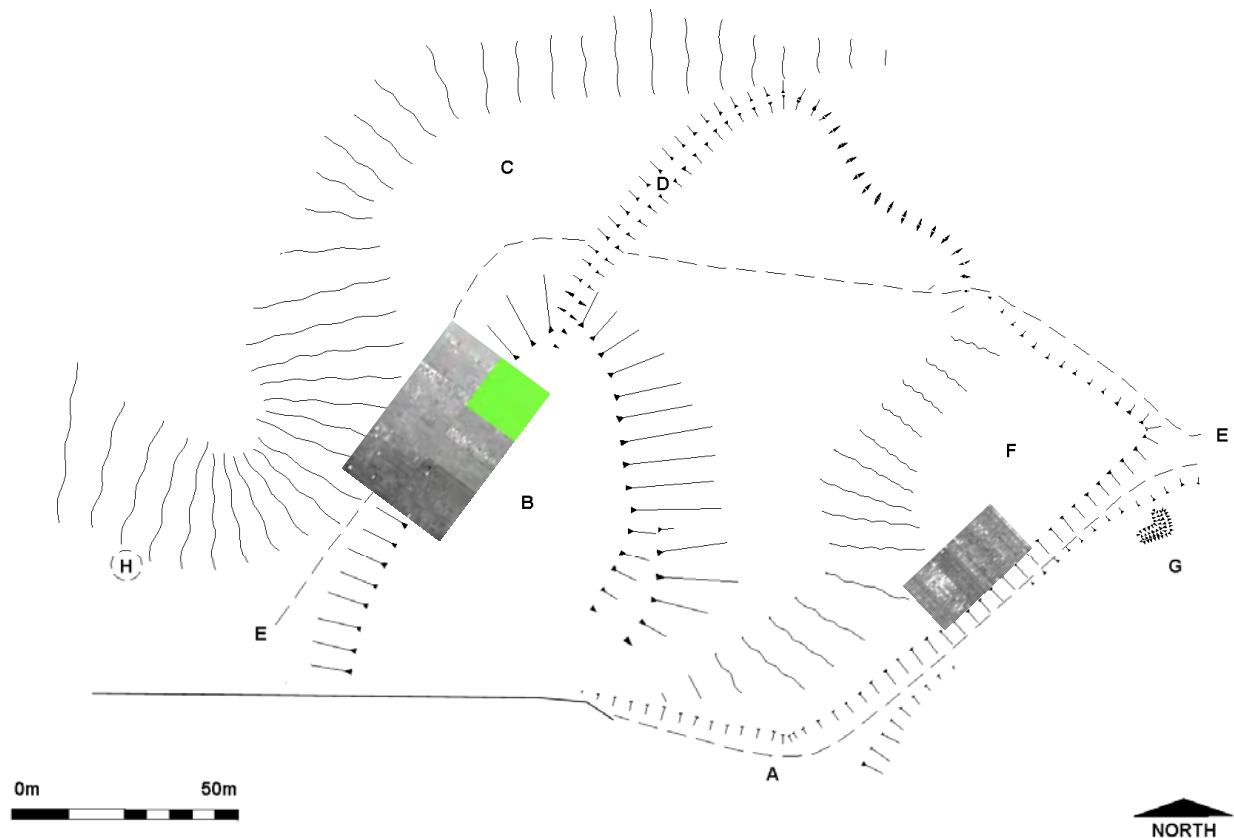
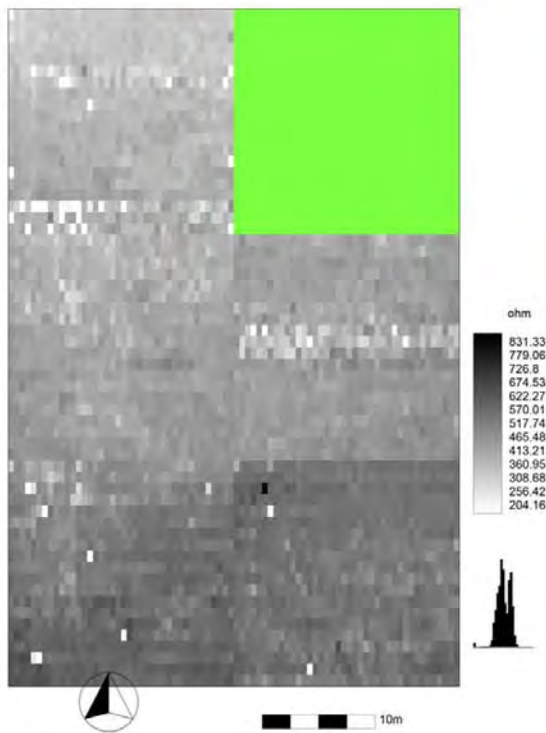


Figure 4: Detailed survey results indicating the location of the geophysical survey. © Herefordshire Archaeology

Site 1

The survey results are relatively uniform indicating very little land disturbance associated with construction in the past. The results dictate high resistance (darker grey colour) in the underlying ground surface with the exception of where Track 'E' is located which is of lower resistance. This would suggest that the track recorded on the 1772 Estate Map was not a metalled surface but instead a slightly hollowed earth track/green way. As the terrace 'C' widens to the north the course of the track is lost, presumably as the track here was less of a hollow and instead level with the ground surface.

