

Case Name: Lyonshall Deserted Medieval Settlement

Case Number: 462895

Background

English Heritage has received an application to consider the medieval settlement remains at Lyonshall in Herefordshire for scheduling.

Asset(s) under Assessment

Facts about the asset(s) can be found in the Annex(es) to this report.

Annex	List Entry Number	Name	Heritage Category	EH Recommendation
1	N/A	Medieval settlement remains at Lyonshall	Scheduling	Do not add to Schedule

Visits

Date	Visit Type
30 March 2011	Full inspection

Context

An application has been received to consider the medieval settlement remains to the north of Lyonshall in Herefordshire for scheduling. The applicant has informed English Heritage that part of the site, located on the west side of the A480 and which is currently under pasture, is under threat from cultivation. The applicant has also indicated that there are further settlement remains in a number of other fields to the north and north-east of the present village and these are considered as part of this assessment.

A request to consider the medieval settlement at Lyonshall for designation was originally submitted in 2001, but the assessment was deferred since there were proposals to undertake an earthwork survey of the site. However, the survey did not take place and we have now been asked to assess the site in light of the potential threat from ploughing.

Lyonshall Castle, a scheduled ancient monument, and the Grade II* listed Church of St Michael and All Angels' are situated towards the northern extent of the site. To the south-west is a section of Offa's Dyke which is also a scheduled monument.

Assessment

Consultation

Due to the very short timescale before the field containing the greatest concentration of earthworks is ploughed, it has not been possible to carry out full consultation on this case. However, all parties involved have been notified of the application. Planning permission is not required in order to take the field into cultivation so assessment and mitigation through PPS 5 is not relevant in this instance.

Assessment

Annex 1 of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Scheduled Monuments (March 2010) document contains the criteria for assessing the national importance of archaeological sites: period, rarity, documentation, group value, survival/condition, fragility/vulnerability, diversity and potential.

Medieval rural settlements in England were marked by great regional diversity in form, size and type, and the protection of their archaeological remains needs to take these differences into account. To do this, England has been divided into three broad Provinces on the basis of each area's distinctive mixture of nucleated and dispersed settlements. This monument lies in the Shropshire Hills and Severn Plain sub-province of the Northern and Western Province, an area characterised by dispersed hamlets and farmsteads, but with some

larger nucleated settlements in well-defined agriculturally favoured areas, established after the Norman Conquest. English Heritage has undertaken extensive research on medieval settlements in a national context as part of the Monuments Protection Programme; Lyonshall was not identified as a site of national importance warranting further investigation in this assessment.

Historic maps indicate that what appears to be the best preserved area of settlement remains, that is the burgage plots situated immediately to the north-west of the village hall, was planted as an orchard in the C19. Although the trees have been cleared from this area and pasture has been re-instated, it is likely that the underlying archaeology will have been affected by the previous land use. An analysis of the historic maps and the aerial photographs has also shown that some of the linear earthworks to the south-west of the A480 appear to be the remains of former field boundaries and drainage ditches. An inspection of the site has indicated that although earthworks relating to the medieval settlement are visible in a number of fields, the majority are of a shallow and degraded nature, most being under 0.5m deep. Within the field to the south-west of the A480 and the fields to the west of the churchyard, which appear to retain the greatest concentration of earthworks, mostly in the form of burgage plots and hollow ways, there does not appear to be any surface evidence for individual building platforms or for other visible features indicative of a nationally important survival of medieval settlement remains. The site appears to have been occupied for only a relatively short period of time and any structures relating to the settlement are likely to have been built of timber. What may survive as buried features, such as the foundation slots and post holes of buildings, may, therefore, be of an ephemeral nature, depending on the soil conditions. Furthermore there is little evidence for the survival of ridge and furrow cultivation or for other features such as fishponds that are usually associated with medieval settlements.

Some research has been undertaken on this medieval settlement, as a consequence of which the history of Lyonshall has been illuminated to some extent, though not in any detail. In addition aerial photographs from the mid- and late C20 depict a series of earthworks across a fairly considerable area to the north of the village, including to the west and north of Upper Farm and to the north of Bryncurl on the north-east edge of the village. That said a number of fields that were considered to retain settlement remains are now under cultivation, mostly planted as orchards, thus at least parts of the site have been disturbed and the archaeology in these areas cannot be considered to survive well. Furthermore there has been residential development to either side of the A480, including the aptly-named Burgage Close and Burgage Bank. Although the area is likely to have once formed part of the medieval settlement, there is no visible evidence for archaeological remains and the character and extent of the site cannot be determined in this area. In addition it has not been possible to establish the nature of below ground survival, although landscaping and gardening activities are considered to have had an impact on the survival of underlying archaeological deposits.

