



Castle Cottage, Wigmore, Herefordshire  
building recording and archaeological monitoring

Huw Sherlock, PJ Pikes and Robert Williams  
2002



## archenfield archaeology ltd

Principal Archaeologist: Huw Sherlock BA, DipArch, MIFA

Archenfield Archaeology Ltd is a multidisciplinary archaeological consultancy, offering a complete range of archaeological advice and services to the public and private sector. We specialise in giving archaeological advice to developers, housing associations and private individuals. We also undertake archaeological intervention, from monitoring to full-scale excavation; building survey; landscape and geophysical surveys and community-based historical and archaeological projects.

*Castle Cottage, Wigmore, Herefordshire: building recording and archaeological monitoring  
2002*

*The authors would like to acknowledge the help and support of the staff of the Herefordshire  
County Record Office and to Robin Hill of Hereford City Library.*

Client: Mr & Mrs Smith, Castle Cottage proprietors

Text: Huw Sherlock, PJ Pikes and Robert Williams

Project Manager: Huw Sherlock

Cover Photograph: Castle Cottage during renovation works



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## Summary

*Archenfield Archaeology conducted a program of building surveying and archaeological monitoring at Castle Cottage, Castle Street, Wigmore; a grade II listed building. A photographic record of exposed structural detail was made and the excavation of a shallow trench was monitored.*

*No archaeological finds were recovered during the monitoring.*

### 1.0 Introduction

NGR: **SO 41330 69010**

Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record - Event No. **32135**

Hereford City Museum Accession No. **HFDMG 2002-45**



**Figure 1: Location plan; extract from Ordnance Survey Superplan data reproduced under license ref.: 26105645**

Mr. A. Smith (the client) commissioned a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording in accordance with a brief issued by the Herefordshire Council Archaeology Service. This was issued in response to planning application NW2002/1374/L for permission to carry out re-introduction of oak framework and other ancillary works.

## 2.0 Geological, historical and archaeological background

### 2.1 Geological background and land use

The topography, geology and soils of Wigmore have been summarised by Hal Dalwood (1996) – ‘the soils are stagnogleyic argillic brown earths of the Yeld Association (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Ragg et al 1984). The underlying geology consists of the Coalbrookdale Formation and Much Wenlock Limestone Formation (British Geological Survey 1:250,000, sheet 52° -0.4°W).’

The Specific geomorphology is glacial till on the edge of an in-filled glacial lake which forms the moor itself – the ‘Wig’ moor. A fossilised shoreline of this lake is visible at Leinthall Stokes SO 4335696 (Cross, 1968, pp207-208).

The house itself occupies the crest of a bank rising from the valley floor and flanks the road that formerly led to the castle. The site is in use as residential accommodation and gardens.

### 2.2 Historical background

There is no recently published general history of Wigmore. A 19<sup>th</sup> century work by Thomas Morgan Bound is fairly fanciful about the settlement’s origin. In Domesday, Wigmore, in Hazeltree Hundred, has three entries. One entry is under the lands held by Ralph Mortimer. This records that Ralph Mortimer holds Wigmore castle. Earl William built it on waste land which is called *Merestun*, which Gunfrith held in the time of Edward the Confessor. There were two hides which paid tax, two ploughs in lordship, and four slaves. The borough which is there pays seven pounds – ‘*bergu qd ibi est redd vii lib*’ (Thorn and Thorn, 9.1).

In the section recording the lands of the king, *Merestone* is recorded as a member of the manor of Kingsland which Ralph Mortimer holds of the king (*ibid.* 1.5).

Section 1.19 (*ibid.*) refers specifically to Wigmore again. Ralph Mortimer holds Wigmore, which Alward held. There is ½ hide - Wigmore castle is situated in it.

There are two versions of the name in Domesday - Wigmore and *Wigemore* - The second element of the name is OE mōr – marsh. Bruce Coplestone-Crow (1989) says that the first element is wicga – ‘beetle, something which wriggles’ which refers to the nature of the marsh overlooked by the castle. This meaning is retained in earwig – The OED gives *erowicga* c1000 AD – an insect which wriggles in the ear (supposedly to get to the brain).