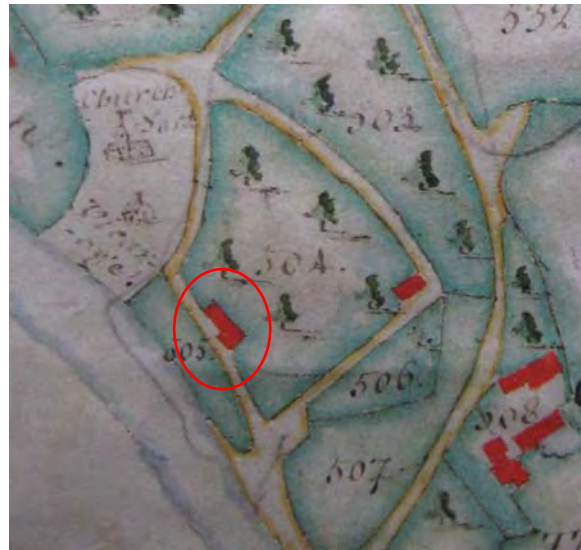
Figure 5: Results of the geophysical survey within Site 1. © Herefordshire Archaeology



Site 2

Sited within the east of the survey area the two survey grids were located with the intention of determining the position of the structure recorded on the 1772 Estate Map. On the map the structure is clearly sited to the west of the recorded track/hollow 'A' which would place it on the upslope within an area of orchard recorded as 'F'.

Figure 6: Excerpt from the 1772 "A Survey of the Manors of Moccas". The structure within field 'F' is highlighted. © WNFC.



The results of the survey were again inconclusive with the exception of an area within the south that indicates two anomalies perhaps relating to the structure. They are visible as areas of low resistance within the soil suggesting that they represent hollows and pits rather than floors and walls features. However the eastern most anomaly is roughly rectangular in form with an area of high resistance within its centre suggesting the possibility of a robbed out foundation with compacted earth floor interior.

The anomaly directly west of this covers a larger area and is less informative although traces of possible wall foundation cuts are possible to distinguish. The majority of this area appears to have been robbed including the possible interior due to the low resistance results of the survey.

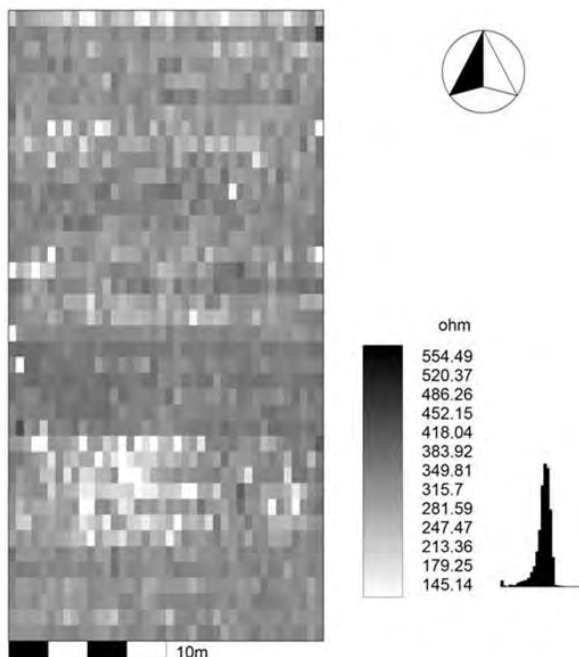


Figure 7: Results of the geophysical survey within Site 2. Note the lighter area within the south of the survey area indicating part of the building site highlighted in the 1772 map above. © Herefordshire Archaeology.

Discussion

The results of the detailed survey indicate that though the ridge is natural, landscaping has altered its original form, with the slope being altered to form three distinct terraces ('B' 'C' 'F'). Terrace 'C' was clearly sub-divided as indicated by the boundary 'D' however observations of the 1772 Estate Map indicated that this was a relatively late addition to the site. Indicated by the map is the course of a second track ('E') that encompasses the western and northern edge of the ridge before linking with the medieval hollow way 'A' at the river crossing. Although its course is fragmented; it can be assumed that the track ran along terrace 'C', before running down slope to the east, north of terrace 'F'. The track is certainly post-medieval in date and has the potential to date to at least the late medieval period. The site of a World War II Home Guard 'L'-shaped trench was also observed.

