

Malkin Tower Farm and the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership

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The Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership

The Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership is a multi-disciplinary project which aims to bring members of the local community together in a variety of tasks and research investigations into the areas surrounding Pendle Hill, in the county of Lancashire in the Northwest of England.

The project is run by the Forest of Bowland AONB, is funded by the Heritage lottery scheme and I was employed as an intern archaeologist by the University of Central Lancashire, to investigate a number of sites of archaeological interest within the AONB boundary surrounding Pendle Hill.

The Pendle Witches

In 1612 a group of men and women were hung at Lancaster for the crime of witchcraft. The 2 events that centre around the prosecution and execution of these unfortunate people centre around a place named in the court accounts published by Thomas Potts as Malkin Tower in the Forest of Pendle.

Alizon Device set out from Malkin Tower towards the nearby town of Colne where she encountered a pedlar who she asked for a pin. The pedlar refused and Alizon cursed him, but to her amazement he collapsed having had a stroke. Alizon and her grandmother, an 88 year old blind woman and known witch called Old Demdike were arrested along with Mother Chattox, the head of a witch family who had a known feud with Old Demdikes family.



Fig 1- Early 17th century image of witches being executed (Lumby, 1995)



Fig 2- Coven of witches handing clay figurines to Satan. (Lumby 1995)

The second event was a meeting of a coven of witches from the areas surrounding Malkin Tower on the Sabbath day, which was illegal in the early 17th century. The group were arrested, tried and executed alongside Alizon and Chattox. Demdike died in prison while awaiting trial. Presumably Malkin Tower was destroyed by the townsfolk shortly after these events due to its ties with Satan and witchcraft.

Malkin Tower

The meeting at Malkin Tower is believed to be the only recording of a gathering or coven of witches for the purpose of witchcraft in history, despite this the exact location has remained a mystery for the last 400 years.

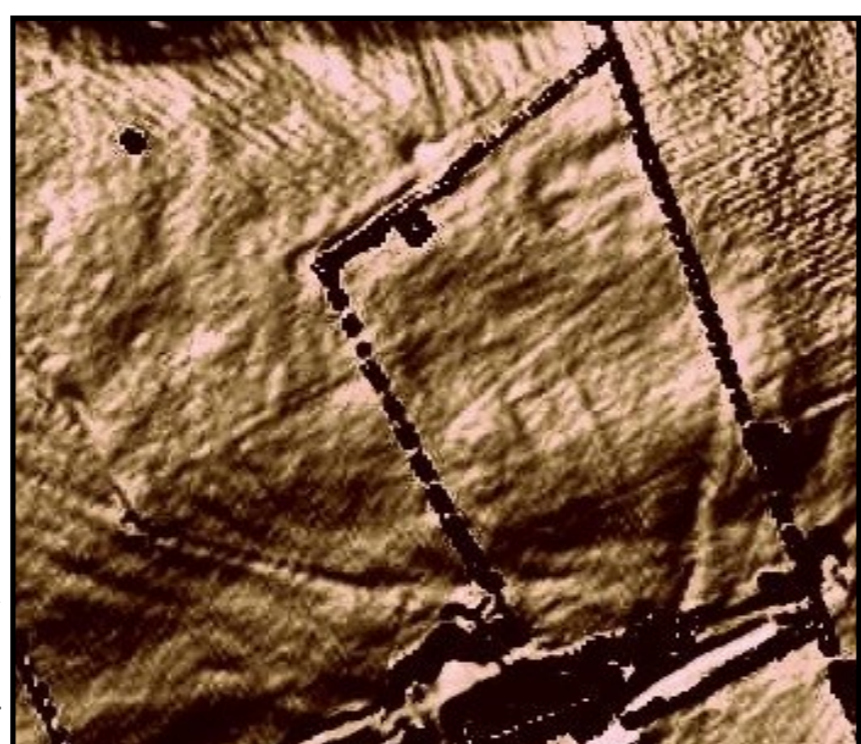


Fig 3-Lidar of Malkin Tower Farm (Clayton, 2007).

