

Clunside Garages, Clun, Shropshire
A Report on an Archaeological Evaluation



August 2003

Contents:

Summary	2
1.0 Introduction.....	2
Site Location and Land Use	2
2.0 Geological, Historical and Archaeological Background.....	3
2.1 Geological background	3
2.2 Historical and archaeological background	3
3.0 Project Aims and Objectives	5
4.0 Methodology	5
4.1 Field Methodology.....	5
4.2 Processing Methodology.....	5
5.0 The Results.....	6
5.1 The Stratigraphy.....	7
Trench 1	7
Trench 2.....	8
5.2 The Pottery.....	8
6.0 Conclusions	8
7.0 Archive Deposition.....	9
8.0 Publication and Dissemination Proposals.....	9
General Bibliography	10
Cartographic Material.....	10

Figures:

Figure 1: Location plan	2
Figure 2: Trench location plan	6
Figure 3: Sections of trenches 1 & 2	7

Summary

Archenfield Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation excavation and monitoring of groundwork during the clearance of the former Clunside Garage Site, High Street, Clun in August 2003. Large parts of the site have been severely affected by the insertion of buried fuel tanks and the construction of the buildings and forecourt. A wall consisting of roughly coursed sandstone blocks was discovered in one of the two evaluation trenches, but little artefactual or dating evidence was recovered.

1.0 Introduction

South Shropshire Housing Association (the client) commissioned a programme of archaeological work in accordance with the brief issued by the Archaeology Service of Shropshire County Council, dated August 2002. This was issued in response to planning application (ref 1/03/14513/F), for permission to demolish the disused garage buildings and erect six dwellings with associated parking. This document gives details of how the archaeological project was conducted, as stipulated in the brief.

