

## EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Quince Hill ringwork, Old Warden

PARISH: OLD WARDEN

DISTRICT: MID BEDFORDSHIRE

COUNTY: BEDFORDSHIRE

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 20411

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): TL13654452

### DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

Quince Hill ringwork is defended by earthen banks and deep ditches. The main defences consist of a ditch of 'V'-shaped profile, about 10m deep and 20m wide, surrounding part of an enclosure 80m wide. On the uphill side of the enclosure is a crescent-shaped bank which is about 15m high relative to the bottom of the ditch and tall enough to give a clear view over the crest of the hill. On the downhill side, the natural slope afforded some protection and less massive defences may have been necessary. On this side any earthworks have since been levelled but the line of the infilled surrounding ditch can be observed as a slight break in slope of the hillside. The main defences were further strengthened, on the uphill side, by an outer bank and ditch. The ditch is between 8m and 12m wide and up to 3m deep and its bottom is partially waterlogged. Within the ditch is a bank 2.5m high and there is a small terrace, 60m long by 15m wide, between the outer bank and the inner ditch. The entrance to the ringwork was on the north west side marked by a causeway across the two ditches and by slight depressions in the banks. The ringwork dates to the late Saxon or early Norman period but there is evidence of Roman settlement in the vicinity. The name, 'The Quinces', was applied to the site in the 17th century and a 19th century edition of the O.S. 1 inch map shows the castle defences were then still visible as a complete circuit.

### ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Ringworks are medieval fortifications built and occupied from the late Anglo-Saxon period to the later 12th century. They comprised a small defended area containing buildings which was surrounded or partly surrounded by a substantial ditch and a bank surmounted by a timber palisade or, rarely, a stone wall. Occasionally a more lightly defended embanked enclosure, the bailey, adjoined the ringwork. Ringworks acted as strongholds for military operations and in some cases as defended aristocratic or manorial settlements. They are rare nationally with only 200 recorded examples and less than 60 with baileys. As such, and as one of a limited number and very restricted range of Anglo-Saxon and Norman fortifications, ringworks are of particular significance to our understanding of the period.

The monument at Old Warden is a good example of a ringwork with upstanding earthworks. Although partially altered the monument is considered to retain

high archaeological potential, particularly in the centre of the ringwork and in the infilled ditch, which provides conditions likely to preserve organic remains.

MONUMENT INCLUDED IN THE SCHEDULE ON 10th February 1992