

## EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Two moated sites, the site of a dovecote and further associated features 120m north west and 180m north of The Old Hall

PARISH: EAST LAYTON

DISTRICT: RICHMONDSHIRE

COUNTY: NORTH YORKSHIRE

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 35479

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): NZ16380999  
NZ16551008

### DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The monument includes extensive earthwork and buried remains of two moated sites, a dovecote and associated features including a range of building platforms and enclosures. The monument is divided into two separate areas of protection. One of the areas, which includes one of the moated sites and the dovecote, occupies the whole of a field called Ashes. The other area occupies the northern part of the field to the east and the enclosed area to the north of this in which the second moated site is located. The monument lies on the north facing slope and level ground to the north of a low ridge which extends east to west on the southern side of lower Teesdale.

The moated site in the Ashes field is thought to date from between the 12th to 14th centuries and was the site of a high status manorial residence of a prestigious family. The size, complexity and range of features surviving throughout the field indicate that this moated site included a number of ancillary features to support the wider economic and social functions of the complex. In addition to the dovecote these would have included stables, workshops, stores and gardens both for pleasure and for horticulture providing produce for consumption by the household.

The second moated site to the north east is thought to have been constructed later. It is not clear whether this moated site also supported a dwelling and it is possible that it was used for some of the ancillary activities associated with the manor house to the south west. Up until the late 20th century the interior was filled with broad ridges which indicates that it was constructed for horticultural purposes, possibly as an orchard, a phenomenon common in the late medieval and post-medieval periods. In the late 20th century a tennis court was constructed in the interior which levelled most of the ridges. This has recently been removed.

The moated manorial residence and ancillary features are all that survive of the former medieval village of East Layton, which is known to have been in existence by the Domesday survey of 1086. Evidence from aerial photographs shows that parts of the wider medieval village were located to

the east, in the field to the east of the road from East Layton to Forcett. This field has been intensively ploughed and there are no earthwork remains visible. By the 14th century the village of East Layton, in common with other villages in the area suffered a decline in fortune due to bad harvests, disease and raids by the Scots and was subsequently abandoned. The manorial residence was abandoned by the late 15th century when the fashion for moated sites waned, and was probably relocated to the site of The Old Hall, the present building of which dates to the early 17th century. The second moated site may however have continued to function as part of the immediate estate of the newly constructed Old Hall.

The site of the moated manorial residence is located in the northern part of the Ashes field and includes an irregularly shaped platform surrounded by a ditch. Whilst the bulk of the moated site lies on level ground, the southern part lies on the lower slopes of the ridge to the south. The platform measures 60m north to south by a maximum of 50m east to west. Around the outer edge of the platform there is a bank up to 3m wide and 0.5m high. On the northern, western and north eastern sides the ditch takes a classic form being wide and flat-bottomed. It measures a maximum of 6m across and is 1.75m deep. Immediately on the outside of the ditch there is a counterscarp bank up to 3m wide and 0.5m high. On the southern and south eastern sides of the moat platform, lying on the sloping ground, the surrounding ditch takes the form of narrow channels up to 2m wide on the south side and 4m on the south east side. These would have served to feed water from the slope to the main part of the moat ditch. On the western side of the moated site there is a circular depression cut into both the platform and the ditch. The purpose of this is currently unclear. Beyond the south east of the platform, and separated from it by the ditch, there is a rectangular enclosure extending northwards down the slope. This enclosure measures 50m north to south by 18m east to west and is defined by an earthen bank 2m wide and 0.5m high. In the south eastern corner of this enclosure there is a circular earthwork with a diameter of 8m. This is interpreted as the base of a dovecote. It is comparable to a group of similar sized and shaped dovecotes in this part of Teesdale, which are dated to the 14th/15th centuries. On the level ground to the east and north of the moated site there are at least two prominent east to west aligned ditches. These link up with the moat ditches and served to feed water to and away from the moated site.

On the slope above the moated site there is a wide ditch extending east to west across the field, which connects to the moat ditches and also to at least two further channels on the slope higher to the south. The whole complex is considered to be a water management system constructed to drain the sloping ground above the moat and also to provide a water supply to the moat ditches. On the slope in the south eastern part of the monument there is a broad terrace of 20 sq m and at the western side of the slope there is a further terrace measuring 40m east to west by 15m north to south. Both these terraces are interpreted as garden areas. On the southern part of the slope two rectangular building platforms orientated north to south survive as earthworks. These measure up to 9m by 3m in size. In the western part of the monument, to the west of the moated site, there are further earthwork remains of enclosures and building platforms associated with the wider functions of the manorial residence. These are partly covered by nettle growth and vegetation, which has obscured their exact form and dimensions.

The second moated site survives as a rectangular shaped platform surrounded by a steep sided ditch with a further outer ditch parallel to the southern side. The platform measures 60m north to south by 30m east to

west. The maximum width at the top of the ditch is 14m and it is approximately 2.5m deep. At the northern and southern ends of the central platform there are three broad ridges up to 5m across and 6m long. These are the ends of the ridges, which formerly extended along the whole length of the interior. The north to south orientation of ridges suggests an orchard as they are known to have been laid out in this fashion. The entrance to the interior was via a causeway in the south east corner of the moat ditch, which measures 10m wide. Some 8m to the south of the southern moat ditch, and parallel with it, there is a shallow ditch 10m wide and approximately 1m deep which extends east-west for 40m. This plan of moated site containing a rectangular-shaped primary moat with a secondary ditch parallel to one of the short sides is known from the medieval period.

The wooden fence and gates at the north eastern moated site are excluded from the monument, although the ground beneath is included.

#### ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Around 6,000 moated sites are known in England. They consist of wide ditches, often or seasonally water-filled, partly or completely enclosing one or more islands of dry ground on which stood domestic or religious buildings. In some cases the islands were used for horticulture. The majority of moated sites served as prestigious aristocratic and seigneurial residences with the provision of a moat intended as a status symbol rather than a practical military defence. The peak period during which moated sites were built was between about 1250 and 1350 and by far the greatest concentration lies in central and eastern parts of England. However, moated sites were built throughout the medieval period, are widely scattered throughout England and exhibit a high level of diversity in their forms and sizes. They form a significant class of medieval monument and are important for the understanding of the distribution of wealth and status in the countryside. Many examples provide conditions favourable to the survival of organic remains.

Dovecotes are buildings constructed for the breeding and keeping of doves or pigeons. They are associated with the medieval and post-medieval landowning aristocracy, both lay and secular, in order to provide a constant and sustainable supply of meat, eggs and manure. They are often circular in plan and are characterised by the presence of nesting boxes on the inside walls. Originally restricted to royalty and nobility, by the 14th century ownership extended throughout the social hierarchy. By the early 17th century large numbers were erected by non-manorial landowners, by which time the ownership of a dovecote had also assumed a social significance. The surviving earthworks of the moated sites, dovecote and the associated features 120m north west and 180m north of The Old Hall are well-preserved. A wide range of archaeological remains survive which offer important scope for the study of medieval domestic and economic life.

MONUMENT INCLUDED IN THE SCHEDULE ON 11th August 2003