1.1 Site Location and Land Use

NGR SO 3030 2808

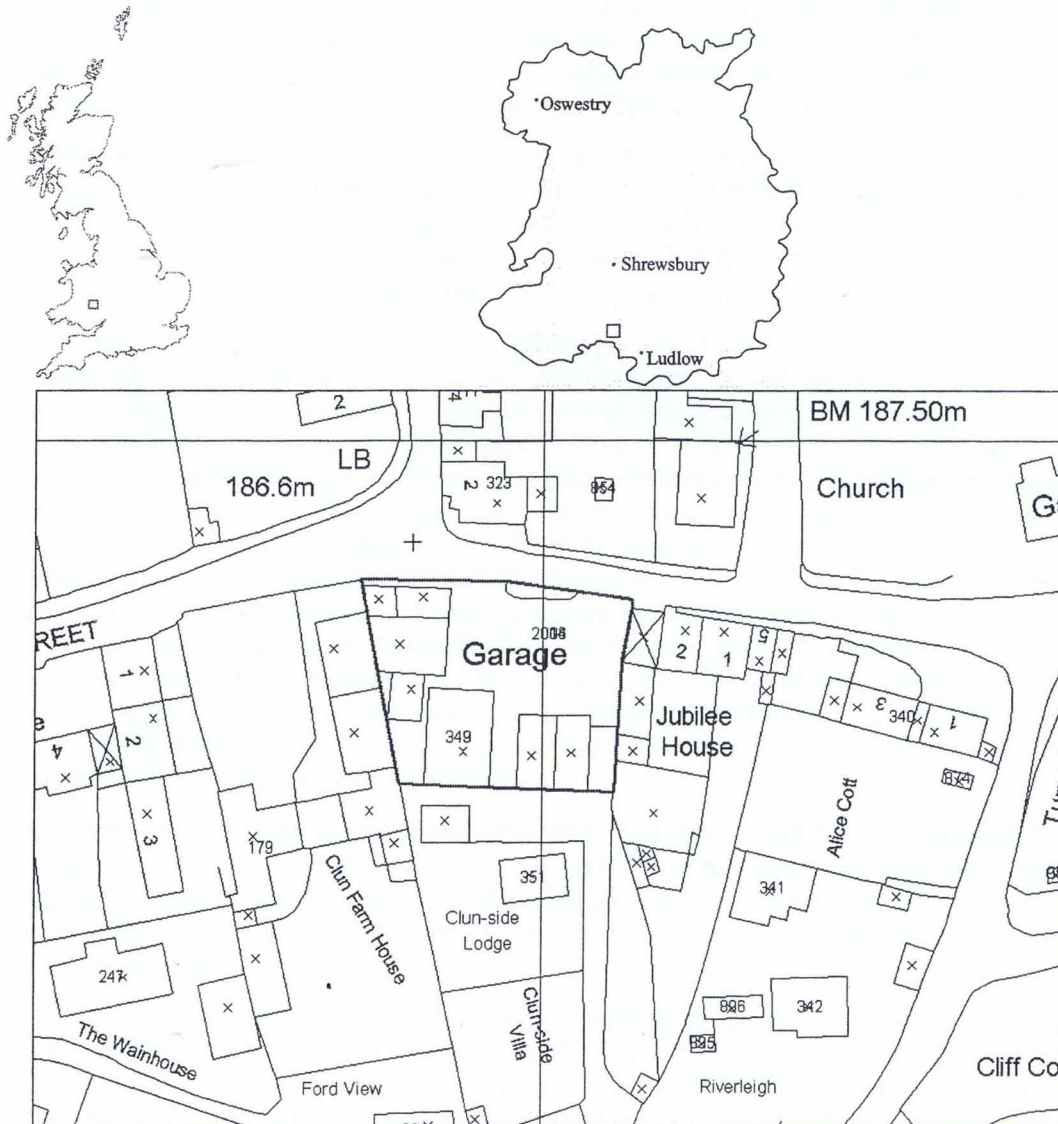


Figure 1: Location plan

The site lies on the south side of High Street Clun. A former petrol station, the site was until very recently occupied by a complex of buildings on the south and south western side of the site, with the site frontage comprising the forecourt; which was covered by a mixture of concrete and tarmac areas. The site slopes down from the roadside to the south.

2.0 Geological, Historical and Archaeological Background

2.1 Geological background

Clun lies on the slopes of the river Clun at a height of 180-200 metres O.D. The solid geology consists of Devonian Raglan Mudstone (British Geological Survey). The drift geology consists of argillic or stagnogleyic argillic brown earths of the Rowton association with alluvial grey soils of the Conway association overlying glacio-fluvial or river terrace gravel, till and river alluvium occurring close to the river (Ragg *et al*, 1984).

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The town of Clun is named after the local river (a British word, the meaning of which is obscure). It lies within an area of known prehistoric activity, as implied by evidence from earthworks and aerial photographs, as well as from the thousands of Neolithic to Bronze age artefacts that have been recovered from around the reputedly prehistoric Clun-Clee trackway; a route that was followed by cattle and sheep drovers till the 19th century. There are also several Iron Age hillforts in the immediate vicinity such as Bury Ditches and Caer Caradoc, and there was also much Roman and Saxon activity in the area.

However pre-medieval archaeological evidence from within the town itself is scant, save for a Romano-British spindle whorl from the site of the Midland Bank, yet there has been little archaeological investigation. In the 1990's the town was assessed as part of the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey (Buteux 1990) that collated archive and documentary resources (including maps, building stock, burgage plots etc).

The earliest known documentary reference to Clun is in the will of Wulfric, '*aet Clune*', dated 1002 (Bowcock 1923). By the 11th century Clun was the centre of an estate, with a presumably both settlement and a Minster, though this is supposition (Cranage, 1903), and was seemingly prosperous. The Domesday Survey in 1086 describes Clun as being held by Edric, a freeman, and worth £25, and therefore relatively well-to-do. Edric was probably Edric Silvaticus, 'Wild Edric', who led a revolt against the Normans in 1068-9 that was ruthlessly suppressed (Stenton, 1971). Western Shropshire was devastated and by 1086 Clun manor was worth just £3. About that time the manor was held by Norman, Picot de Say, chief vassal of Roger de Montgomery-who had been granted Shropshire by William the Conqueror, and was in effect Overlord. Its fortunes began to recover and the manor was the centre of Picot's Barony of Clun and included a manorial hall, a mill, (probably of Saxon origin) 15 taxable hides and land for 60 ploughs. Though not mentioned in the Domesday Book some consider the church of Saxon origin, possibly a Minster or mother church of a large parish (Andersen, 1864).

The present parish church was extensively renovated in 1877 but some commentators that described it before the work was carried out state that parts of the nave were pre-Conquest (Bagshaw, 1851; Hulbert, 1837). The fact that the church is on the south side of the river rather than in the town planted around the post-Conquest castle implies it is part of a Saxon settlement there.

