

# Earthworks at Doddershall

**HISTORIC LANDSCAPE REPORT / December 2012**

including HS2 high-speed rail line impact assessment

**Buckinghamshire  
Archaeological  
Society**



**SURVEY:**  
Mike Farley,  
Peter Marsden,  
Steve Nicholl,  
Karen Pepler and  
John Sheldon.

**RESEARCH AND  
REPORT:**  
Peter Marsden

Report number  
BAS/2012-04

# Earthworks at Doddershall



Buckinghamshire  
Archaeological  
Society

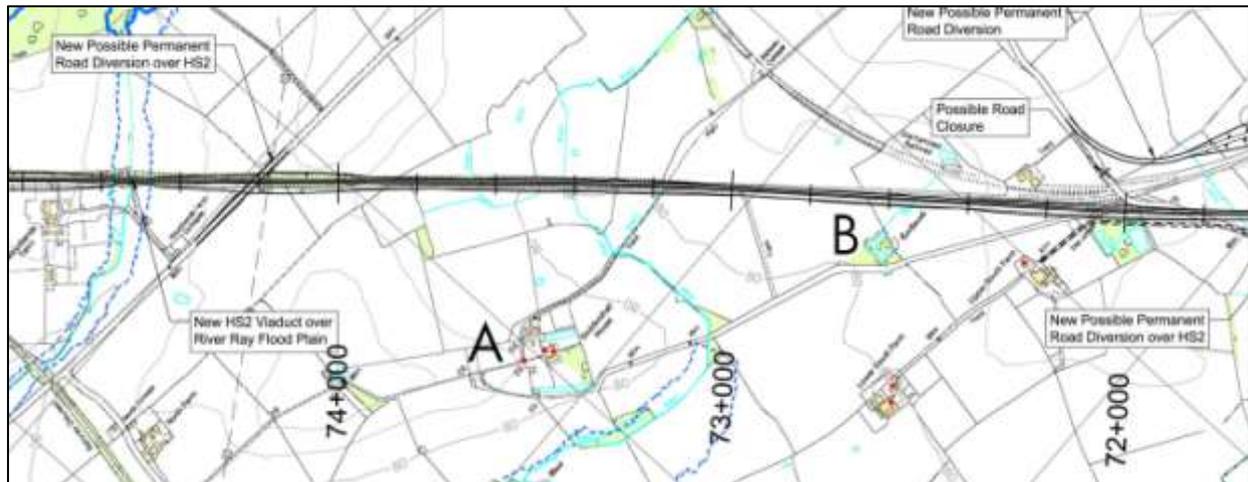
## HISTORIC LANDSCAPE REPORT

including HS2 high-speed rail line impact assessment

December 2012

Report and documentary research by Peter Marsden, with contributions from Mike Farley, Steve Nicholl, Karen Pepler and John Sheldon.

This is report number BAS/ 2012-04.



ABOVE: The official HS2 route plan of January 2012 showing where the line would cross the Doddershall estate. Doddershall House is marked 'A' and the earthworks 'B'. The line itself follows the trackbed of the existing goods line between Quanton and Calvert.<sup>1</sup>

LEFT: The western channel of the 'moat', looking north.

PHOTOGRAPH: Marian Miller

## SUMMARY

Survey and documentary evidence show that the earthworks in question are one of eight moated sites within the pre-Domesday Doddershall estate. A survey by the Historical Monuments Commission suggested that these may be the remains of a medieval moated house. An Ordnance Survey investigator, however, preferred to map them as a gun battery from the English Civil War of 1642-9. The site is currently unscheduled and has never been excavated.

A field survey and documentary research by members of the society found some evidence to support either theory, though insufficient to prove either. Both theories may be correct.

The planned HS2 rail line will pass within 100 metres of the earthworks, but may move closer if the existing goods line is to be retained – making it likely that construction works will destroy the site. This report concludes that the earthworks are a significant heritage asset and that a full archaeological survey is essential to determine their exact historical provenance.

## **1: The site**

### **1.1 Geographical location**

Beside the main eastern drive to Doddershall House there is a large horseshoe-shaped water-filled 20ft-wide ditch surrounded by a small mixed tree plantation. This appears on the modern Ordnance Survey map at Grid Reference SP 728197, where it is marked 'Civil War Battery'.<sup>2</sup> The original purpose of the site is, however, uncertain, so these notes will refer to it simply as the 'earthworks'.