The earlier name of the settlement here then appears to have been *Merestone/Merestun* – Old English Mersc-tūn – TŪN by the ‘mere’ or marsh - the name of the marsh itself later being applied to the new settlement. The modern derivation of *Merestone* is usually Marston, but sometimes Merston (in Kent, Sussex and Wiltshire – Ekwall, 1960). The form *Merestone* was used in Domesday for Merston in Sussex, Long Marston in Gloucestershire and Marston Moretaine in Bedfordshire (*ibid.*). The marginal annotation for Wigmore in the Herefordshire Domesday of the 1160s is ‘*Wigemore in Merstona ij h*’ (Galbraith and Tait, 1950).

Wigmore is one of very few Herefordshire boroughs recorded in the original Domesday Book. In 1066 Hereford was the only borough in the county. By 1086 boroughs were certainly attached to the castles of Clifford and Wigmore. Both these castles were foundations of William fitz Osbern, the Earl of Hereford under William I and Clifford is stated in Domesday to have 16 burgesses.

Embryonic boroughs may have also have existed at Ewyas Harold and Richard’s Castle. At Ewyas Harold, fitz Osbern had re-fortified the pre-conquest Pentecost Castle where there were two dwellings at the time of Domesday. The 23 men at

*Auretone*, the site of the pre-conquest Richard's Castle, may also be burgesses (Noble, 1964, p64).

If, as seems likely, the customs of fitz Osbern's Breteuil with its 12d rental apply to Wigmore, The £7 paid by the borough may represent 140 burgages (Noble, 1964, p64-65).

The boroughs at Bromyard, Ledbury and Ross-on-Wye are not documented before the Red Book of the Bishop of Hereford written towards the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Beresford and Finberg, 1973) by which time, however, they were well established boroughs. In Bromyard, the Red Book lists 230 named tenants who held whole, parts or multiples of burgages. These burgage plots can be approximately related to the present street plan of Bromyard (Sherlock and Pikes, 2001).

Wigmore, although by no means a failed borough, seems not to have flourished to the same degree as Bromyard. There are two 14<sup>th</sup> century extents are preserved in the Public Record Office which include the settlement. The number of burgesses in the borough are assessed at 144, which seems suspiciously rounded (the old 'gross' of 12 times 12), but this may reflect a reasonable estimation of their actual number (Bayliss, 1958).

Castle Cottage is marked as number 167 on the 1841 tithe map of Wigmore (see figure 2). The apportionment records that it was owned by Henry Prince and occupied by Thomas Owens.