The results of the geophysical survey that targeted two separate areas (Site 1 & Site 2) provided information on a number of features, the focus of the investigation. Within 'Site 1' the five survey grids indicate very little in the way of structural evidence at the summit of the ridge with the exception of the track way aligned north-south on the 1772 Moccas Estate Map, that is indicated by an area of low resistance.

This is not to deduce that there is no archaeological activity in relation to settlement at the summit of the hill, it may be conditions within the soil were not ideal at the time of survey. Only through some trial excavation can we begin to unravel the sites relation to Bredwardine Village.

Acknowledgments

This investigation would not have been possible without the support and permission of the landowner Chester-Masters of Moccas and the land tenants at Old Court.

A special thank you is reserved for the members of Bredwardine and Brobury History Group who organised and participated in number through all weathers with high spirits during the investigation.

Thank you

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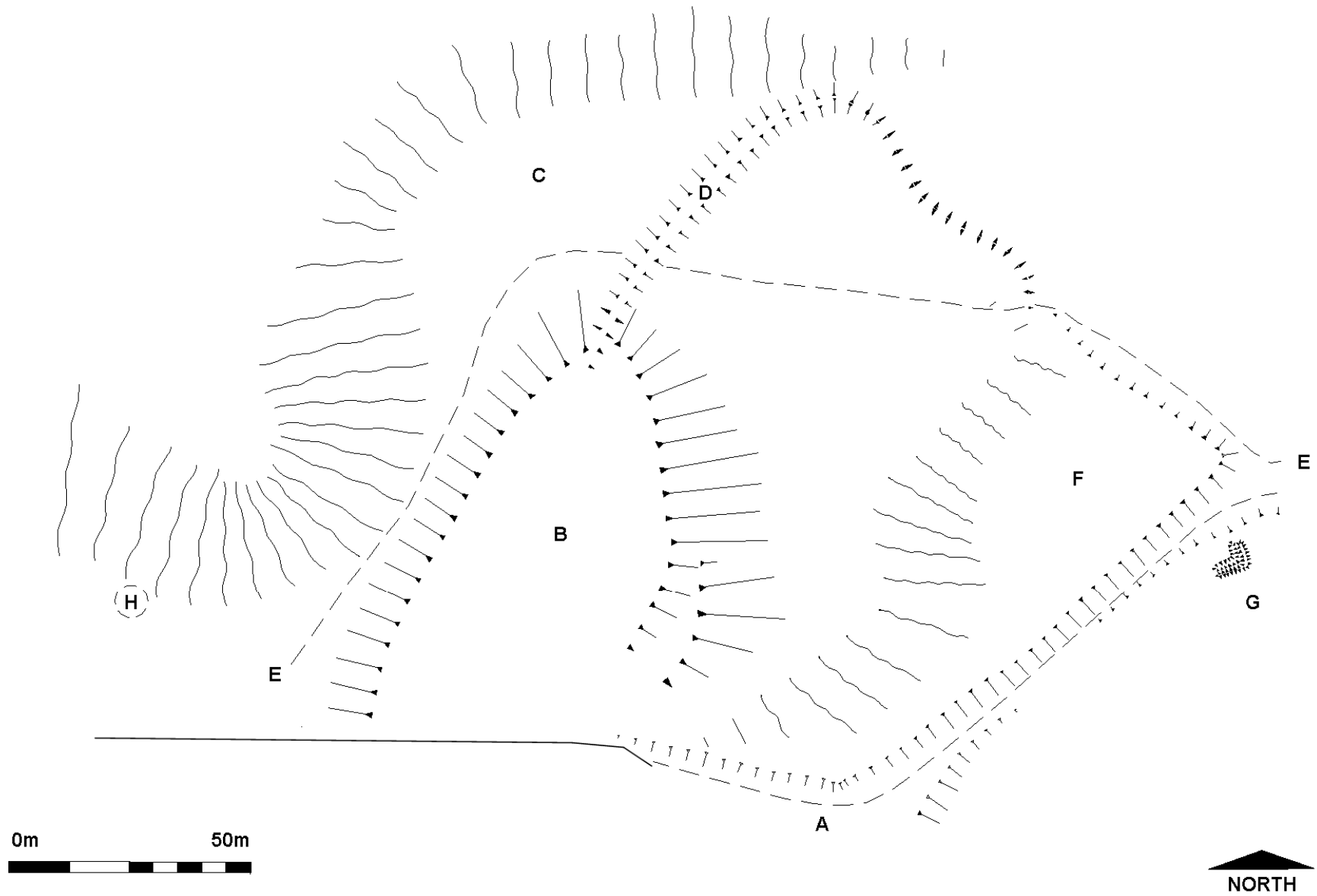
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Figure 5: *Results of the geophysical survey within Site 1. © Herefordshire Archaeology*

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Figure 7: *Results of the geophysical survey within Site 2. © Herefordshire Archaeology.*

Appendix 1: *Results of the detailed survey at Church Orchard. The plan was drawn at 1:500 Scale. © Herefordshire Archaeology*



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