### **1.2 Historic context**

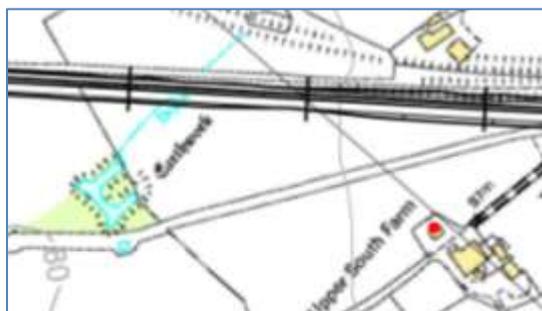
The estate of Doddershall dates from at least Anglo-Saxon times and appears in Domesday Book in 1085.<sup>3</sup> The earthworks are one of a number of 'moated sites' within the estate, though they are not scheduled as a historic monument and have never been excavated.

The estate was subject to early enclosure around 1495, when tenants were evicted and dwellings left deserted and derelict. Within this context, the Royal Commission for Historic Monuments (RCHM) has recorded the earthworks as the remains of a medieval moated house.<sup>4</sup>

During the English Civil War of 1642-49 the area around Aylesbury was the scene of frequent skirmishes between Royalist and Parliamentary forces. In this context, an Ordnance Survey field investigator, disagreeing with the Commission's view, recorded the earthworks as a civil war gun battery.<sup>5</sup>

The topography of Doddershall, as a landed estate in the hands of a single family for the past 400 years, offers a physical record of the economic and social history of Buckinghamshire.

### **1.3 The 21st-century context: the HS2 high-speed rail line**



The revised route of the proposed HS2 high-speed rail line between London and Birmingham, defined in January 2012, shows the line following the existing track of the former Great Central line built in the 1890s. This runs 100 metres to the north of the earthworks at their nearest point.

The current HS2 route plan showing the line as it passes 100 metres north of the earthworks.

Two factors indicate, however, that the earthworks would be seriously damaged by the construction of the HS2 line.

First, the land-take for HS2 will be greater to allow for power gantries and security fences on each side, and the construction work is likely to require considerable access roads.

Secondly, Minister of Transport Justine Greening announced on 16 July 2012 that the government intends to upgrade the line between Oxford and Bedford through Verney Junction, reopening it to passengers.<sup>6</sup> This suggests the existing single-track line between Aylesbury and Verney Junction will need to be retained as a link to the restored line. To permit this, the proposed line of HS2 where it crosses the Doddershall estate would need to be moved to the south – bringing the earthworks directly within its construction zone.

## **2: The survey**

The earthworks were viewed by five members of the Bucks Archaeological Society in October and November 2012, though no exact measurements were made. They consist of a rectangular platform, roughly 50ft square, which is surrounded on three sides by a 20ft-wide 'moat'. The fourth, eastern side is open ground, roughly level with the nearby field, where there are slight indications of a related earthwork.

Earth has been mounded up on the inside of the

three 'moated' sides to form a rounded bank, and the centre of the platform has been raised above the surrounding ground by between five

and ten feet. The centre of the 'horseshoe' faces west towards Doddershall House, 600 yards away.



The earthworks as shown in the Bucks Historic Environment Record (HER record ID 0033400000).

The horseshoe-shaped moat or ditch also has short extensions at each corner. The interior platform and surrounding ground is irregular in places, indicating the recent dumping of spoil. Replanting has also taken place in the surrounding copse, where the majority of trees are 25-50 years of age.

