

THE FINDS

The majority of the finds consist of pieces of broken pottery. Most of these can be dated to about the thirteenth century. They probably belonged to coarse ware domestic vessels such as cooking pots.

Surprisingly, few pieces of fine (or expensive) pottery have been found considering that the site would appear to have been of a high status.

A piece of pottery decorated with a green glaze was found beneath the early bank, and another piece of decorated pottery was found in the rubble associated with the building beneath the later rampart.

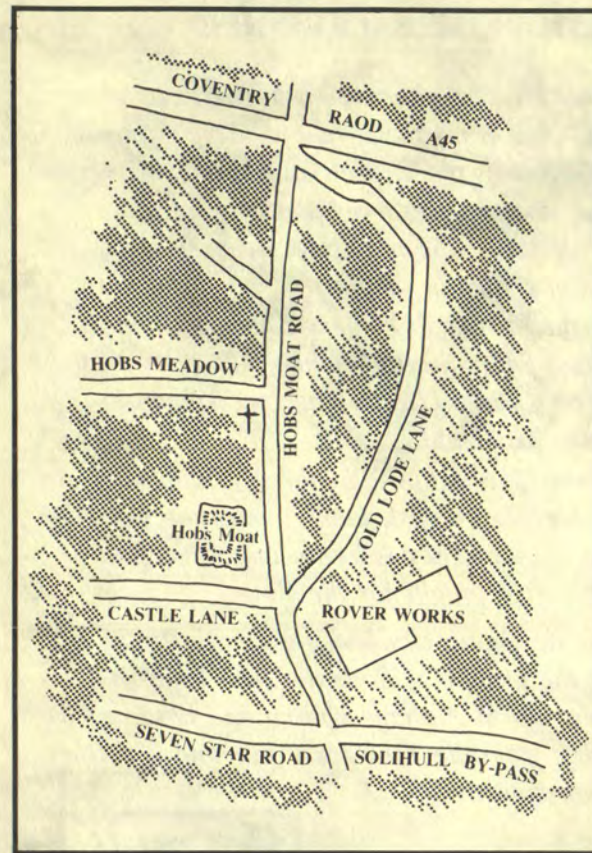
Pieces of corroded metal objects, lumps of coal and burnt wood have also been found, all of which provide further evidence of human activity.

THE LANDSCAPING PROJECT

This is a very important part of the project. It's aim is to conserve the monument and to provide a more pleasant amenity for the public.

One of the first tasks was to remove over one hundred and twenty lorry loads of rubbish from the site. A path has now been laid around the southern and eastern sides of the monument and seats have been installed.

The internal western rampart has been seeded and turfed in an attempt to discover the best methods of consolidation. It is planned to turf the outer rampart and some of the moat platform in the near future.



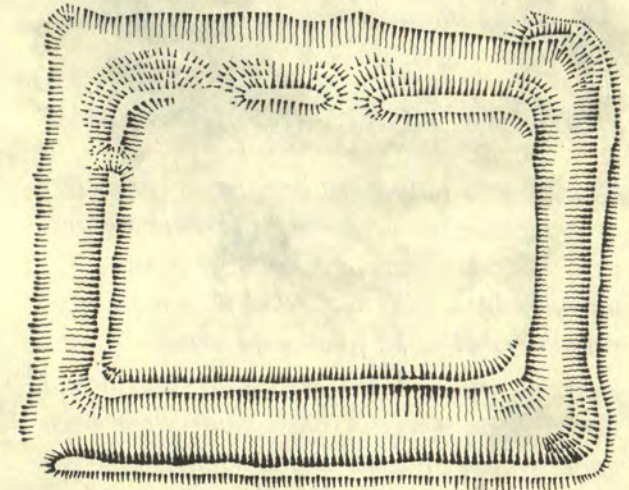
The project is managed on behalf of the Manpower Services Commission and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council by SOLIHULL ENTERPRISE AGENCY.

The Agency acknowledges the assistance and co-operation of :

*English Heritage
Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
The Reverend Peter Roe, Vicar of St. Mary's,
Hobs Moat.*

**WORKING FOR THE COMMUNITY A
MANPOWER SERVICES COMMISSION
PROJECT.**

The Hobs Moat



Project 1987

THE PROJECT

Hobs Moat is the most impressive medieval earthwork in Solihull. It had begun to fall into a severe state of disrepair until the Manpower Services Commission project was established in September 1985.

The monument is being archaeologically investigated to discover signs of medieval activity within the moat. A landscaping team is also working to conserve the earthwork and to turn the area into a pleasant public amenity.

MEDIEVAL MOATS AND HOBS MOAT

Moated sites have been defined as 'an area of ground, often occupied by a dwelling or associated structure, bounded or partly bounded by a wide ditch which in most cases was intended to be filled with water'.

There is a concentration of these sites around Birmingham where 36 such moats have been found within an area of one square kilometre. Many have been found around Solihull although few survive today.

The earthwork at Hobs Moat is not typical of these sites as it is much larger and more complex.

Visible today is a ditch of a maximum depth of four metres and substantial bank or rampart surrounding it. The northern, western and eastern sides of the earthwork have a rampart on either side of the ditch. An area of about two acres is enclosed in which it can be presumed that the manor house and other buildings were constructed.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Hobs Moat is situated in the north of what was once a medieval manor. This manor is recorded in the Domesday Book as 'Ulverley' and possibly preserves the name of 'Wulfhere', who may have been an early Saxon settler in the area.

By the thirteenth century a new settlement called Solihull had become the centre of the manor, while Ulverley became known as 'Old Town' or Olton.

From 1213 until 1295, the de Odingsells, an immigrant Flemish family, were the Lords of the Manor. They were an important family who often fought for the King.

The de Odingsells had the greatest influence on the growth of Solihull. They built and enlarged St Alphege church and obtained a grant from the King for a fair and a market in the town.



HOBS MOAT

It is surprising that Hobs Moat is not mentioned in any written source until the mid seventeenth century when Sir William Dugdale, a Warwickshire historian, visited the site. He found no remains of any of the buildings which had stood there, only a 'parcel of oaks', which he thought marked their position.

Likewise, Huton, the Birmingham historian, found no evidence of occupation 150 years later, except for ploughmarks. These accounts, and the archaeological evidence, seem to show that the manor was deserted in the medieval period, possibly after the death of the last de Odingsells.

EXCAVATIONS

Three areas have been excavated at Hobs Moat so far.

The first was at the southern end of the platform, or area within the ramparts. Here the remains of a shed-like structure or outbuilding were found. Built after the main period of occupation, it was thought to belong to a time when the site was in decline.

A section was cut through the western rampart, from which it was discovered that a pre-existing bank and ditch had been covered by a later earthwork.

The third area excavated was on the eastern side of the earthwork where, beneath the later bank, the remains of an earlier building were found.

