

SOTMAS Geophysical Survey of Norbury Moated Manor house



Illustration from Dr. Plot by Burghers of Norbury Manor as it was in 1686.



The gargoyle recovered from the moat.

Introduction

Ralph de Botiller succeeded to the fortified manor house of Norbury on the death of Philip Marmion in 1291. The moated house of Norbury Manor was built by Ralph de Botiller in the early fourteenth century (John Darlington, in “Stafford Past” suggests between 1291 and 1307).

In 1521 Norbury Manor was sold to a lawyer, Thomas Skrymsher. The Skrymsher family appear to have owned the property for the next 250 years. Certainly in 1686 Dr. Plot illustrates the house with Sir Charles Skrymsher and his wife standing outside. To quote John Darlington’s description of the illustration “It shows a gateway in the middle of the

platform, which was reached by crossing a bridge. The building formed a vertical continuation of the moat revetment walls and the lower floor is part of the original hall dating to c. 1300. The upper two levels of mullioned and transomed windows with gables above and the jettied gallery are likely to have been 16th century. On the corner of the building the illustration shows a ‘bartizan’ – a small projecting turret which also dates to the 16th century. The building has considerable similarities with the fortified manor house of Stokesay (built in 1291) in south Shropshire.” In addition the illustration appears to show a gargoyle high up on the left, just below the roof. A similar stone head was recovered from the moat within living memory, in a position immediately below the point illustrated.

The Skrymsher family also lived at Aqualate Hall. Sir Thomas Skrymsher was Lord of the manor of Mere and built the first hall at Aqualate. He died in 1633.

The house and estate at Norbury became the property of George Anson of Shugborough Hall, Staffordshire in 1775.

By the early nineteenth century the building was in a dilapidated state and lived in by farm workers.

The building was demolished in 1838 and a new house was built further to the south, using stone from the old manor house.

In 1975 English Heritage instituted a watching brief.

The geological deposits of the immediate area are classified as "Till, Devensian - Diamicton" i.e. boulder clay or other unstratified sediment deposited by melting glaciers or ice sheets dating to the period between 120,000 and 10,000 years ago. The Devensian is interpreted as the last full glacial series within the Pleistocene. The term Diamiction relates to poorly sorted sediment that contains a wide range of particle sizes i.e. sand or larger size particles that are suspended in a mud matrix.

The underlying bedrock is from the Mercia Mudstone Group (Mudstone and Halite-Stone: sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 206 to 248 million years ago in the Triassic Period. The local environment was previously dominated by hot deserts).