### **2.1 Other survey results**

The RCHM described the site as a 'homestead moat' with an island raised 7ft and one arm of the moat filled in with material from the island.<sup>7</sup> Rodwell, transcriber of the Doddershall estate papers, agrees, suggesting that it is a moated house site dating from the 15th century or earlier.<sup>8</sup>

The Ordnance Survey's field investigator, on the other hand, describes the site as a 'Civil War earthwork designed as a battery position for a single cannon. Open horseshoe plan with a triple-sided defensive ditch' and an 'all-embracing zone of fire'. The investigator cites 'parallels in Lincolnshire, Derbyshire, Notts and elsewhere'.<sup>9</sup>

A more recent suggestion is that the shape of the interior earthworks may simply reflect dumped spoil arising from excavation of the 'ponds' with no specific intent to form 'banks', and that the earthworks result from agricultural work on the estate during the past two centuries.<sup>10</sup>

## **3: Documentary evidence**

The documentary archives of the Doddershall Estate are deposited in the Centre for Bucks Studies. They amount to almost 600 documents, the more significant of which have been summarised by Rodwell.

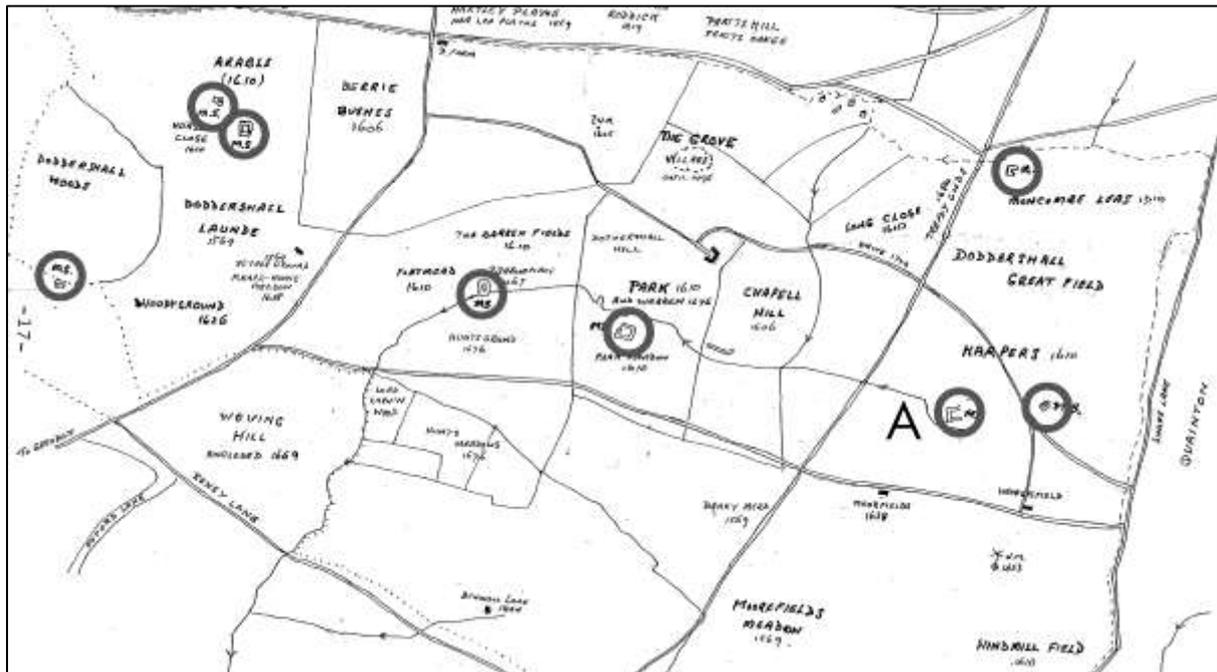
### **3.1 Chaundelers**

Rodwell identifies no fewer than eight 'moated sites' on the manor of 'Doddeshull', as it is named in the earliest document, dated circa 1225.<sup>11</sup> He writes:

'It seems to me that the largest of these [moated] sites was "Chaundelers", the site that has been designated, for no very good reason, a Civil War Battery. There are a host of moated sites in Bucks,

but Doddershall seems to have more than its ration. There are eight sites here but none in Shipton Lee or Quinton. Mike Farley has written that they seem to be mainly 13th century, and it was probably the fashion of the day to moat one's house.<sup>12</sup>

The reference to 'Chaundelers' is in a document dated 10 November 1430: 'Richard Chaundeler of Wotton under Bernwood and Margery his wife, Grant to Walter Sclattons of doddurshull and Joane his wife the moiety of a messuage called Chaundelers with the moiety of 1 rood of Arable land in Dodershull for a yearly rent of six pence.'<sup>13</sup>



