Specialist Walkover Survey and Aerial Photography Review

Off Site Works
Land at Rowden Park
Chippenham
Wiltshire SN15 2NN

September 2014
Riverside Park
Chippenham
Wiltshire

Specialist walkover survey and aerial photography review

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1 INTRODUCTION

Project background

1.1 In July 2014 Cotswold Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting to carry out a specialist walkover survey and aerial photography review for a site at Riverside Park, Chippenham, Wiltshire (centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) ST 91802 72071, Figure 1; hereafter referred to as, the Site). The primary focus of the study was to identify any archaeological features relating to the siege of Rowden Manor during the English Civil War.

1.2 The information presented in this report was required to supplement an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment, prepared by CgMs Consulting in February 2014 (CgMs 2014). Additional archaeological fieldwork within Riverside Park to date comprised a geophysical survey targeted on proposed six balancing pond sites, located to the west and south-west of Rowden Manor (Pre-Construct Geophysics 2014).

1.3 The wider Site is located directly to the south of Chippenham and is bounded to the east by the River Avon, to the north and north-east by the A4 and modern housing estates, to the west by the B4648 and to the south by a nursery and agricultural land. It is within a conservation area that covers much of the landscape around Rowden Manor.

Aims and scope

1.4 The main objectives of this assessment are to determine, as far as is possible from the data gathered during the walkover survey and the aerial photography review, the presence, nature, extent and significance of heritage assets potentially relating to the English Civil War actions which occurred in and around Rowden Manor.
**Methodology**

1.5 The methodology employed during this assessment was based upon key professional guidance including the ‘Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment’ (Institute for Archaeologists 2012).

1.6 This study involved consultation of the readily available aerial photography collection at English Heritage Archives, Swindon and the review of the historic maps held at Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, Chippenham.

1.7 In addition, a site visit was undertaken on 18th July 2014 to assess the present condition of the Site, identify any potential archaeological assets and assist in the assessment of potential previous impacts upon the archaeological resource.

2. **BACKGROUND NARRATIVE TO THE SIEGE OF ROWDEN MANOR**

2.1 In comparison to the extensive, protracted sieges of numerous fortified houses, castles and ensconced cities during the Civil War, the siege of Rowden Manor was a relatively minor affair. However, there were a series of fiercely contested engagements and, at its height, a minimum of several hundred men were engaged. It is therefore much more significant than a simple ‘encounter’ skirmish between small bodies of men or scouting parties. The siege is typical of many minor events and skirmishes of the Civil War in that they have received neither proper recognition nor investigation.

2.2 The Manor was seized and fortified in May 1643 by the Parliamentarians after their capture of Malmesbury, Chippenham and Lacock Abbey to the south. A force of Royalists set out from Devizes to re-capture the Abbey, but found it abandoned, the garrison having retreated to Rowden Manor and Chippenham. They entered Chippenham and a detachment under Captain Webb captured the Governor of Rowden, Colonel Ludford, and a handful of men. The Royalists then marched on the Manor itself and demanded that the defenders surrender. The Parliamentarians answered simply with a volley of musketry. In response, a number of heavy artillery pieces were summoned by the Royalists from Bath and brought immediately before the Manor by Sir Francis Doddington, where they began a bombardment. It is not recorded whether the Parliamentarians had any artillery of their own with which to repel this threat, so it is presumed they did not.
2.3 A further four hundred Royalist Dragoons under Lord Astley arrived as reinforcement from Cirencester to assist Sir Charles Lloyd’s regiment of foot and Sir James Long’s regiment of horse. The garrison of Rowden Manor may have numbered around two or three hundred at this time (Mercurius Aulicus 1644).

2.4 A short while later, Colonel Stephens, Sheriff of Gloucester, attempted to relieve the siege by breaking through the Royalist lines with both horse and foot, and bringing supplies and ammunition into the Manor. He was successful. However, while Stephens and his men rested inside the manor, the Royalists and a number of sympathetic locals, according to Daniell, threw up a large work immediately beyond the main gate of the Manor, effectively trapping the Parliamentarians inside. Approximately four hundred men were trapped in worsening conditions inside the manor compound, surrounded by a much larger force of besiegers. Stephens began another daring move and attempted a sally from the Manor, driving back the Royalists with sustained musket volleys as other men tried to demolish the siegework and make spaces sufficient for horse to escape. However, the Royalists stiffly resisted and the sally failed, resulting in many Parliamentarian dead. The survivors retreated back into the Manor grounds and the siege continued.