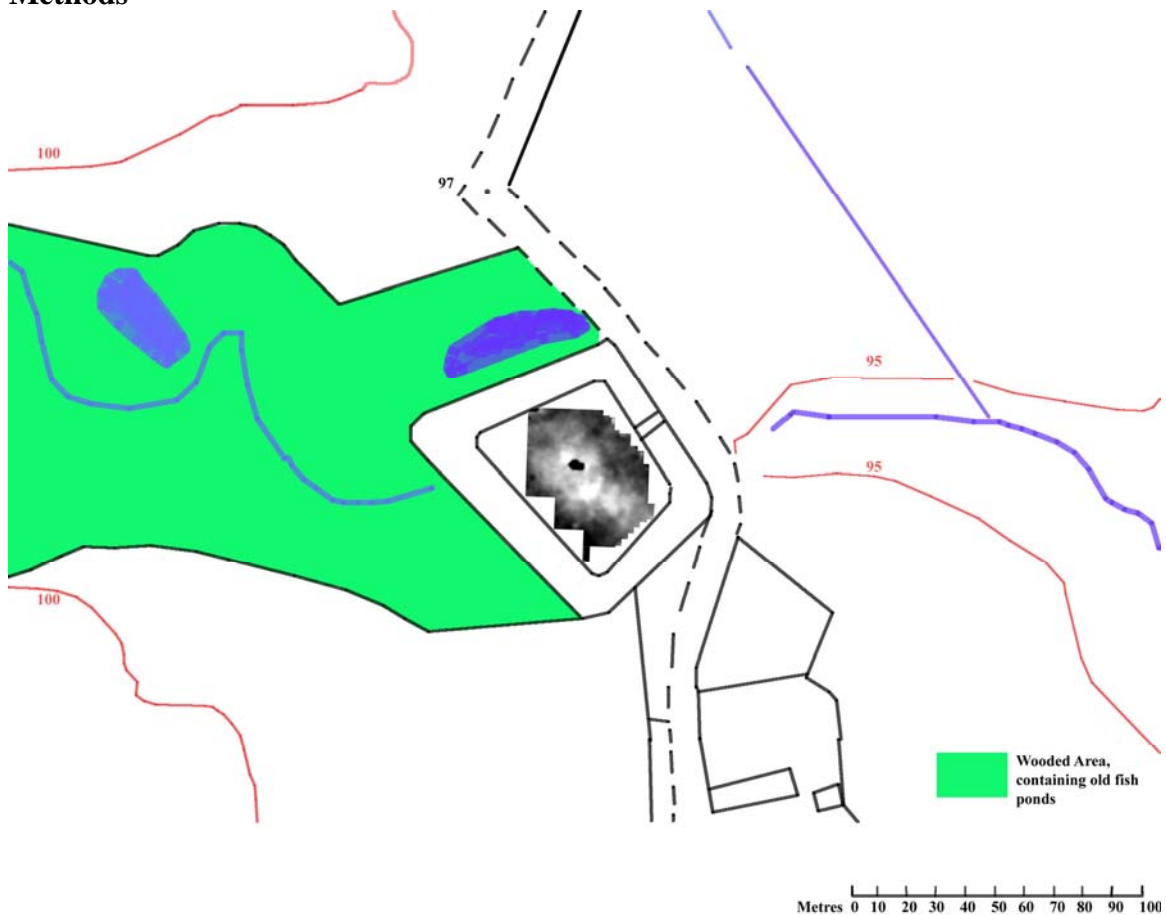
The moat is fed from the west and outflows eastwards into the Wood Brook. This brook gradually turns south and then south west to pass under the canal just south of Norbury Junction.

Close to the moat, to the north and west, are a series of fish ponds. These lie within a small wooded area.



South, east and north revetment walls of the moat, with wood to the west.

Methods



Map of the Moated site and the immediate area with resistivity results superimposed.

It was thought that a geophysical survey of the moat platform may indicate the location of the walls of the demolished buildings. To set up a grid for the operation it was noted that the north west corner of the platform was almost due west of the entrance gate. This was to be treated as the 50 metre north line of the grid.

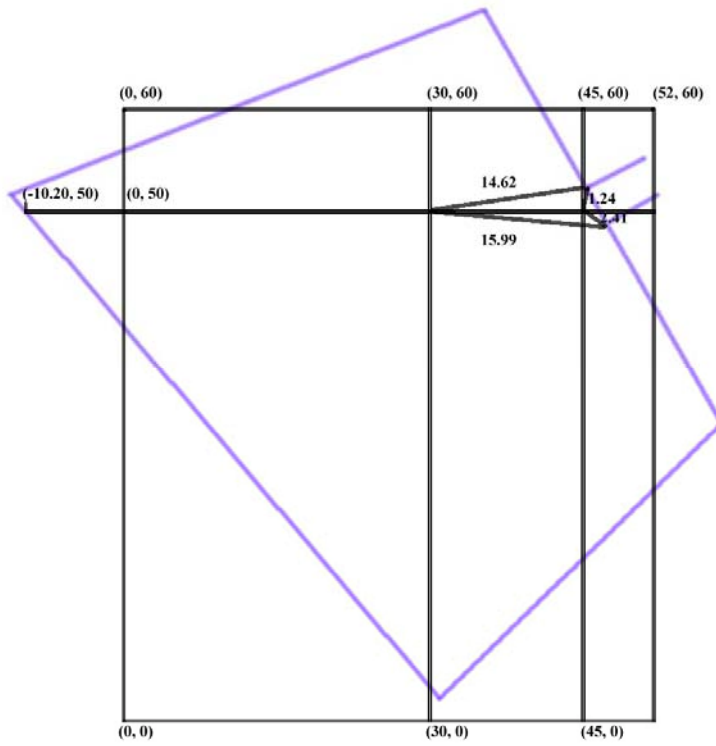
The following points were located:

- The north west corner would be at (-10.20, 50);
- (30, 50) was 14.62 metres from the outside of the northmost gate post, and 15.99 metres from the outside of the southmost gate post;
- (45,30) was 1.24 metres from the outside of the northmost gate post, and 2.41 metres from the outside of the southmost gate post.