The site lies within the regional settlement zone of the Shropshire Hills and Severn Plain sub-Province of the Northern and Western Province which is an area of great diversity. The area is characterised by medium and high densities of dispersed settlement, and with concentrations of small villages and hamlets. In medieval times there were limited areas of open-field agriculture, intermingled with extensive tracts of woodland and hill country that were used for grazing. The applicant suggests that the earthworks at Lyonshall are well preserved and are illustrative of the historical development of medieval settlement in the Welsh Marches. However, when compared with examples of medieval settlements that are scheduled such as the site at Longtown to the south, Lyonshall does not survive as well largely as a consequence of the degraded nature of the earthworks and the extent of more recent development. Furthermore, Longtown has good documentary evidence relating to the development of both the town and the castle with which it was associated. The earthworks at Lyonshall which are spread over a considerable area represent perhaps only a small proportion of the original extent of the settlement. They are similar to the remains of many shrunken or deserted medieval settlements throughout the country, which provide evidence of former medieval occupation, but with no outstanding features.

It must be acknowledged that the site has a strong spatial and historical relationship with the late-C11 or early-C12 Lyonshall Castle which is a scheduled ancient monument, and the Grade II* listed St Michaels and All Angels' Church which retains considerable medieval fabric. However, except for earthworks in the field to the west of the churchyard, there is no visible relationship with the principal area of settlement remains to the south due to later residential development and tree planting between these features.

At present the medieval settlement remains at Lyonshall are considered to be of local rather than national importance. The importance of the site within a local context, however, should not be overlooked since there is the potential for the survival of buried archaeology. Any medieval settlement remains discovered in future which indicate that the survival of buried remains is better than that suggested by the degraded earthworks

and the level of disturbance caused by cultivation may enhance the significance of the site and it may be reassessed for its eligibility for scheduling. In the meantime, however, it is felt that any archaeology should be managed through the government's advice on the historic environment in Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5).

Conclusion

After examining all the records and other relevant information and having carefully considered the national importance of this case, the criteria for scheduling are not fulfilled. The medieval settlement remains at Lyonshall are, therefore, not recommended for scheduling.

Reasons for Designation Decision

Survival: the areas of abandoned medieval habitation at Lyonshall do not survive particularly well in the form of substantial earthworks and there is no evidence for the survival and character of any buried archaeological deposits

Potential: parts of the site have been cultivated, or built over, causing significant disturbance to any buried remains

Representation: the earthworks and any underlying archaeological deposits that may survive are not considered to be sufficiently important in a national context to merit statutory designation

Annex 1

Factual Details

Name: Medieval settlement remains at Lyonshall

Location: Fields either side of A480,
Lyonshall,
Herefordshire,

County	District	District Type	Parish
	County of Herefordshire	Unitary Authority	Lyonshall

History

Although not mentioned in the Domesday, the castle was probably established at Lyonshall not long after the Norman Conquest and appears to have belonged in succession to the families of Lacy, Devereux and Vere, and again to that of Devereux. Although the date of the first settlement at Lyonshall is unknown, documentary sources indicate that a weekly market and annual fair were granted in 1301. The settlement, which developed on a linear plan extending southwards from the castle, was one of several new towns or boroughs in the area, which were usually sited adjacent to a castle for defence. Following the Black Death in the mid-14th century, Lyonshall's population appears to have decreased, leading to an abandonment of the area between the castle and the present core of the village to the south.

Details

The site includes the dispersed earthwork remains associated with the areas of abandonment caused by the shrinkage of the medieval settlement of Lyonshall. They are principally located to the north-west and north-east of the present village, on gently undulating land, and in places are interspersed with modern additions to this settlement. The medieval settlement took the form of a largely linear development and is believed to have been focussed on a series of burgage plots running north-west to south-east, to either side of the modern road, (A480), with further medieval occupation remains in the area to the west of the church and the site of Lyonshall Castle. Separate from this, beyond the western and south-eastern extent of the present village are further irregular earthworks that probably represent agricultural enclosures.