2.5 It is known that other Parliamentarian garrisons were aware of what transpired at Rowden, but for whatever reason, chose not to become involved. Pay records from the garrison of Great Chalfield manor give the detail ‘to five spies at Rowden £1 5s 0d’ (Baines 2009).

2.6 The siege had stretched on into the following February when harsh winter storms forced the besieging Royalists to withdraw from their forward positions. The Governor of Gloucester, Colonel Massey, explained that he was in the midst of actioning a relief of the Manor with a substantial force of horse and foot, but he too was defeated by the weather (Calendar State Papers, Domestic 1644-1645). Stephens hoped that the darkness and confusion of the storm, coupled with attacks by Massey, might allow for his forces to make a covert escape. However, the Royalists maintained vigilance in the surrounding countryside and with the scattering of Massey’s force, Stephens saw that such escape would still be futile. He finally surrendered on 15th February 1644 on agreement that the lives of the defenders would be spared.
2.7 Rowden House was razed to the ground soon after and Stephens remained captive for a short while, but was later released as part of a prisoner exchange (Daniell 1894).

3 WALKOVER SURVEY

The site

3.1 The Site lies within a gently sloping valley on land that falls away eastwards towards the River Avon, at an elevation of approximately 45m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The land rises relatively sharply to the north-west, to approximately 65m aOD. The full extent of the battle action is not currently known.

3.2 The walkover survey confirmed the site is predominantly occupied by a series of large pasture fields, currently used by local residents for dog walking and recreation. A number of footpaths cover the site, although the paths are overgrown and poorly marked in places.

3.3 Due to the restricted access into Rowden Manor itself and large overgrown areas, not all parts of the Site were assessed in detail during the walkover survey. As a result, it cannot be excluded that additional remains could be located elsewhere, particularly within the present boundary of the Manor.

Archaeological assets

3.4 During the walkover survey, a moderately substantial ditch and bank was identified. It appeared to straddle the main access road into the Manor and subsequently had been cut through by the modern road (Figure 14). Other minor earthworks were also noted. These approximately corresponded with a series of earthworks noted on the early Ordnance Survey mapping labelled as ‘Entrenchments’ (Figure 4), although this label is revised to ‘Earthworks’ on later editions (Figure 5) until being entirely omitted on present versions.

3.5 The large earthwork closely corresponds with the westernmost ‘entrenchment’ labelled on the early OS mapping (Figure 4), although on the ground is clearly different in form. The OS mapping gives the incorrect impression that the earthworks are all of one feature. It also failed to identify numerous, less visible earthworks and therefore presents a skewed view of what might have existed in the area.
Assessment of this feature in conjunction with the aerial photograph review suggests that it is part of a medieval hollow way.

3.6 From identification and observations on the ground, the northern and eastern portions of the earthwork in Figure 4 appear far less substantial and are likely they form part of a minor boundary related to the hollow way. The topographic map of 1784 (Figure 3) labels a tree-lined footpath which may well be the same feature.

3.7 The map of 1784 (Figure 3) partly names the field within which these earthworks exist as ‘Breach’. Other surrounding fields also have ‘Breach’ as part of their name. There is no record of a breach ever being made in the defences of the Manor during the Civil War, but this is perhaps a reference to the siege. There is, however, no further proof to substantiate this idea. This map also shows a curvilinear boundary wall to the south of the Manor (the reproduced image is oriented with south at the top), which encroaches into the main yard and apparently forms one wall of a building. It is possible this curving boundary relates to an earlier phase of occupation on the site.

3.8 A number of other earthworks were noted alongside the present access road into the Manor, although the full extent of these was difficult to discern at ground level (Figure 15). These were also identified in aerial photographs and it is possible that these relate to the Civil War. They are discussed in further detail below in paragraph 4.11.

3.9 During the walkover survey, Rowden Down Hill was identified as a likely point to site artillery for bombarding the Manor as it overlooks the entire complex at moderately close range, providing excellent over-watch (Figure 16). It is also on the western side of the River Avon, which would have suited artillery coming directly from Bath. It would, however, have been equally possible to site artillery on the flat ground to the south and north, from which the roofs of the present Manor are easily visible (Figure 13).