Rodwell's historical map of the estate with the eight moated sites marked. The earthworks that are the subject of the report are marked 'A'; note that this is within 'Doddershall Great Field'. Doddershall House itself, just north-east of the centre of the map, may be a ninth moated site.<sup>14</sup>

### **3.2 Enclosure and dispossession**

The common open fields of medieval Doddershall were enclosed in the late 15th century when, according to contemporary sources, 120 people were dispossessed and evicted in order to turn the former arable fields into pastures for sheep:

'And they say that Thomas Pigott, serjeant of law, was lately seised in his demesne, as of fee, of twenty and four Messuages and twenty and four virgates of arable land suitable for cultivation and ploughed annually ... in the vill or hamlet of Doddershill ... on eleventh august in the tenth year of the said late king [Henry VII, that is, 1495] he enclosed those tenements with hedges and ditches and he made ruin of the said Messuages and lands and willingly allowed them to be in ruin and desolation ... and he converted the said lands ... to pasture for sheep ... and on that occasion sixteen ploughs were discarded and one hundred and twenty persons were taken away who in the said Messuages had until then dwelt ... and in the end as is supposed returned in extreme poverty and ended their lives.'<sup>15</sup>

Dramatic as this incident may seem, it is clear that the process of dispossession and enclosure continued piecemeal over a period of many years. For example on 27 June 1566 Queen Elizabeth I

granted 'licence to Thomas Pigott and his heires to throw down a cettain messuage and barn to convert to pasture and enclose certain lands in Doddershall, 110 acres of arable.'<sup>16</sup>

### **3.3 'Doddershall Great Field'**

Today the earthworks stand at the junction of four fields – though these were originally one, named variously 'Doddershall Great Ground' or 'Doddershall Great Field'. This was roughly 200 acres and the largest on the estate.<sup>17</sup> It was probably one of the common open fields of the medieval manor.<sup>18</sup>

The earliest estate documents for Doddershall are Deeds and Rentals which list areas of land, rarely buildings. Rodwell writes that '... it was during the 16th century that field names were first listed in the documents, by which time "Doddershall Great Ground" had already been renamed "Harpers Field". I believe that that this was because as soon as it was enclosed it was rented to William Harper of Quaynton, husbandman'.<sup>19</sup>

References to this field, the largest on the estate, appears regularly in the documents:

'15?? The particular of his present revenues... The Harpers feilds 175£.'<sup>20</sup>

'c1620 Dothershull ... The Harpers fields plough copse £190.'<sup>21</sup>

'6 February 1623/4 ... Dotheshall greate field als Harpers feild ...'<sup>22</sup>

'31 January 1638/9 ... Sir Richard Pigott of Doddershall, Knight, Grant to John Humfries of Addlington, Yeoman ... Dothershall Greayte ffield alias Harpers ffield...'<sup>23</sup>

Such references continue until 1685 ('1685 Doddershall Rent Roll for Lady Day. John Rogers for Harpers feild and Long Close £87.10.0.'<sup>24</sup>), indicating that the 'Great Field' remained intact throughout the 17th century.

The first indication of possible division appears just after the turn of the century ('1706 John Franklyn. Harpers field £160. Meadow to it. £20 ...'<sup>25</sup>) though the meadow could have been an entirely separate piece of land. But in 1735 the division is confirmed: 'Memorandum 5 December 1735 John Franklyn of Harpers Field in the parish of Quainton, grasier, Tenant to a certain Messuage ... and also the Great Ground otherways called Harpers Feild as it is now divided into three parts...'<sup>26</sup>

This is the first time since the medieval period that a dwelling is mentioned in connection with a land holding. In another document of the same date (5 December 1735), the position of the accompanying dwelling is clearer: 'Richard Franklyn of Dothershall, Grazier, Tenant to a Messuage with the barns etc ... also the ground thereunto adjoining called Morefields ...'<sup>27</sup>

By 1751 the buildings are defined in more modern terms and with a different tenant: 'A farmhouse and outhouses let to John Bayley. £324.8.9. Great Harpers Feild. Little Harpers Feild and orchard...'<sup>28</sup>

### **3.4 Map evidence**

The first known plan of Doddershall estate dates from 1587 and a dispute about grazing rights.<sup>29</sup> This shows Harpers Field as a single large undivided area. Watercourses are not generally shown on the map, but buildings are. On the plan, Harpers Field contains neither a building nor a moat.

