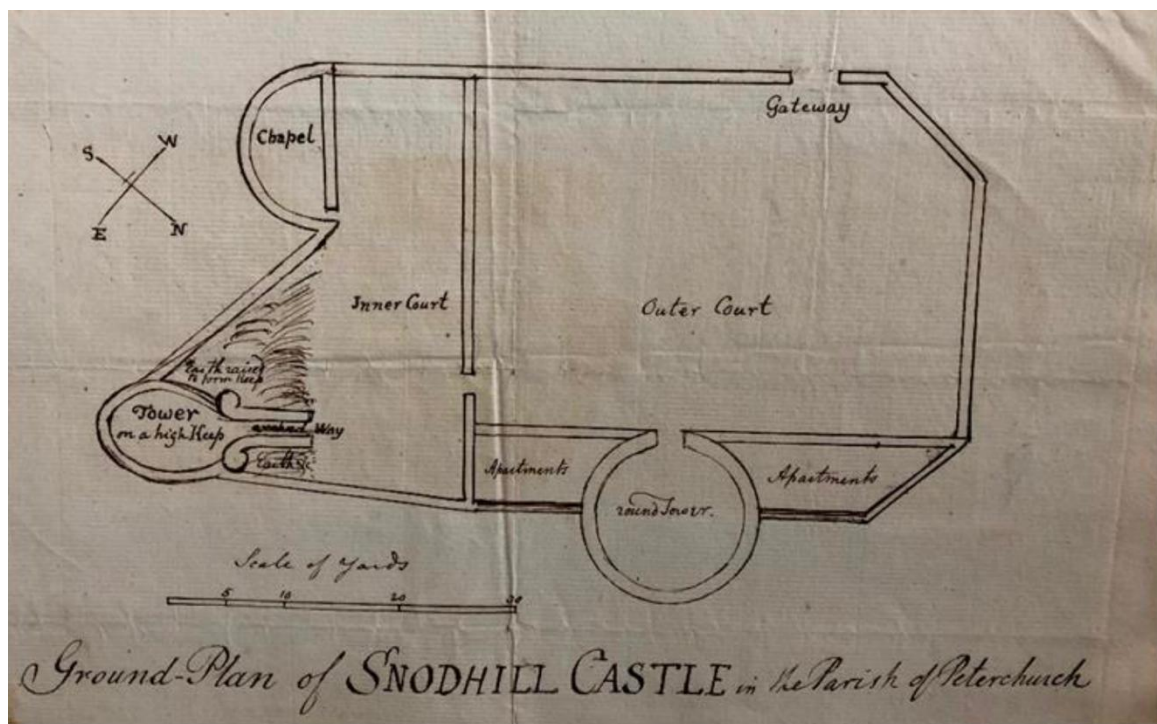




Project: Fortifying the Future

Brief for Documentary Research and assessment.



Summary:

The SCPT requires a researcher to deliver:

1. a chronological narrative report on the history of the castle from the C11 to the mid-C17
2. a survey of available published sources (including online archival resources) and unpublished sources relating to the castle and settlement in their geographic and historical context
3. an assessment of the source's potential for additional original research and how this might be approached in the future, including through virtual volunteering or 'people powered research'

Fortifying the Future is a three-year project (August 2024-2027) funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund that will help SCPT build a resilient infrastructure that can sustain a long-term holistic programme of research, exploration and engagement activity to bring the castle's interest to the widest range of people and to inspire future trustees to engage in its management.

The research element of the project set out in this brief will help us tell the castle's story, collaborate with others in the field and engage volunteers in future research projects as well as plan the castle's on-going conservation.

Our budget for the work is £7,200 inclusive of expenses and VAT.

We anticipate a start date for the research of 01/09/2025 with final completion by 30/11/2025

Proposals should be submitted to Project Lead Katherine Findlay PDF format by email at katherine.findlay@snodhillcastle.org by 11:59pm Monday 12/08/2025.

BACKGROUND

Background to the trust

The Snodhill Castle Preservation Trust (SCPT) is a registered charity established in 2016. The castle is in the hamlet of Snodhill, Herefordshire, approximately 7 miles east of Hay on Wye and 15 miles west of Hereford. It was founded by William Fitz Osbern in the early C11 and is a designated scheduled monument of national importance.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1015168?section=official-list-entry>

It is archaeologically unusual in being previously unexcavated; it is rich in wildlife and enjoys a beautiful, deeply rural and historically important landscape setting.