From these points the grid was set out.

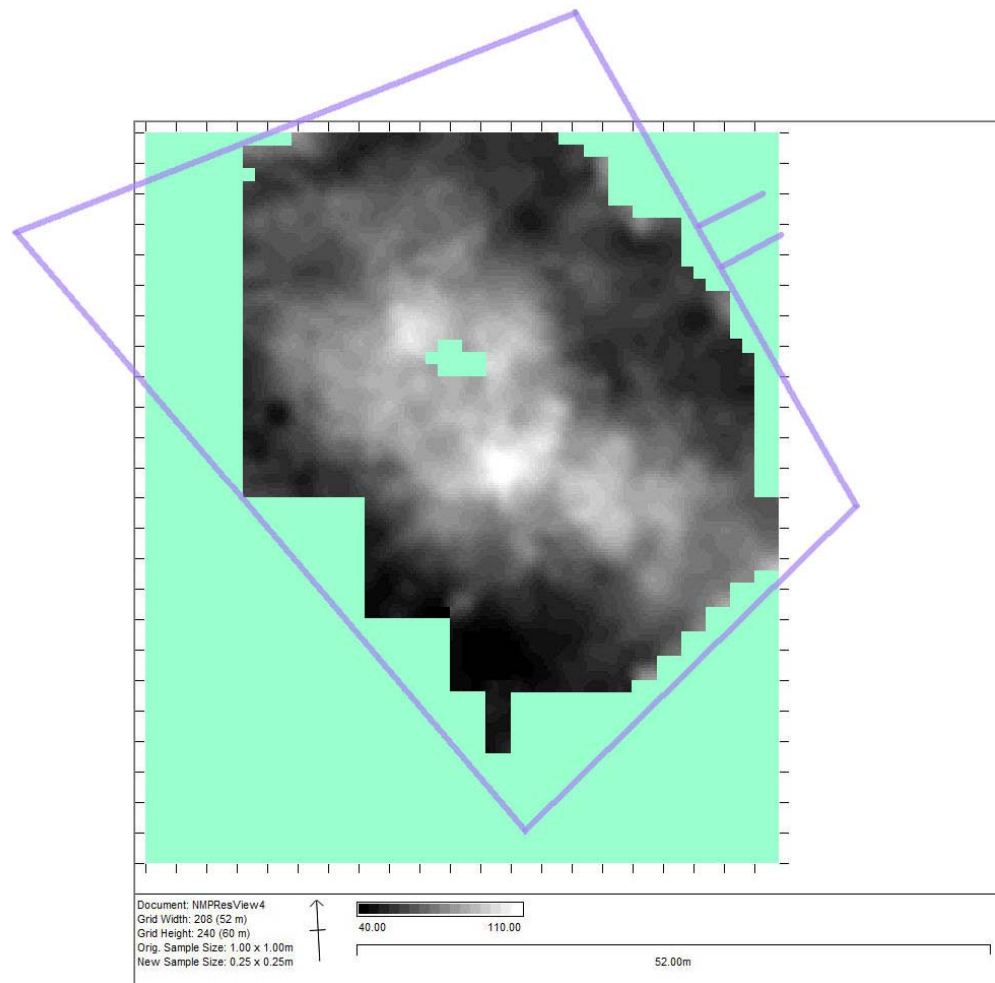
The platform surface was strewn with large slabs of dressed sandstone. In particular there was a large pile of these in a central position. Other concentrations were found near the

edges of the platform. This created a problem for both magnetometry and resistivity, meaning that certain areas could not be surveyed.