The largest concentration of earthworks is situated in a field to the north-west of the present village, but earthworks are also visible in a number of other fields to the north-west, east and south-east. Immediately to the west of the main thoroughfare (A480), and to the north of the village hall, are six low terraces or enclosures, probably abandoned burgage plots, which front onto the modern road. They are rectangular in plan, each measuring approximately 30m by 80m with their long axes roughly north-east to south-west and their boundaries defined by low banks and ditches. There is little evidence for any individual building platforms within these enclosures but this may be due to the fact that they were occupied by an orchard by at least the C19. The western boundary of the plots is marked by a shallow, but distinct hollow way, probably a former back lane which is aligned north-west to south-east and appears to have originally joined what is now the main road (A44) to the south-west of the church. Beyond the back lane are earthworks that are less well-defined and of indeterminable nature, including a number of probable shallow drainage ditches. Aerial photographs indicate that some of these features have been created by the removal of hedges. The southern half of the field was under arable cultivation in the mid-C20 and there is thus no visible evidence of archaeological features in this area.

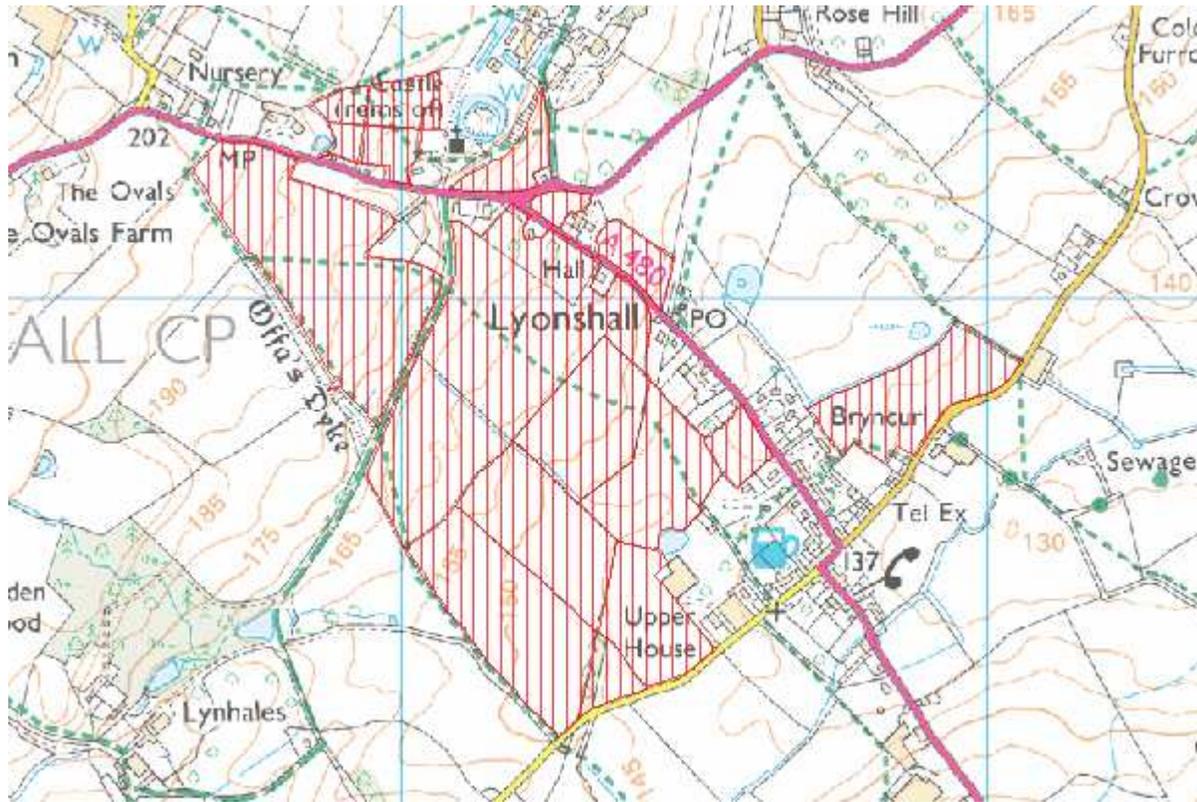
To the west of the church on the north side of the A44 is a series of perpendicular ditches which appear to define several compartments which probably represent further settlement remains, gardens or agricultural enclosures. Along the north-eastern edge of these earthworks is a trackway which continues as an obvious earthwork north-westwards towards the Old Vicarage. In addition there are traces of ridge and furrow and possible trackways in fields to the north-east and west of the present village, close to Bryncurl and Upper House respectively.

Selected Sources

Ray, Keith, Medieval Towns in Herefordshire, Herefordshire Archaeology Report 20, 2001

Map

National Grid Reference: SO3285656023



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The above map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale. For a copy of the full scale map, please see the attached PDF - 1400013_1_634388980691718960.pdf