We hold the castle under a 999 year lease for the purpose of "preserving it for the benefit of the people of the hamlet of Snodhill, Herefordshire and the nation". Since 2016 (with considerable grant aid) we have rescued the castle ruins from risk so that it is now a safe and beautiful place for people to visit as and when they wish.

Our object is to discover more about the castle's lost history through research and archaeological excavation and to bring this, together with the site's natural history and interest to a wider public for their benefit, amenity and enjoyment. Doing that will protect the castle's present and preserve its future.

For more information about the trust and what we do please visit our website:

<https://www.snodhillcastle.org/>

Background to Fortifying the Future

SCPT has achieved its first object: the castle's standing remains are sound and secure. We now need to establish the castle's unique place in our national story so that we can engage more people in its future and ensure that it never reappears on a Heritage at Risk Register.

To 'fortify the future' we need to ensure the SCPT has a resilient infrastructure that can sustain a long term, holistic programme of research, exploration and engagement activity beyond the lives of its current trustees.

Fortifying the Future is a three year project funded by the National Heritage Lottery Fund to provide SCPT with tools and resources that establish how the castle will be conserved, managed and funded into the future and that make it easy for new and existing trustees, partners and communities to engage in the process. It will review our existing resources, identify options for growth and development and deliver necessary new tools and resources in the context of an updated strategy and business plan.

Fortifying the future includes research into the castle's history and sources that will help us tell its story, collaborate with others in the field and engage volunteers in future research projects as well as plan its on-going conservation.

Commission specific background

The castle has been the subject of extensive structural recording and analysis, and also archaeological investigation. To date, however, limited documentary research has been undertaken (largely by Garry Crook of the Snodhill Castle Preservation Trust SCPT). SCPT can supply the following background information and contacts for staff at Historic England and Herefordshire Archaeology:

- Research by Garry Crook of SCPT (spreadsheets, maps, plans, documents, downloaded books)
- A 'work in progress' outline history of the castle by Garry Crook
- Historic England: Snodhill Castle, Peterchurch, Herefordshire: Archaeological, Architectural and Aerial Survey and Investigation (Research Report Series No.76-2017)
- Historic England: Revealing a Marcher Castle (April 2018)
<https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/research/back-issues/snodhill-castle-peterchurch-herefordshire/>
- Reports on archaeological excavations carried out by Manchester & Cardiff Universities in 2020-21 and 2022, 2023 by Hereford Archaeology
- Reports on archaeological excavations carried out by Hereford Archaeology 2017 - 2019.

Through an agreement with the Herefordshire Archives & Records Centre (HARC), a volunteer is currently identifying all the records held at HARC that are related to Snodhill Castle with a view to creating a 'special collection' within the online catalogue.

THE BRIEF: Documentary Research and Assessment

Purpose & use

The purpose of the project is to provide SCPT with:

1. a chronological narrative report on the history of the castle from the C11 to the mid-C17

2. a survey of available published sources (including online archival resources) and unpublished sources relating to the castle and settlement in their geographic and historical context
3. an assessment of the source's potential for additional original research and how this might be approached in the future, including through virtual volunteering or 'people powered research'

We will use these resources to:

- Improve our understanding by linking the history of the castle to its structural development as understood through the structural and archaeological work over the past 10 years
- Establish Snodhill Castle within the wider context of study into Welsh Marcher castles
- Inform future research and investigation projects
- Inform SCPT's understanding, conservation and management of the castle
- Tell the castle's history to a diverse audience in a variety of ways by developing inclusive content and expanding digital access to it
- Engage new audiences
- Recruit new volunteers to further research its history

Sources & Scope

The project will include use of the following sources as a minimum:

- available published sources, including online archival resources, relating to Snodhill Castle with particular attention to the castle and landscape and settlement in its geographic and historical context
- existing research and reports listed above in 'commission specific background' The
- unpublished sources including amongst others, searches at the County Record Offices in Herefordshire, Shropshire, Powys (including archives of the Council of the Marches), and other sources available to professional researchers such as the Public Record Office in Kew and the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth
- existing illustrative material where this exists (with appropriate attention to issues of copyright)

A comparative analysis of castles in the Welsh Marches is not part of this project, however, the work should include a list of references relating to major work carried out, especially in the past 20 years, on major castles in the southern and central Marches. These include Goodrich (edited by R. Shoesmith). Ludlow (edited by R. Shoesmith). Chepstow (edited by Rick Turner and Andy Johnson). Wigmore Castle, North Herefordshire, Excavations 1996 and 1998, (edited by Stephanie Ratkai, 2015, The Society for Medieval Archaeology). Eardisley Castle (by Nigel Baker), Wilton Castle, Longtown Castle, Clifford Castle (by Herefordshire Archaeology), Caus Castle and Castle Pulverbatch in Shropshire, together with publications on Shrewsbury Castle (by Nigel Baker), and other recent work at Oswestry Castle.