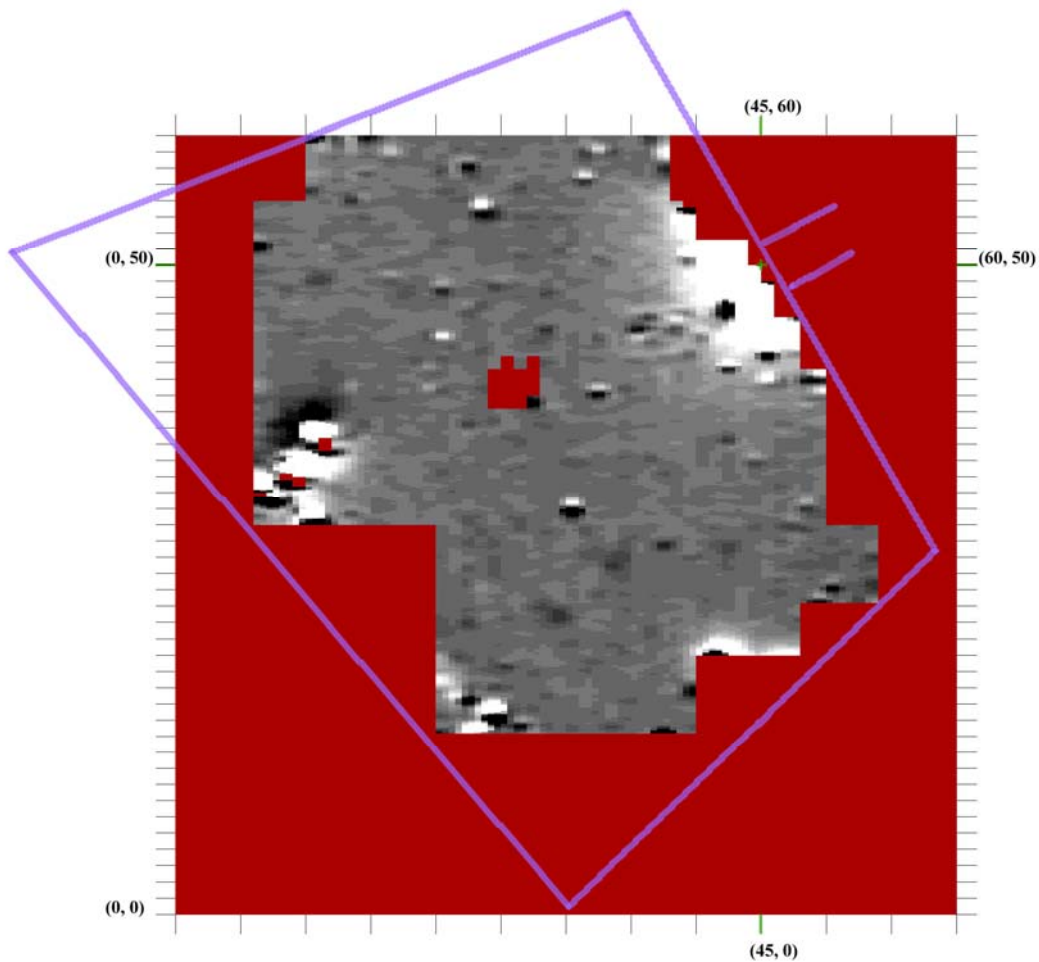
Grid layout using the north west corner and gate posts as fixed points.

Resistivity results.



An area 44 metres east to west and 51 metres north to south was surveyed. The resistivity results are very interesting. There is a clear distinction between the material at the centre of the platform and that from the front (north east facing side of the platform) and rear. This could indicate that the footprints of the buildings still exist. This certainly seems to be the case near the entrance where there may be indications of linear features (robbed wall bases). Alternatively it could reflect the earth works performed to raise the platform, to produce a flat raised area before the buildings were erected.

Magnetometry results.



Document: NMPmapView2
Grid Width: 480 (120 m)
Grid Height: 120 (120 m)
Sample Size: 0.25 x 1.00m



An area 48 metres east to west and 46 metres north to south was surveyed. The magnetometry results probably have no indication of any structures on the site. There are several isolated small anomalies. The major anomalies are all related to the areas of sandstone blocks and other debris from demolition of the walls. This debris masks any features which may still exist below.