Rumours and folklore place the location at Malkin Tower Farm in Blacko, Sadlers Farm in Newchurch with recent historical discoveries by John Clayton, suggesting Malkin Tower to be at Mancknowles Ing in Barley.

It is this evidence along with the popularity of the Pendle witch story that inspired this investigation, with the search for Malkin Tower providing a framework for a number of archaeological investigations attempting to find the lost witches house.

Malkin Tower Farm in Blacko is a likely location for Malkin Tower. The earliest maps name this plot of land as Black Tower farm but papers from 1509 name this field as the Malkyn yard. Lidar data from John Clayton shows a rectilinear feature in an otherwise empty field and it is this location that was one of the shortlisted sites to be surveyed using non-invasive geophysical techniques.

The results of the surveys carried out as part of the Pendle Landscape Partnership will help guide an excavation which is planned to be carried out by student from the Vanderbilt University, USA in the summer of 2018.

References

- Clayton, J. 2007. *The Lancashire Witch Conspiracy: A History of Pendle Forest and the Pendle Witch Trials*. Barrowford Press: UK.
- Lumby, J. 1995. *The Lancashire Witch-Craze: Jennet Preston and the Lancashire Witches, 1612*. Carnegie Publishing Ltd: Preston.
- Peel, E & Southern, P. 1969. *The Trials of the Lancashire Witches: A Study of 17th Century Witchcraft*. Latimer Trend & Company Ltd: Plymouth
- Poole, R. 2011. *The Wonderful Discovery of Witches in the County of Lancaster: Thomas Potts's original account. Modernised and introduced by Robert Poole*. Palatine Books: Lancaster.
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Methodology

The aim of this investigation was to use both Resistivity and Magnetometry; 2 types of geophysical survey to find evidence to prove the hypothesis that the site of Malkin Tower Farm is the location of earlier structures possibly related to the Malkin Tower of Pendle witch fame.

A Bartington 601 Fluxgate gradiometer uses electromagnetic waves to pick up disturbances in the microscopic metal particles within the earth. This technique is useful for discovering ditches, post holes and areas of burning. An RM15 resistivity probe with data logger and multi-plexer (see fig 4) was used to measure the electrical resistance within the earth. This technique is useful for identifying ditches, stone walls and roads.



Fig 4-Cropmark at Malkin Tower Farm. Could this be the ruins of Malkin Tower?

The field to be surveyed was marked out in 30 x 30 metre grids and the same grids were used for both types of survey to maintain spatial control when overlaying and interpreting the data. The data was then processed using Geoplot and overlaid onto a satellite image of the site using Photoshop.



Fig 5- Results of magnetometry survey at Malkin Tower Farm

distance stony areas which is probably rubble from the destructive phase of the buildings.

A row of postholes are visible to the south of the complex and this corresponds with where the land falls away at a steep angle. A dark shape can be seen to the top right of the survey image which corresponds with the Malkin Gable; a curious wall that has the dry stone field boundary incorporated into it. This shows that there were a number of structures to this complex and this would tie-in with the description of Malkin Tower from the account by Thomas Potts.



Fig 7- Interpretation of results of both surveys.

Results

The results of the magnetometry survey revealed a recti-linear anomaly to the south end of the field which corresponds with a flat platform and cropmark and the recti-linear feature seen in the Lidar data. A faint sub-circular anomaly can be seen to the north of the recti-linear feature and it would appear from this data that a structure was present in this field at some point in antiquity.