The project should test and take forward base-line documentary research by Garry Crook of SCPT, especially regarding the chapel and the castle's relationship with the Chandos family.

Garry Crook's work and questions posed by the results of archaeological investigation include the following areas that could be further developed as part of the project:

The chapel

Exploring early Norman links with building in France and Herefordshire by William Fitz Osbern, founder of Snodhill Castle and the Abbey of Lire, and Hugh l'Asne who held Snodhill from William and founded a daughter abbey at Livers Ocle in Herefordshire before his death in 1101. How might these shed light on:

- when the chapel was built
- mentions and suggestions that Snodhill Chapel existed in the C12 and its association with Fownhope Church.

The chapel's Royal Free status first appears in 1287 (King Edward I) and then runs uninterrupted until 1556 (Queen Mary). Queen Elizabeth granted the castle (and chapel) to Robert Dudley: Earl of Leicester in 1563, and it is referred to in the later 16C.

- Does documentary evidence help us understand why the chapel was Royal and add to its story?

The Chandos Family

On Hugh l'Asne's death the castle passed to his son-in-law Robert de Chandos and was held by this relatively minor family for over 300 years.

- Is there evidence of the Chandos's role in developing Snodhill as a major castle, how this was funded and why? e.g. evidence of Royal patronage, early wool trade income, lucrative positions (Sheriff of Hereford, Constables for the King etc) marriages etc?

Elizabethan activities

What was the post Chandos ownership of the castle and is there evidence of investment and/or activity at or relating to the castle in this period?

Civil War

What was the castle's role in the Civil War? Are there records somewhere that could throw more light on this?

Castle puzzles

How did Snodhill relate to other marcher castles?

Why did it develop complex features like the postern and barbican?

Is it a new class of castle?

Methodology

Applicants should supply a methodology setting out how they will achieve the project objectives. We anticipate that a methodology for the work will follow the project objectives and scope, but also understand that professional researchers may have proposals that may be to the further benefit of the objectives.

Expertise required

1. Proven experience of documentary research with regard to the period between the C11 and C17, especially with regard to the Welsh Borders
2. Clear understanding and knowledge of sources for the period and access to them
3. Relevant expertise in palaeography and languages used in relevant sources of the period

Outputs/deliverables

The following outputs will be required:

- a chronological narrative report on the history of the castle in Microsoft Word
- a report on published and unpublished sources with an assessment of their potential in Microsoft Word
- a set of research data, stored in a readily accessible electronic format such as Excel
- a review meeting with the project management team to assess progress, at a point to be agreed

CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

The contract will be let by the SCPT and managed for the Trust on a day-to-day basis by the Project Lead Katherine Findlay with specialist support from trustees William Klemperer and Garry Crook

Timescale

We expect the work commissioned to begin on 01/09/2025 and be completed by 30/11/2025

Budget

The anticipated budget is £7,200 inclusive of all expenses and VAT.

AWARD CRITERIA

A proposal for undertaking the work should include:

1. a detailed methodology for undertaking the study
2. details of the staff allocated to the project, together with their experience in carrying out similar projects
3. the allocation of days between members of the team
4. confirmation you can work within the timescale set-out within this brief
5. an overall cost for the work inclusive of VAT and expenses

Proposals will be assessed on the following criteria:

1. The extent to which the proposal demonstrates an understanding of the issues related to this brief
2. The appropriateness of the methodology and methods to the requirements set out in the brief
3. The degree to which the bidder has demonstrated the experience needed to successfully complete the work

4. How well the bidder has structured the work in order to successfully manage and deliver the project within the budget and timetable required.

PROCUREMENT PROCESS

Proposals should be submitted to Project Lead Katherine Findlay PDF format by email at katherine.findlay@snodhillcastle.org by 11:59pm Monday 12/08/2025.

SCPT will notify bidders of our procurement decision week commencing 19/08/2025.

If you have any queries regarding the brief, please contact Katherine Findlay.

SCPT 16/06/2025