

Dowsing survey of Berry Castle on 14th Sept 2016

Richard Sears (October 2016)

...The inconvenient truth!

Well with a sub-title like that what did we find you may say! Well not what we expected is the answer.

The original survey – 18th Aug 2016

The original survey made by Gwynn Paulett and I was from a month earlier and in the day we covered approx. two-thirds of the quadrangle. To recap, we limited our dowsing to the first 50 years after being constructed which we found to be about 2760 years ago. At the start of the day we established that there were 30 or 31 roundhouses built in the 50-year period but we only had time to map out R1 to R23 (two of these being enclosures) and they were predominantly to the North and centre, leaving the Southern third for another day.

Second visit – 14th Sept 2016

To cut down on time Gwynn prior to this visit did some remote dowsing, during which he found another 7 roundhouses which when roughly sketched out on the plan were located on the South side but all in the Eastern half. There was a cluster of 3 roundhouses in the SE corner and 4 more centrally (see attached and updated plan).

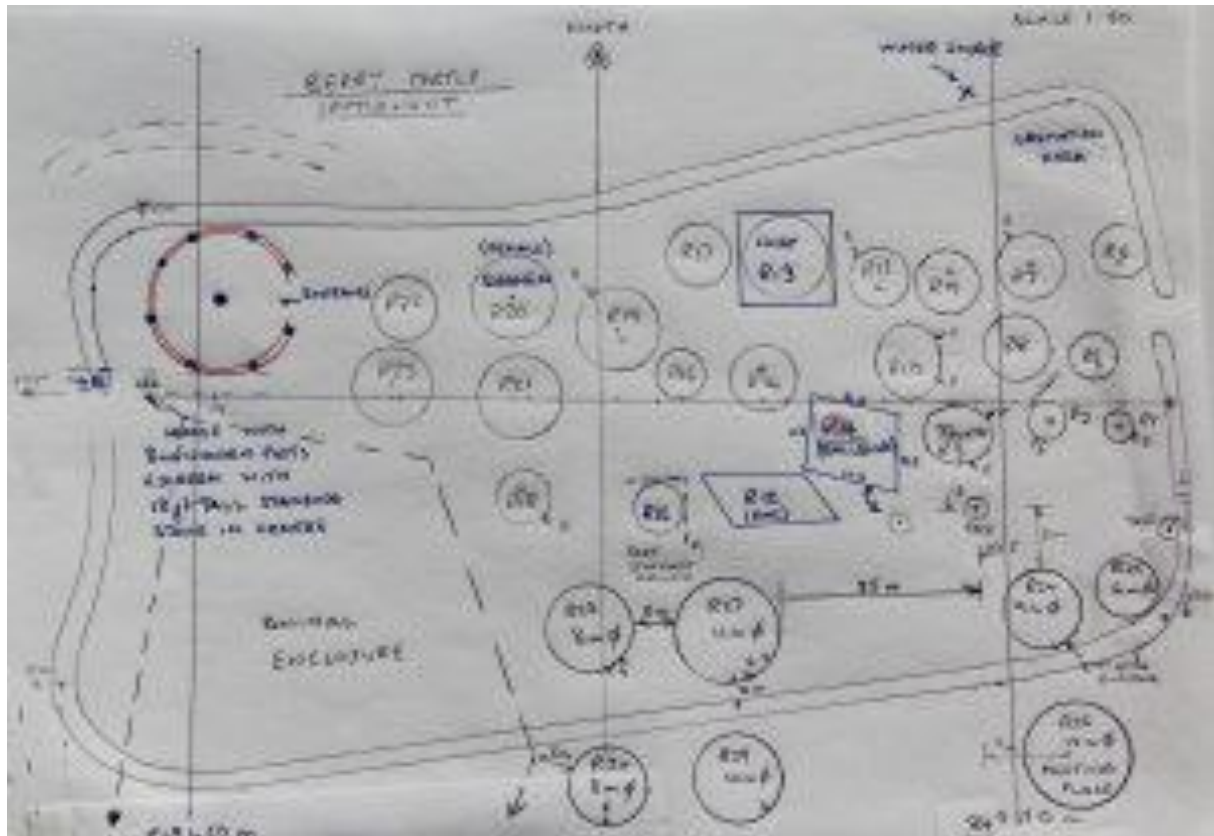
By the time I arrived on site (one hour late!) he had mostly marked them out on the ground with the entrances and hearths, although when we later dowsed R26, a 12 m dia. dwelling we found that no one lived there, but it gave a positive response when asked to it being a meeting place. We also found a definite line showing an animal enclosure (see plan) on the SW side that went off into the existing woods.

My immediate reaction was ... 'This can't be right ... the roundhouses are straddling the mound'... but 'no', says Gwynn, 'check it out, this isn't the boundary.' Confused (!) I checked, and yes the boundary was further South, but running parallel to the existing mound in the uncleared woods by about 40 m.

In order to check, we both independently started at the opposite two southern corners of the mound, me at the SW and Gwynn at the SE, and, following the rods down the hill into the woods (for Gwynn) and down the existing track for me, we both went about 40m until the rods turned at the original corners of the enclosure, and then we both followed the rods through the undergrowth, until we met in the middle!

What this means is that Berry originally was more of a Square configuration, rather than an oblong, and at some later point, later than 2710 years ago, the current mound was built. Certainly from the lower position one has a clear view of the stream, which isn't possible from higher up. Also of note in the general vicinity of this lower boundary there is quite a lot of stone on the surface, plus near the SW corner there is a visible pile of stone.

There has always been speculation why there is no corresponding ditch to the Southern mound as there are to the other 3 sides, but we find that in the mid 1700s the area was levelled to make a trackway for the gentry to ride their horses through their woodlands.



The updated Berry survey