Thomas Jefferys' map of Buckinghamshire, 1770, is of too large a scale to show individual fields and earthworks, but it does



Doddershall on the 1833 one-inch OS map. The earthworks are centre-right.

mark two sets of buildings, named 'Moorfields' and 'Harpersfield', in the positions occupied today by Lower South Farm and Upper South Farm respectively.<sup>30</sup>

The two other extant maps of the estate both date from the 19th century. That of 1859 shows the earthworks as a horseshoe-shaped moat at the junction of the four fields, which are named in the key as Upper Harpers, Lower Harpers, Cotemere Mead, and Rook Tree and Cowslip Meadow.<sup>31</sup> That of 1892 confirms this position;<sup>32</sup> it was drawn to show the then proposed Great Central railway line, which opened in 1899.<sup>33</sup>

The earthworks are also shown clearly on the 1833 one-inch Ordnance Survey map and again on the 1885 edition, where their shape exactly matches that we see today.<sup>34</sup>

## **4: Discussion**

### **4.1 A moated house site from before 1430?**

Rodwell agrees with RCHM but goes further, suggesting that the earthworks are the remains of a moated house site named 'Chaundlers' in a document of 1430.

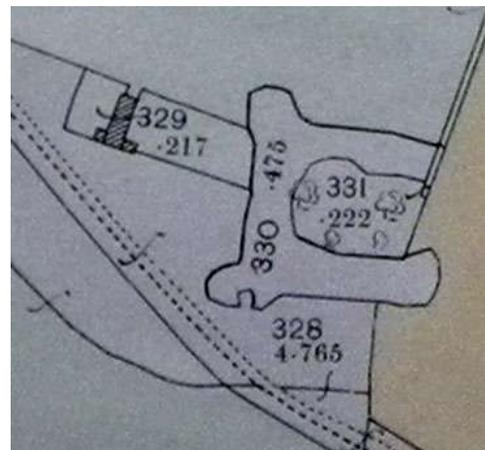
This certainly might have been a medieval moated house site. There are several moated sites on the Doddershall estate (Rodwell counts eight) and the records show that the Pigott family carried out a consistent policy of eviction during the years after 1495, leaving properties deserted and derelict. This may be one of them – even though its position in the centre of 'Dothershall Greayte ffield', a former common open field, is curious.

The evidence that it is 'Chaundlers', however, is weak. The name is mentioned in the documents transcribed by Rodwell only once, and his identification appears to be based only on the fact that this is the largest surviving 'moated site' on the estate.

Surviving documents offer no evidence for occupation of the earthworks site between the 16th and 18th centuries. When in 1735 a 'messuage' is mentioned in connection with Harpers Field, then occupied by the tenant John Franklyn, the evidence of Jefferys' map 35 years later shows that the dwelling itself was also called 'Harpers Field' - and matching Jefferys with 19th-century maps shows that is not the earthworks but today's Upper South Farm.

The form of the earthworks today tells us little, because modern dredging and clearance work have been carried out. On the other hand, the horseshoe shape of the 'moats' has remained unchanged since at least 1859, and the map accompanying the 1910 Land Valuation seems to indicate a truncated fourth channel, now further filled in.

So while this may be a medieval moated house site, both the documentary evidence and the currently visible physical evidence are inconclusive.



The earthworks as shown on the 1910 Land Valuation map, with what may be the remains of a 'return' channel at the south-east corner.<sup>35</sup>

## **4.2 A gun battery from the English Civil War?**

During the English Civil War of the 1640s the area around Aylesbury saw considerable skirmishing, with control swinging back and forth between Oxford, which was held for the king by Prince Rupert, and the Parliamentarians, who mostly held Aylesbury and the Chilterns.<sup>36</sup>

If the earthworks in question were of the same form in the 1640s as they are today, they would have offered an effective gun platform for the Parliamentary side, slightly raised above the surrounding open field, defended on three sides by a low earth bank and the 20ft-wide 'moats'. Artillery in the 17th century was fired with a low trajectory, so such a battery would command an open field of fire westwards towards Doddershall House and Royalist Oxfordshire. During agricultural clearance of the earthworks during the 1990s, musket balls were found.<sup>37</sup>