The castle, first mentioned in 1140, was probably built in the late eleventh century by Picot de Say, or his son Henry, and a planned street layout seemingly arose in association. The area between the church and the castle was later laid out with burgage plots; 183 by the late 13 century. By the early 12th century there was a general reorganisation of the properties in the Welsh March and the manors of Clun and Obley were taken out of the old

hundred of Purslow and became the separate Honor of Clun-virtually a Marcher Lordship (Eyton 1864). The Honor was neither wholly English nor wholly Welsh, and its laws were taken from both countries-though always subject to the whims of the ruling Baron. In 1204 a charter for a three day fair was granted, and in 1277 a murage grant allowed the town to enclose itself within a walled defensive circuit.

As a strategic and political power base, the town was targeted by the Welsh, and it was attacked by Prince Rhys in 1196 and Prince Llywelyn in 1234. In 1216 John FitzAlan, whose family had absorbed the barony through marriage in the mid 12th century, was implicated resulting in an attack by King John. In 1302 it was noted that 60 burgages were empty and only 85% paid rent (Buteux 1996), by which time the town had begun to decline and the outbreaks of the Black Death between 1348 and 1374 would have accelerated this decline. By 1605 only about 100 burgages were tenanted, and by 1835 only 25. The castle was described as '*somewhat ruinous*' by John Leland in 1540, and by the Civil War in the 1640's was not seen fit to be garrisoned (Buteux 1996). In 1813 Clun was described as '*a small neglected town.....little worthy of note*' (Nightingale 1813). Eventually, in 1886, the borough was abolished.

3.0 Project Aims and Objectives

The aims of the project were: -

- To monitor all groundwork undertaken by the contractor.
- To make a record of the extent and depth of all such groundwork.
- To excavate two trenches 1.5 metres by 5 metres to investigate the presence or absence of archaeological features or deposits and to provide information about the nature, extent, sensitivity, depth and potential of any such archaeological findings.
- To make a record of any archaeological features or deposits exposed.
- To record the presence of sensitive archaeological material within the trenches and in the spoil removed during excavation, and to retrieve any potential dating evidence.
- To make a record of all finds and any environmental material recovered.
- To ensure that if any environmental evidence is preserved, that a sufficient sample be retained to allow for further analysis.
- To ensure that the location and of the area excavated is accurately recorded on a suitably scaled plan.
- To record negative evidence and to consider its implications.

4.0 Methodology

4.1 Field Methodology

The following methodology was employed: -

- Suitably qualified archaeologists monitored all activity that involved disturbance of the ground surface.
- An assessment of the archaeological significance of finds, structures and deposits was made and appropriate action taken.
- Structures and stratigraphic sequences observed were recorded on scaled drawings and the position of all work disturbing the ground, and any archaeological features, was located on them.
- The presence of artefacts and was recorded with a description of their type, quantity and original location. The spoil was scanned for significant finds but in fact none were observed.
- All descriptions of structures and deposits, photographic records and drawing numbers were recorded on the relevant data capture documents in accordance with Archenfield Archaeology's standard site recording procedures.
- Significant features were, where possible, photographed next to an appropriate scale rule, and a board displaying a unique context number. Each photographic exposure was recorded in the photographic log.
- Staff carrying out the evaluation excavation followed the guidelines laid down in the Archenfield Archaeology Health and Safety Policy
- Archenfield Archaeology conforms to the Institute of Field Archaeologists' Code of Conduct and code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual arrangements in Field Archaeology. All projects are, where applicable, carried out in accordance with IFA Standards and Guidance or Draft Standards and Guidance.

4.2 Processing Methodology

- All retained artefacts and ecofacts were cleaned, catalogued and recorded.
- All data were entered into a Microsoft Access relational database

5.0 The Results

Two evaluation trenches were dug using a JCB. These were situated on the western side of the proposed development area. Both trenches were 1.5 metre in width and Trench 1 measured 6.50 metres in length and Trench 2 measured 5 metres in length. The ground at the north east section of the development area had been heavily disturbed by the disused petrol and oil tanks from the former petrol station. An area approximately 12metres wide by 9metres in length and up to 4 metres deep was eventually lost in terms of any potential archaeological assessment by the removal of the petrol tanks.