Conclusion

It does appear that some features of the buildings, particularly those close to the entrance, remain buried on the platform.

Several bodies (including English Heritage and the landowners) are coming together to make the walls of the platform safe; this will involve recovering and reusing much of the dressed stone which is currently scattered on the surface of the platform. It will be worth redoing the survey after this has been done, since it will make more of the area available for survey and also remove some of the surface material which is probably masking the results.

Acknowledgments

Our thanks to the landowners, Norbury Park Estate, for their interest in, and allowing us to conduct, the survey.

We thank English Heritage for giving us permission to perform this survey. We also thank them, and Andy Payne in particular for the loan of the magnetometer and the training in its use.

References

The historical information was mainly obtained from: Stafford Past “A guide to the archaeological and historical sites of the Stafford Area” pages 42 to 46, by John Darlington, published by Stafford Borough Council.

The Geology information was obtained from the British Geology Survey with the help of David Emley from the university of Keele geology department.

Appendix



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Enclosure:

English Heritage Geophysical Survey Database Questionnaire

Survey Details

**Name of Site: NORBURY MANOR MOATED SITE 8 FISHPONDS AND
CONNECTING CHANNELS**

County: STAFFORDSHIRE

**NGR Grid Reference (Centre of survey to nearest 100m):
SJ 7965 2325**

Start Date: 12th April 2012 End Date: 18th May 2012

Geology at site (Drift and Solid):

Till Devensian - Diamicton which overlies Mercian Mudstone

Known archaeological Sites/Monuments covered by the survey
(Scheduled Monument No. or National Archaeological Record No. if known)

Monument no. 13471

Archaeological Sites/Monument types detected by survey
(Type and Period if known. "?" where any doubt).

**Surveyor (Organisation, if applicable, otherwise individual responsible for the survey):
Stoke-on-Trent Museum Archaeological Society (SOTMAS)**

Name of Client, if any:



THE AXIS 10 HOLLIDAY STREET BIRMINGHAM B1 1TG
Telephone 0121 625 6820 Facsimile 0121 625 6821
www.english-heritage.org.uk

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the FOIA or EIR applies.



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Purpose of Survey:

No geophysical survey of this important site have been performed as far as we could discover. It was thought that such a survey was suitable for the society to perform. This will produce a useful record for the future.

Location of:

a) Primary archive, i.e. raw data, electronic archive etc:

The primary archive is to be stored on our web site.

b) Full Report:

The full report is to be stored on our web site and will be made generally available.



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Technical Details

(Please fill out a separate sheet for each survey technique used)

Type of Survey (Use term from attached list or specify other):

Magnetometry

Area Surveyed, if applicable (In hectares to one decimal place):
48 by 46 metres

Traverse Separation, if regular: 1 metre

Reading/Sample Interval: 25 cms.

Type, Make and model of Instrumentation:

FM36 gradiometer

For Resistivity Survey:

Probe configuration:

Probe Spacing:

Land use at the time of the survey (Use term/terms from the attached list or specify other):

None.



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Technical Details

(Please fill out a separate sheet for each survey technique used)

Type of Survey (Use term from attached list or specify other):

Resistivity

Area Surveyed, if applicable (In hectares to one decimal place):
44 by 51 metres

Traverse Separation, if regular: **1 metre**

Reading/Sample Interval: **1 metre**

Type, Make and model of Instrumentation:

RM4

For Resistivity Survey:

Probe configuration:

Standard 2 probe

Probe Spacing:

50 cms.

Land use at the time of the survey (Use term/terms from the attached list or specify other):

None.



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Additional Remarks (Please mention any other technical aspects of the survey that have not been covered by the above questions such as sampling strategy, non standard technique, problems with equipment etc.):

The magnetometry survey was taken heading alternately North then South gradually moving East. The grid size was 30 metres by 30 metres.
The resistivity survey was performed similarly. The RM4 meter was set to RURAL and with a range of 2000 Ohms.

List of terms for Survey Type

Magnetometer (includes gradiometer)

Resistivity

Resistivity Profile

Magnetic Susceptibility

Electro-Magnetic Survey

Ground Penetrating Radar

Other (please specify)



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