

Alistair Marshall, *The Later Saxon and Early Norman Manorial Settlement at Guiting Power, Gloucestershire: Archaeological investigation of a Domesday Book entry* (Archaeopress, 2020). ii + 118pp., numerous figs and tables. Cardcovers, £28.00; eBook, £16.00 [ISBN 978-1-78969-365-2 and 978-1-78969-366-9]

This slim volume is the third of the trilogy of reports by Alistair Marshall on excavations at Guiting Power. The excavations reported here took place in the early 1990s and were adjacent to and south-east of the round barrow (Guiting Power 3), the excavation of which is reported in the volume reviewed by Tim Darvill. A series of banks and ditches were sectioned, including a substantial perimeter bank and ditch, with smaller banks and gullies dividing the site into a number of sub-enclosures. Two larger areas were excavated to enable the examination of a possible longhouse and of a church. The excavated evidence is clearly set out and is illustrated by good drawings and photographs; supplementary material in the form of maps and colour photographs is available online via a URL made available with the report.

The stratified pottery associated with the ditches and buildings dates from the 11th to the 13th century, and other finds are consistent with this date. A few fragments of grass-tempered ware and two radiocarbon dates from pits on the berm of the barrow hint at slightly earlier occupation in the area, as does a coin of Eadred (946–55) found beneath the apse of the church. The excavated remains are convincingly argued to represent part of a late Anglo-Saxon and Norman seigneurial complex, though ‘auxiliary to the main habitation’. Marshall tentatively favours a location for the core buildings of the early complex further south-east in Parson’s Piece, with a move in the Norman period to the site of the existing manorial buildings which stand to the west and south-west of the areas excavated. However, it seems equally plausible that the pre-Conquest core lay on the same site as the later buildings.

The discovery of a previously unknown church was a major surprise, and it is this structure, built of clay-bonded stone, which seems likely to receive most attention from future scholars. The building is tiny, comprising a nave and apse measuring 11 m in total length. The standard of construction was poor; the construction trench was shallow, even though the building could have been built on the natural limestone bedrock by digging 10–20 cm deeper. The north wall of the nave was partly built over an infilled ditch with resultant structural problems. The building was irregularly laid out, exceptionally so in the case of the apse. Marshall describes the construction as ‘vernacular’ and ‘certainly not the work of professional masons’. No associated burials were encountered. A *terminus post quem* was provided by the pottery in the ditch partly sealed by the north wall, suggesting a date in the late 11th or early 12th century; reused fragments of narrow windows with diagonal tooling provide support for such a date, as does a corbel-head from collapsed rubble.

The building was evidently abandoned at an early stage, perhaps when the nearby parish church was built at a date likely to lie between 1120 and 1150 (as Malcolm Thurlby comments to me); the stonework of the standing walls was subsequently robbed. As there has been relatively little disturbance since the abandonment, there is some valuable evidence for the liturgical arrangements of the church. The tiny apse was carefully paved with closely-fitting slabs and was raised two steps above the nave; communication between nave and apse was provided through an opening no wider than a doorway. The apse is too small to have contained the altar which must therefore have stood at the east end of the nave, though no trace of it survived, perhaps suggesting that this feature was carefully removed or that it was of timber. A date any later than the early 12th century seems improbable for the church, as

theological developments were leading to the introduction of greater separation between laity and the altar, with altars being moved eastwards. At Guiting Power the presumed altar at the east end of the nave was accompanied by short stone benches running westwards from the eastern corners of the nave, acting either as seating or (more probably) as supports for liturgical furnishings. There is also evidence for a post-setting inside the entrance doorway, perhaps for a stoup, while a spouted vessel was discovered in basal rubble just outside the building; Marshall makes the interesting suggestion that this was carefully discarded after being used in the service of consecration of the church. Marshall suggests that, after allowing for the altar at the east end of the nave, the church can have held a congregation of no more than ten. Presumably the church served an individual household rather than a parish.

Marshall proposes that the orientation of the building was determined by sunrise at around the time of Easter. However, a recent investigation of Welsh churches has rejected most of the traditional explanations for church orientation and concluded that the predominant influence was usually provided by the local topography. Given that the church at Guiting Power follows the general orientation of the ditches and banks in the area excavated, this seems likely to be the case here.

After total excavation the church was reconstructed with dwarf walls. The reconstruction may be visited by the public, along with the adjacent barrow, at times when there are no sheep in the field.

Marshall makes a valiant (if at times rather laboured) attempt to interpret the seigneurial site in the context of historical evidence provided by pre-Conquest charter-boundaries for nearby parishes and by the Domesday Book evidence. The case is well-made that Guiting Power was probably the principal estate of Alwine, the last pre-Conquest sheriff of Gloucestershire. It is, however, unfortunate that the author has misunderstood the Hawling charter-boundary as belonging to the early 9th century; the boundary clause does not belong to the document to which it was mistakenly appended by Worcester cartularists and must have come from a lost document of 10th- or 11th-century date.

Many of the points made above by Tim Copeland in the penultimate paragraph of his review on the volume devoted to the Iron Age and Roman excavations at Guiting Power also apply to this volume, which was also first published with an identical text in 2004 (there is a copy in the Society's library). In this case too a revision of the bibliography would have been helpful. A considerable number of comparable sites have now been excavated, and consideration of these would have enriched the discussion of the site. The attempt to place the site in the broad context of the evolution of the local landscape would likewise have benefited from reference to the ever-burgeoning literature in the field of landscape archaeology.

Despite minor reservations, this volume is a valuable contribution to the literature on seigneurial sites in the late Anglo-Saxon and Norman periods.

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