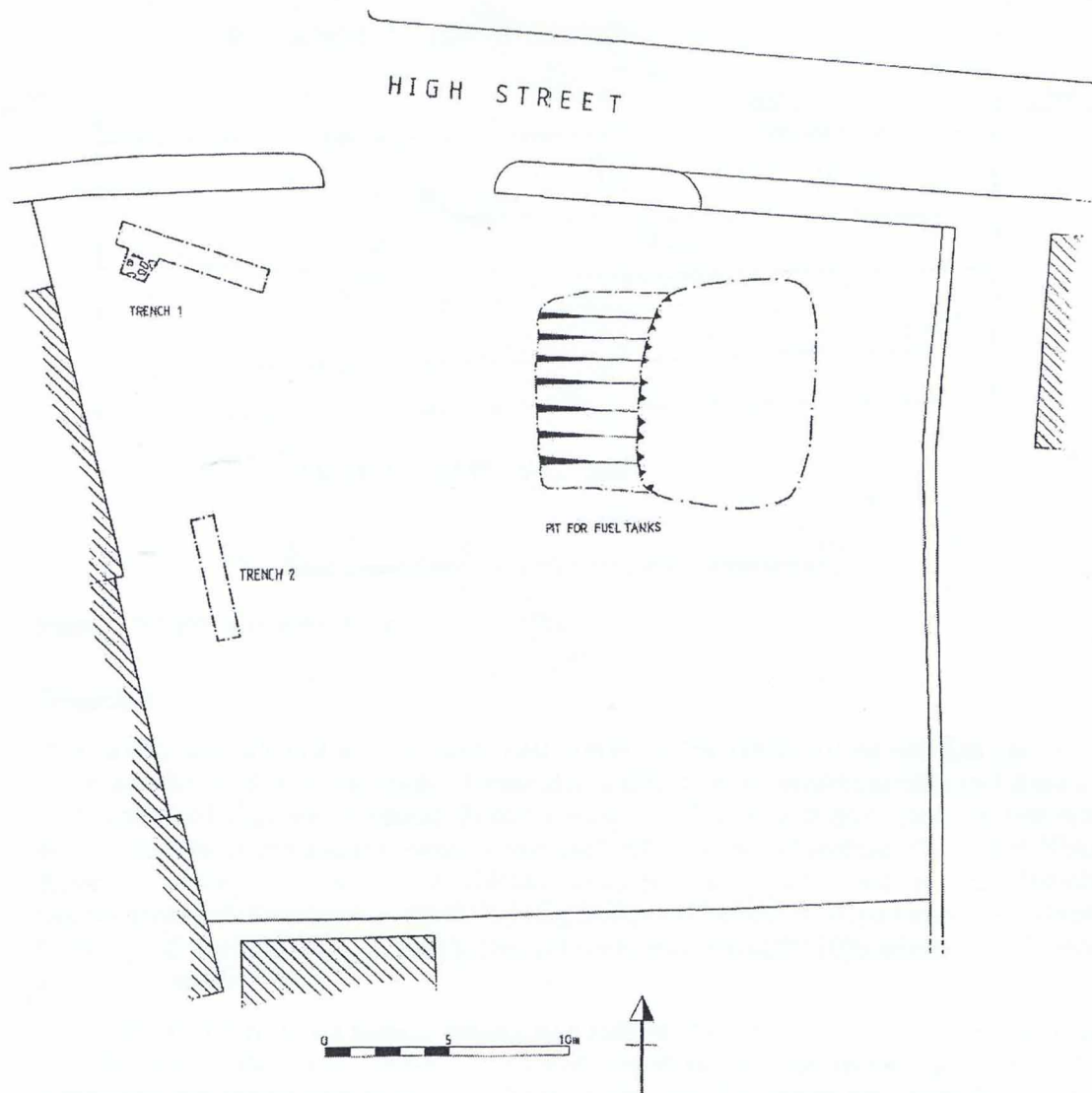


Figure 2: Trench location plan

5.1 The Stratigraphy

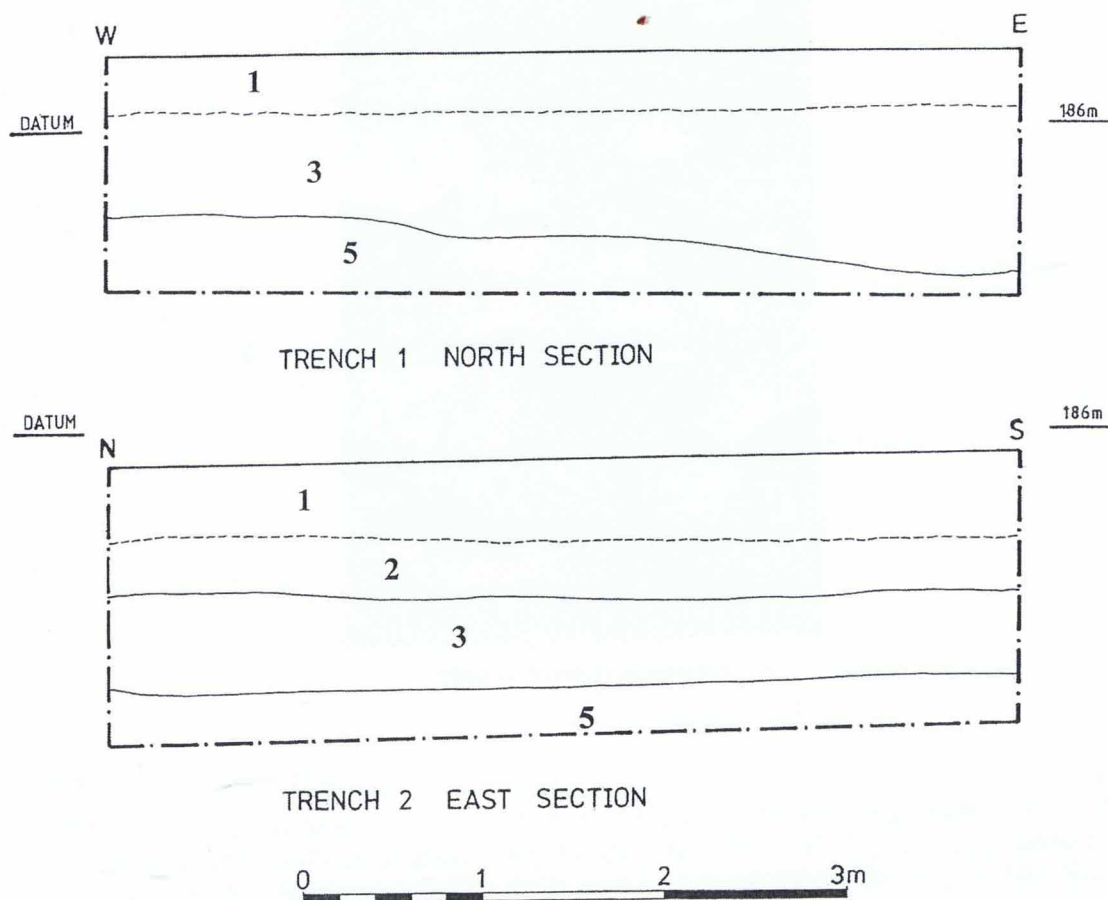


Figure 3: Sections of trenches 1 & 2

Trench 1

This trench was situated on the north west corner of the development site and ran in a north-west by south-east direction. **Context 1**, a thin layer of modern tarmac and general rubble overlaid a subsoil (**Context 3**) comprising of a friable mid grey brown gravel-silt with occasional flecks and fragments of charcoal, which was archaeologically sterile. This deposit, seemingly natural, was thicker towards the eastern end of the trench (approximately 0.90 metres) as the underlying horizon (**Context 5**) sloped away. **Context 5** comprised of a mid- orange, brown clay-silt with approximately 10% mixed gravels and occasional charcoal flecks.

A feature (**Context 4**, see plate 1 below) was seen at the western end of this trench and was set within the south section. Further investigation was necessary to try and understand the nature and alignment of this feature so the trench was extended to the south. This feature consisted of worked stone set fairly loosely within the ground which seemed to be running in a north south direction.

There was evidence of lime mortar, suggesting that even though the stones were loose they were at one time bonded together. This feature was not seen in the north section of the trench, whereas it was seen in the southern section. Even though the trench was extended southwards the true length of the feature was not determined.