The results from the resistivity survey has uncovered a much larger complex of enclosures surrounding the recti-linear feature. The sub circular feature is seen more clearly to the north of the structure and areas of white indicate high re-

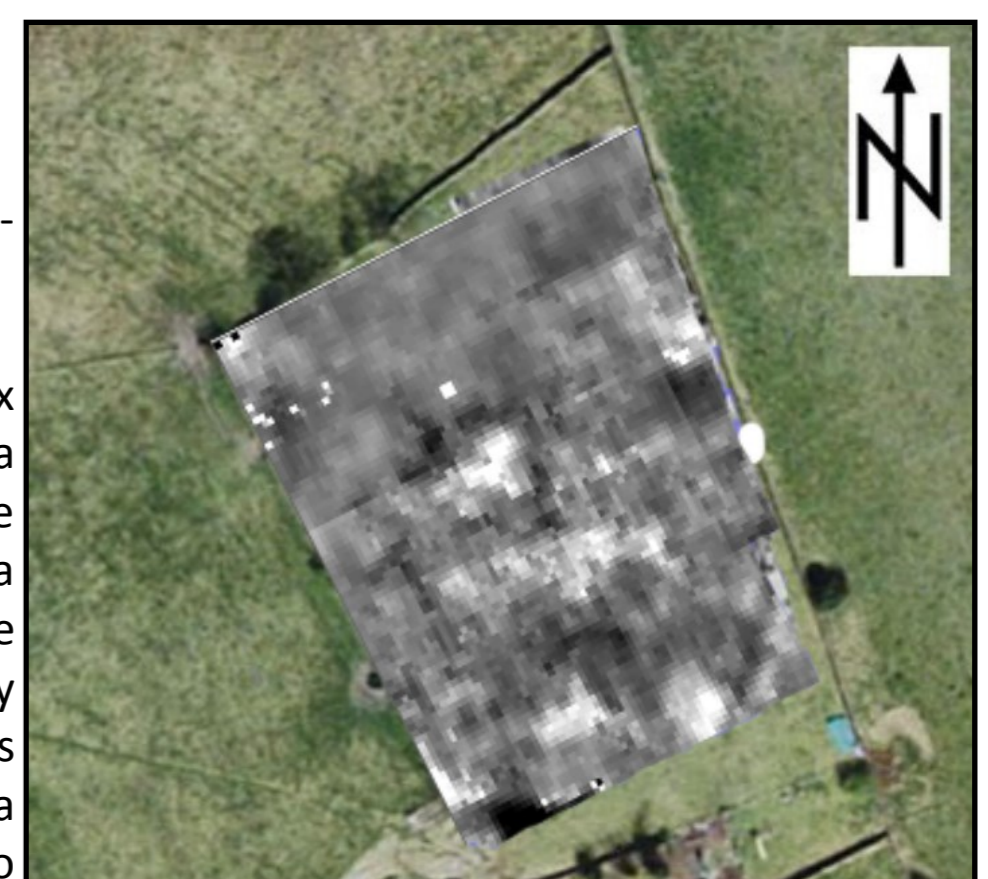


Fig 6-Results of resistivity survey at Malkin Tower Farm

Analysis and Conclusion

The results from the magnetometry and resistivity results have revealed a number of anomalies in the field which are no longer above the service but now appear as a cropmark. It is likely that this cluster of features is an old farmstead and Malkin Tower Farm is a likely location for Malkin Tower due to its name containing the word Malkyn almost 100 years before the events leading to the witchcraft trials. This site will be excavated next summer and the results of these surveys will lead the planning and location of the trenches with the hope to find dateable evidence contemporary with the Early 17th century.

Figures

- Fig 1:
Lumby, J. 1995. *The Lancashire Witch-Craze: Jennet Preston and the Lancashire Witches, 1612*. Carnegie Publishing Ltd: Preston.
- Fig 2:
Lumby, J. 1995. *The Lancashire Witch-Craze: Jennet Preston and the Lancashire Witches, 1612*. Carnegie Publishing Ltd: Preston.
- Fig 3:
Clayton, J. 2007. *The Lancashire Witch Conspiracy: A History of Pendle Forest and the Pendle Witch Trials*. Barrowford Press: UK.