3.10 It is possible that there is some trace of Civil War related archaeology within the boundary of Rowden Manor itself. Many of the burnt stones from the old House were incorporated into the garden walls of the replacement complex (Daniell 1894). It was unfortunately not possible to gain close enough access to verify this statement.
4  AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY REVIEW

Introduction

4.1 A full search of aerial photographs held by the English Heritage Archives (EHA) was carried out for the Site (EHA ref. 88403). This returned thirteen oblique photographs and fifty one vertical photographs (Appendix 1).

4.2 All identified features are illustrated on Figure 6. Two of the photographs are reproduced in this report (Figures 7 and 8). The review of the aerial photographs concentrated on the immediate vicinity of Rowden Manor as this was the epicentre of the fighting. It is also unlikely that the 17th century military activity would have resulted in the creation of earthworks far beyond this area. Siege works of this period are generally designed to protect defenders and besiegers whilst in effective range for musket and artillery. It therefore stands to reason that no such earthworks would have been constructed a long distance from the Manor.

4.3 Any earthworks from the Civil War are likely to have been primarily an earthen construction of bank and ditch, perhaps reinforced by gabions or wooden hoarding. Apart from the reference to the work which blocked the entrance to the Manor, there are no references to extensive offensive or defensive siege works, so it can probably be assumed that anything constructed was on a relatively small scale.

Oblique photographs

4.4 All thirteen of the oblique photographs were reviewed for this study. They comprised both colour prints and digital colour photographs taken between 1998 and 2012.

Vertical photographs

4.5 Forty three vertical, black and white photographs were available at the EHA and comprised prints taken by both the RAF and Ordnance Survey, between 1945 and 1996.

LIDAR

4.6 A single LIDAR image from 2005 was also consulted (Fig 9).
**Results**

4.7 The review of the aerial photographs revealed a significant number of previously unidentified earthworks of a possible range of dates.

4.8 Two curvilinear features of possible prehistoric or Iron Age date were identified to the north and north east of the present Rowden Manor. It is possible these represent partially visible ring ditches or roundhouse drip gullies.

4.9 It is clear that the medieval Rowden Manor existed within a busy agricultural landscape. Numerous field boundaries of probable medieval date are visible on many of the aerial photographs, as well as a series of boundaries likely to be more closely related to the manorial complex itself. These perhaps represent enclosures for animals or other ancillary functions. Two possible hollow-ways were also identified, heading north from the present Manor access road, towards Chippenham. One of these is undoubtedly the same earthwork that is identified in the HER as a possible entrenchment relating to the siege of the Manor (MONUMENT No. 1580026, ST 97 SW 176); this identification now seems unlikely. It seems probable that the ditch identified during the walkover survey, at least in part, relates to this hollow-way. It is possible that such a feature may have been utilised during the Civil War – it appears much more prominently alongside the Manor access road and perhaps provided some siege work function during this period.

4.10 Some of the medieval boundaries may also have been extant during the 1640s. It is clear that the early OS mapping identified a small number of these boundaries, the ones that were still readily visible above ground, but their identification as ‘Entrenchments’ relating to the siege, and subsequent HER entry (MONUMENT NO. 1580023, ST 97 SW 175) is probably incorrect. Ridge and furrow is also readily visible in many of the surrounding fields, particularly in the LIDAR image (Figure 9).

4.11 A number of features possibly relating to the Civil War were also identified (Figure 6). These include two small anomalies alongside the present access into the Manor. It is plausible that these represent the surviving above ground remains of the hastily constructed work which barred the Parliamentarians from escaping the Manor. On some aerial photographs there are faint traces of sub-triangular earthworks extending to the north and east of the present Manor boundary. Although far from certain, it is possible that these represent small defensive works constructed by the Parliamentarians. Certainly, their approximate shape and size is in keeping with
what would be expected of defensive works of this period, but no further conclusions can be made without archaeological investigation. Another earthwork is visible as a dark streak to the south west of the Manor. It stops noticeably short of the medieval enclosure boundaries and may represent an entrenchment constructed during the Civil War, designed to move men forward whilst remaining in cover. The northern end of this earthwork appears to be wider and more rounded, and if dating from the Civil War, may represent a gun or mortar position.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The walkover survey and aerial photography review undertaken for this study have identified a number of features of interest. A series of features were identified as cropmarks on aerial photographs including possible prehistoric remains. Most of the identified features probably relate to the medieval occupation of Rowden Manor, with a number of smaller features possibly directly relate to the Civil War siege.