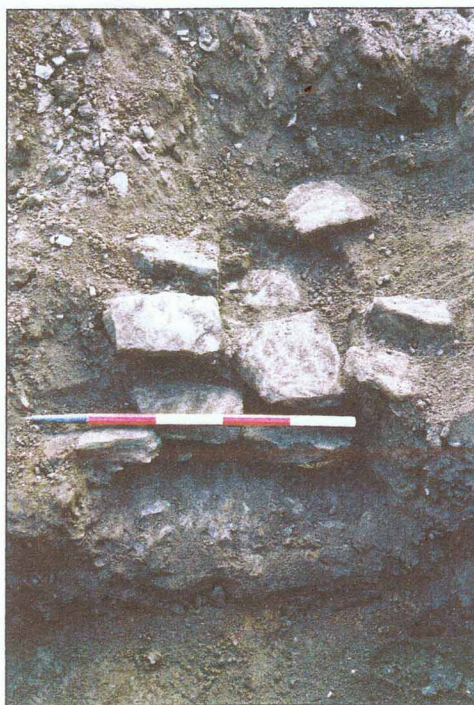


Plate 1: Wall (4) in trench 1

Trench 2

This trench was situated directly south from trench 1, also on the western side of the development area and was aligned along a north-south axis. Modern rubble (**Context 1**) was much thicker here, up to 0.30m thick, and overlay (**Context 2**), up to 0.30m thick, quite similar to (and merging with) **Context 3**, yet darker and more humic. This layer was also archaeologically sterile. **Context 3**, here fairly level and about 0.50m thick, again overlay **Context 5**.

5.2 The Pottery

The two trenches that were excavated contained no stratified pottery. The site as a whole produced little ceramic evidence, with only 14 sherds of unstratified pottery being retained. These mainly consisted of nineteenth century Staffordshire slip and pearl wares with some sherds of salt glazed stoneware. There was also one sherd from a German Westerwald stoneware mug and a single sherd dating from the medieval period, a piece of green glazed strap handle with incised decoration (stabbing).

6.0 Conclusions

The site has been largely truncated along the northwestern side due to the insertion and subsequent removal of buried fuel tanks. In places these had been sunk into the ground to a depth of 4 metres. The evidence gathered from the excavation of trenches 1 and 2 demonstrated that the survival of the original ground surface has probably been affected by the construction of the garage buildings and associated hard standing. The only surviving feature that pre-dates this phase is the wall (**context 4**) observed in trench 1. No dating evidence was recovered from this feature, but it seems possible that it may have originally formed the boundary of a burgage plot, or that it represents the remains of the foundations of an earlier building.

7.0 Archive Deposition

The primary project archive, consisting of the excavated material and any original paper records, will be prepared and stored in accordance with the guidelines laid down in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' guidelines for the preparation and storage of archives. The primary archive will be stored with Shrewsbury Museum.

A copy of the digital archive, stored on CD and consisting of context, artefact and ecofact data, together with the site plan and selected photographs, will accompany the primary archive.

The client, in consultation with the project manager, will make provision for the deposition of all finds from the excavation with the Shrewsbury Museum. On completion of the fieldwork and the processing, collation, recording and analysis of the finds from the excavation all finds will be handed over to the museum staff, along with the project archive. Arrangements will be made with the museum for the transfer of title.

8.0 Publication and Dissemination Proposals

Paper copies of this report will be lodged with the Archaeological Adviser to Shropshire County Council and Shropshire Sites and Monuments Record. A short note on the project will be prepared for publication in the Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society.

CD- Rom's of this report, together with the supporting archival material will be available from Archenfield Archaeology.

The complete photographic record, including the negatives, will be retained by Archenfield Archaeology.

General Bibliography

- Buteux, V. 1996 *Archaeological Assessment of Clun, Shropshire*; Central Marches Historic Towns Survey, Worcestershire County Archaeology Service Report 311
- Kenyon, RL. 1917 'The Borough of Clun' *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society*, vol. 39, 127-140
- Morris, R. 1990 *Clun Castle Shropshire: An outline history*. City of Hereford Archaeology Unit. Hereford Archaeology Series 69
- Stone, R. 2002 Clunside Garage Clun Shropshire A report on an archaeological assessment. Marches Archaeology Series 251

Cartographic Material

- Tithe Commissioners, 1847 Clun Parish Tithe Map
- Ordnance Survey, 1884 1st edition 1:2500 plan. County Series, Shropshire
- Ordnance Survey, 1903 2nd edition 1:2500 plan. County Series, Shropshire

Copyright

Archenfield Archaeology will retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents, under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1998* with all rights reserved; excepting that it hereby provide an exclusive licence to the client for use of such documents by the client in all matters directly relating to the project.