

Morecambe Bay Partnership CST application – December 2014
Castle Studies Trust Grant Application: Supporting Text for Gleaston Castle

The work proposed in this grant application is long overdue and for the first time would provide and accurate record of the fabric and architectural features of the castle. The towers are currently inaccessible due to their dangerous condition; structural scaffolding would be required to allow exploration of their upper floors. Given the vulnerability and condition of Gleaston Castle, it has been placed on English Heritage's Heritage at Risk Register as 'Priority-Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric'.

Gleaston castle is designated as a Scheduled Monument and a Grade I listed enclosure castle of which there are only 126 nationally recorded examples, no two being alike (English Heritage 2014). The remains of Gleaston Castle are deemed to be of major architectural importance, having been described as a 'key site in the development of the North's later Medieval fortified residences (LUAU 1998, 42). Cumbria has a rich record of fortifications, which remain poorly understood. These relate largely to the Scottish border-raids and political upheaval of the 13th and 14th centuries. Gleaston Castle is believed to have been constructed to replace Aldingham motte and bailey, located on the coast some 2km to its east (Elsworth, forthcoming), and has an associated mill, which remains extant, 0.5km to its south. Taking forward the proposed survey of the castle would not only lead to an appreciation of the how the site operated within its local environs, but also address the lack of detailed records for the development of similar sites in the region (Newman & Newman 2007: 18).

Records of Gleaston Castle are currently limited to antiquarian accounts and drawings, some of which include basic ground and floor plans (e.g. Cowper 1895, Kendall 1906 and Curwen 1913; Buck 1727; Roper 1880; reproduced in LUAU 1998). Whilst these include evidence from documentary sources pertaining to past ownership, the castle's construction and subsequent abandonment, there is little detail regarding its physical structure and layout. Whilst brief inspection of the site clearly illustrates evidence for phasing and structural development, accessibility restrictions mean this is currently difficult to assess.

Given its local, regional and national importance, it is surprising that the site has never been fully recorded and should this application be successful, it is hoped that this omission can be addressed. Before any more of the castle's fabric is irrevocably lost, it is proposed to create records of its extant architectural remains and earthworks surviving within the courtyard enclosed by the curtain walls and towers.

In comparison with traditional methods of archaeological buildings recording, the use of aerial photographic techniques to undertake this survey would provide an exceptionally cost effective method of obtaining accurate and detailed results safely and without recourse to the erection of scaffolding.

The contractor employed will be following the most recent ADS guidelines (2014) for the use of UAV's for capturing archaeological data.

Following the building survey a conservation statement will be produced. This will draw together and interpret the results to provide an illustrated record of the site, an appraisal of its current condition and interpretation of evidence for its constructional phasing. This will allow the significance and development of the castle to be better understood, and place it within its local, regional and national context. The report will also outline strategies for potential future interventions.

This work is seen as the first phase of an extensive programme of recording, consolidation and interpretation, which is urgently required to further research, preserve and promote this important site. This initial project would produce an essential record of the extant remains and provide a context for their understanding. It is hoped that this will provide a point of departure from which to raise the profile of the site and engender the local and wider interest essential to securing the funds necessary to protect its future.

Bibliography

ADS 2014, UAV Survey: A Guide to Good Practice. Available at:

http://guides.archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/g2gp/AerialPht_UAV. Accessed 10th November 2014

Cowper, H. S., 1895, Gleaston Castle, Trans Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiq Archaeol Soc, **13**, 37-49

Curwen, J.F. 1913, The Castles and Fortified Towers of Cumberland, Westmoreland and Lancashire North of the Sands. Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiq Archaeol Soc, extra ser **13**, 142-144

Elsworth, D. (ed.) Forthcoming. Aldingham Motte, Cumbria and its environs in the Medieval period. Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society; Cumbria Archaeological Research Reports no 5. Bowness: Badger Press.

English Heritage 2006, Understanding Historic Buildings. A Guide to Good Recording Practice

English Heritage 2014, List entry: Enclosure castle known as Gleaston Castle. Available at:

<http://list.english-heritage.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=1013966>. Accessed 10th November 2014

IfA 2013, Standards and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings of structures

Kendall, W. B. 1906, Gleaston Castle, Trans Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiq Archaeol Soc, new ser **6**, 184-190

Lancaster University Archaeology Unit 1998, Gleaston Castle Cumbria. Feasibility Study. Report no 1997-98/(075)/7774

Newman, C and Newman R, 2007, The Medieval Period Research Agenda, in Brennand, M Ed. *Research and Archaeology in North West England: An Archaeological Research Framework for North West England, Volume 2 Research Agenda and Strategy*

Prince's Regeneration Trust 2009, How to Write Conservation Reports