The English Heritage 'Pastscape' website is unequivocal: 'MONUMENT NO. 342706: Civil war gun position, for a single cannon. Horse shoe shaped earthwork with a defensive ditch.'<sup>38</sup> But apart from this and the description 'Civil War Battery' on the modern Ordnance Survey map, there seems to be no solid evidence. The most likely source for the Ordnance Survey's attribution is local tradition – yet there is no mention of the earthworks in the Doddershall Papers until the estate map of 1859.

Once again this is a plausible theory, but currently visible physical evidence is inconclusive.

## **4.3 Later agricultural works?**

Today the earthworks show signs of recent dredging to keep the wide water channels clear, and relatively recent replanting of the surrounding copse. The channels are probably locally useful in draining surrounding fields and keeping the nearby driveway to Doddershall House free of flooding. It is uncertain, however, whether this was their original function. The three channels are large – approximately 20ft wide by 90ft long – and their shape is more complex than a simple agricultural drainage pond would require.

A further suggestion is that the earthworks and ponds, standing beside the main driveway, may have been constructed as a 'garden feature' for Doddershall Park. This is unlikely. The drive was not diverted to its present position until the coming of the Great Central railway in the 1890s<sup>39</sup> and the estate map of 1859 shows the earthworks in the middle of fields.

The earthworks are clearly in use today as drainage and a copse within an agricultural estate, but their complex and unchanging form makes it unlikely that they were dug just for that purpose.

## **4.4 A site that has been reused over the centuries?**

The earthworks have never been investigated by excavation. As we have seen, currently available physical and documentary evidence is insufficient to determine their original use. The known history of Doddershall over the centuries does however give plausibility to both theories.

It does not seem unreasonable to suggest that succeeding generations may have turned an original deserted moated house site to their own purposes: the parliamentary forces of the 1640s finding it an ideal defensive position for a gun battery, while modern farming has reused it for agricultural drainage and tree planting.

But only further investigation by archaeological survey and excavation will determine whether one, or both, of these theories is correct.

## **5: Conclusions**

### **5.1 Significance and value as a heritage asset**

Because of the conflicting interpretations of the site and lack of archaeological investigation we are unable to make an assessment of its historical significance but trust that this report will make a real contribution to the HS2 Environmental Impact Assessment process (EIA). We believe that the findings of this report confirm that the earthworks have potentially 'Moderate' significance within Table 11 of the Cultural Heritage chapter of the HS2 EIA Scoping and Methodology Report of September 2012 (SMR).

### **5.2 The impact of HS2**

The earthworks are likely to be within the construction zone of the HS2 high-speed line. If the line goes ahead as planned the earthworks will be destroyed.

On the basis of information currently available from the Department for Transport and HS2 Limited we believe the impact within Table 12 of the SMR would be 'High'. We therefore conclude that the potential significance of the effect within Table 13 of the SMR is 'Major'.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The earthworks are only a small part of a complex and largely uninvestigated ancient and historically significant landscape at Doddershall so should be investigated as part of an extensive landscape and archaeological survey. Also, especially in view of conflicting interpretations of the site, we believe an intensive archaeological survey of the earthworks and their setting is essential, with trial excavations at key points, followed by full excavation if appropriate.

## **REFERENCES**

### ABBREVIATIONS:

- CBS Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies  
HER Historic Environment Record  
RCHM Royal Commission on Historic Monuments

### NOTES

- 1: ARUP HS2 Post Consultation Route Plan and Profile Sheet 12 (Drawing number HS2-ARP-00-DR-RW-05012, issue 4.0, January 2012).
- 2: UK Ordnance Survey 'Explorer' Map 181: Chiltern Hills North (Revised 2009).
- 3: Domesday Book: Buckinghamshire, folio 153a.
- 4: RCHM Buckinghamshire, volume 2, page 243.
- 5: Quoted in Buckinghamshire HER record ID 0033400000.
- 6: Ministerial statement at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/investing-in-rail-investing-in-jobs-and-growth> with a map showing the restored line at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/3644/map-all-schemes.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/3644/map-all-schemes.pdf)
- 7: RCHM Buckinghamshire, volume 2, page 243.
- 8: G Rodwell, Doddershall and Shipton Lee (printed by the author, Quinton 1999), page 1.
- 9: Buckinghamshire HER record ID 0033400000.