5.2 It is clear that, whilst relatively minor when compared to the major engagements of the Civil War, the siege of Rowden Manor was a significant action within Wiltshire and the site of heavy loss of life. The sustained nature of the bombardment and fierceness of the infantry clashes indicate the strong possibility of battle related artefacts being deposited in the landscape around the house. Much of the landscape has remained a greenfield site since the time of the Civil War, as such the likelihood that such artefacts still survive is very high. Recovery of these artefacts through a systematic metal detector survey would enable a far better understanding of the course of the battle action, along with more effective interpretation of the site for members of the public. It would be necessary to undertake targeted geophysics and excavate trenches in the vicinity of the noted earthworks in order to determine their character and ascertain if they do indeed date from the Civil War.

5.3 The geophysical survey carried out within Riverside Park, targeting the areas proposed for balancing ponds, revealed anomalies indicating potential pits and ditches. These anomalies were observed in fields in the vicinity of the nursery, significantly to the south of the Rowden Manor site (Pre-Construct Geophysics 2014: Areas 3-5). In closer proximity to the Manor, features of modern origin were recorded (Area 1) together with remains associated with cultivation, including ploughed-out ridge and furrow (Area 2).
5.4 This assessment has indicated that features associated with the Civil War siege are unlikely to have been constructed at a significant distance from the Manor. It can be therefore concluded that the siege works would have been focused within the area of the Manor and that features recorded during the geophysical survey, at a distance from the manorial site, are unlikely to have been associated with the Civil War activity.

5.5 Consequently, the excavations associated with the proposed balancing ponds are unlikely to affect any surviving earthworks or below ground remains related to the Civil War military activity. However, the excavations will impact directly upon the anomalies identified in the geophysical survey, which could potentially be of archaeological origin. It is considered that archaeological recording prior to the construction work would provide an appropriate level of mitigation with regard to these archaeological remains. The scale, scope and nature of these mitigation works will need to be agreed through consultation with the Wiltshire County Archaeologist.
4 REFERENCES

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CgMs 2014 Archaeological Desk Based Assessment: Land at Rowden Park, Chippenham, Wiltshire, SN15 2NN, client report ref. DH/KB/16305


Institute for Archaeologists 2012. Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment


Rev. J. J. Daniel (ed.) 1894 The History of Chippenham. Compiled from Researches by the Author, and from the Collections of Rev. Canon Jackson, London: Houlston and Sons

http://www.old-maps.co.uk/maps.html, accessed July 2014
APPENDIX A: AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY SEARCH

VERTICAL PHOTOGRAPHS

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OBLIQUE PHOTOGRAPHS

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3 Extract from the John Powell, Topographical Map of the Town and Borough of Chippenham, Wilts, 1784
4 Extract from the 1886 Ordnance Survey Map
5 Extract from the 1937 Ordnance Survey Map
Possible archaeological features

- prehistoric
- medieval
- Civil War
- post-medieval

site boundary

Possible archaeological features identified during aerial photograph and LIDAR review

Cotswold Archaeology

Cirencester 01285 771022
Milton Keynes 01908 218320
Andover 01264 347630

w cotsarco.co.uk

www.cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk
e enquiries@cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk

Crown copyright 2009. All rights reserved. Licence number 100020449.
7 Aerial Photograph OS/88006, Frame Number 119
8 Aerial Photograph RAF/540/549, Frame Number 4038
LIDAR image of Rowden Manor

Riverside Park, Chippenham, Wiltshire

LIDAR data
10 View towards Rowden Manor along present access road
11 View towards Rowden Manor from western bank of possible hollow way
12 View towards Rowden Manor from the south west
13 View of bank cut by present access road
14 View of earthworks to north west of Rowden Manor
15 View towards Rowden Manor from Rowden Down Hill - possible location on which to site artillery battery