- 10: Michael Farley, personal communication.
- 11: CBS D/P Addl 23 (c1225?), in Rodwell, page 5.
- 12: Rodwell, page 1; he gives no source reference for the dating attributed to Mike Farley.
- 13: CBS D/P 166 (10 November 1430), in Rodwell, page 8.
- 14: Reproduced from Rodwell, page 17.
- 15: I.S. Leadam, *The Domesday of Inclosures 1517-1518* (London, two volumes 1897), volume 1, page 162, quoted in Rodwell, pages 8-9.
- 16: CBS D/P 344 (27 June 1566), in Rodwell, page 11.
- 17: Calculated from its four constituent fields as shown on the Plan of the Manor of Doddershall 1859, reproduced in G Rodwell, *Doddershall and Shipton Lee – Addendum* (printed by the author, Quainton 2003) pages 49E-G.
- 18: CBS D/P 466.
- 19: Rodwell, page 1.
- 20: CBS D/P Addl 1a (15??), in Rodwell, page 12. The next largest field is ‘the nether ground and Mead 100£’.
- 21: CBS D/P Addl 1a (c1610), in Rodwell, page 15.
- 22: CBS D/P Addl 2 (6 February 1623/4), in Rodwell, page 22.
- 23: CBS D/P 466 (31 January 1638/9), in Rodwell, page 23.
- 24: CBS D/P Addl 1b (1685), in Rodwell, page 26.
- 25: CBS D/P Addl 1b (1706), in Rodwell, page 26.
- 26: CBS D/P Addl 1c.8 (5 December 1735), in Rodwell, page 31.
- 27: CBS D/P Addl 1c.9 (5 December 1735), in Rodwell, page 31.
- 28: CBS D/P Addl 3 (c1751), in Rodwell, page 32.
- 29: The 1587 map itself is at Doddershall House, in the possession of the Prideaux family. Redrawn versions of the map appear in G Lipscomb, opposite page 51, and a ‘corrected’ version of Lipscomb’s version is in Rodwell, page 16.
- 30: *Buckinghamshire in the 1760s and 1820s: The County Maps of Jefferys and Bryant* (Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society, Aylesbury 2000) page 3.
- 31: Plan of the Manor of Doddershall 1859, reproduced in Rodwell, Addendum, page 49F.
- 32: CBS D/P Addl 21 (1892), reproduced in Rodwell, page 19.
- 33: Lesley Oppitz, *Lost Railways of the Chilterns* (Newbury 2005) page 62.
- 34: British History Online: Ordnance Survey Epoch 1 (1885) ‘England – Buckinghamshire: 022’. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/mapsheet.aspx?compid=55108&sheetid=933&zm=1&x=458&y=298&ox=4059&oy=2900> Date accessed: 25 November 2012.
- 35: Doddershall 1910 Land Valuation map: National Archives IR126/1/224.
- 36: See for example John Adair, *A Life of John Hampden the Patriot 1594-1643* (London 2003) pages 175, 195, 201-2, 209, 214, and 227-243.
- 37: Christopher Prideaux, owner of Doddershall estate, personal communication, November 2012.
- 38: See URL: [http://www.pastscape.org.uk/hob.aspx?hob\\_id=342706](http://www.pastscape.org.uk/hob.aspx?hob_id=342706)
- 39: Rodwell, page 3.

#### THANKS

to Christopher Prideaux, owner of Doddershall, for showing members of BAS around the Doddershall estate and giving us access to make this survey.

and to Mike Farley, Steve Nicholl, Karen Pepler and John Sheldon for their contributions to the survey and research. Any errors are the responsibility of the author, Peter Marsden.

---

PM 9 Dec 2012

This report has  
been produced  
by the  
**Buckinghamshire  
Archaeological  
Society**



County Museum,  
Church Street,  
Aylesbury,  
Buckinghamshire  
HP20 2QP

Website:  
[www.bucksas.org.uk](http://www.bucksas.org.uk)