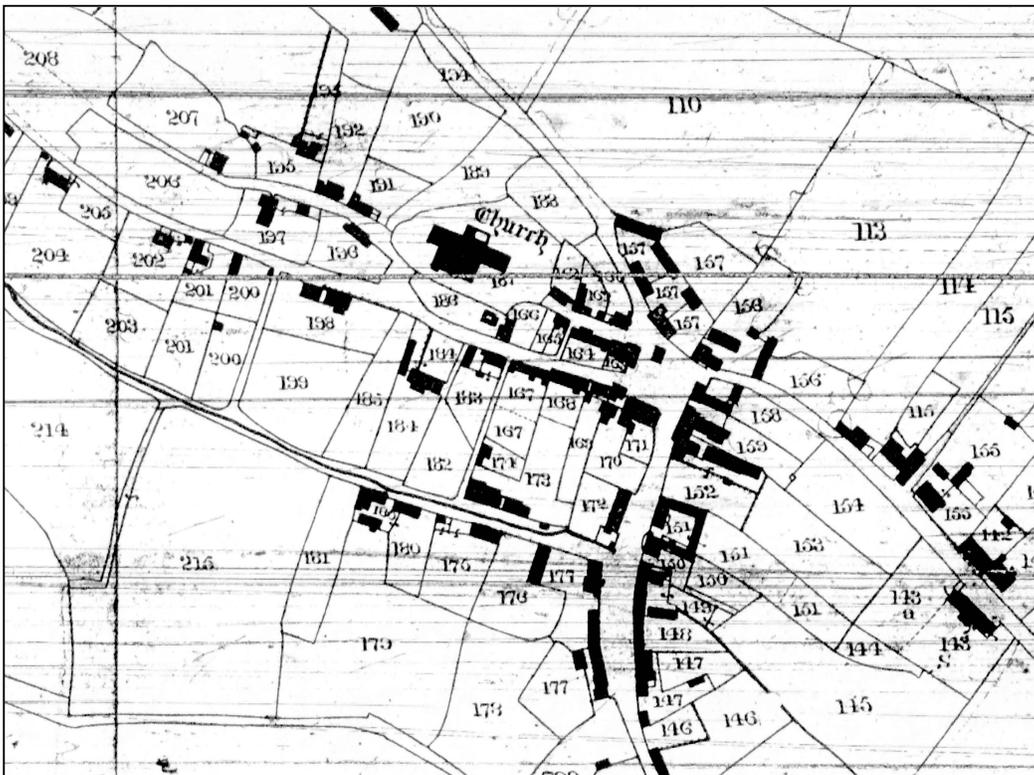


Figure 2: Extract from the 1841 tithe map of Wigmore.

## 2.3 Archaeological background

Archaeological projects in Wigmore have tended to be biased towards the castle.

Wigmore itself was the subject of an archaeological assessment as part of the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey (Dalwood, 1996). At that time three archaeological excavations had taken place in the village.

One of these found a floor, traces of walls and a fireplace below an existing house, the Old Post Office during restoration work. These were not dated, but were pre 1600.<sup>1</sup> Excavation beneath a 17<sup>th</sup> century cottage in Castle Street by J W Tonkin revealed foundations of an earlier two-roomed house built at right angles to the street.<sup>2</sup>

Salvage recording at Castle Street during bulldozing in 1970 revealed foundations of the timber framed vicarage, pulled down about 100 years previously. These consisted of stone footings about 18ins high and wide. This building was 45ft by 30ft and divided into two rooms by a footing.<sup>3</sup>

Other work in Wigmore has included salvage recording at the Old Vicarage Residential Home, Ford Street, which recovered three sherds of medieval pottery (13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century), and late 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery and building materials.<sup>4</sup>

Again, medieval material was recovered during archaeological monitoring of ground-works for new building adjacent to Oakley House in 2000, where a building from not later than the early 16<sup>th</sup> century was also found (Appleton-Fox, 2000).<sup>5</sup>

Castle Cottage lies within a part of Wigmore identified as distinct urban component in the form of a block of tenement or 'burgage' plots on the south side of Castle Street.<sup>6</sup> This, together with other medieval urban components, formed the entity which has been classified (its 'medieval urban form') as a small medieval market town (Dalwood, 1996).<sup>7</sup>

Standing buildings in Wigmore have also been examined. One house in the village may have medieval origins although rebuilt in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (RCHM, 1934, p210 no. 11).<sup>8</sup> More recently, outbuildings at Court House were examined by Richard Stone (2002).<sup>9</sup>

The house itself is a Grade II listed building (DOE 1987).

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<sup>1</sup> Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record number 16470  
<sup>2</sup> Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record number 16476  
<sup>3</sup> Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record number 21984  
<sup>4</sup> Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record number 19417  
<sup>5</sup> Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record number 31759  
<sup>6</sup> Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record number 19434  
<sup>7</sup> Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record number 19441  
<sup>8</sup> Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record number 185  
<sup>9</sup> Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record number 31809

### **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 make a record of any archaeological features or deposits exposed. In particular, attention should be paid to testing the results against the model for medieval Wigmore suggested in the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey (Dalwood, 1996).
- To record the presence of 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 was preserved, that a sufficient sample be retained to allow for further analysis. It would be borne in mind that Wigmore has produced no environmental evidence and that *'the full potential for recovery of environmental remains and research is largely unknown'* (Pearson, 1996).
- To ensure that the location and of the area excavated was accurately recorded on a suitably scaled plan.
- To record negative evidence and to consider its implications.
- To make a photographic and drawn record of the alterations being made to the building.

### **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.
- Opportunities for retrieval of environmental material were sought, but unfortunately none were forthcoming.
- Staff carrying out the monitoring of the groundwork followed the guidelines laid down in the Archenfield Archaeology Health and Safety Policy.
- A photographic record was made of the portions of the timber frame that were to be replaced prior to the work commencing. The architect's plans and elevations were used as a basis for the drawn record. These were then annotated and corrected to provide a baseline statement of the condition of the building prior to the work being carried out.
- The building and its setting were assessed and analysed by suitably qualified employees of Archenfield Archaeology.
- 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 processed, catalogued and assessed.
- All data were entered into a Microsoft ©Access relational database.

## 5.0 The Results

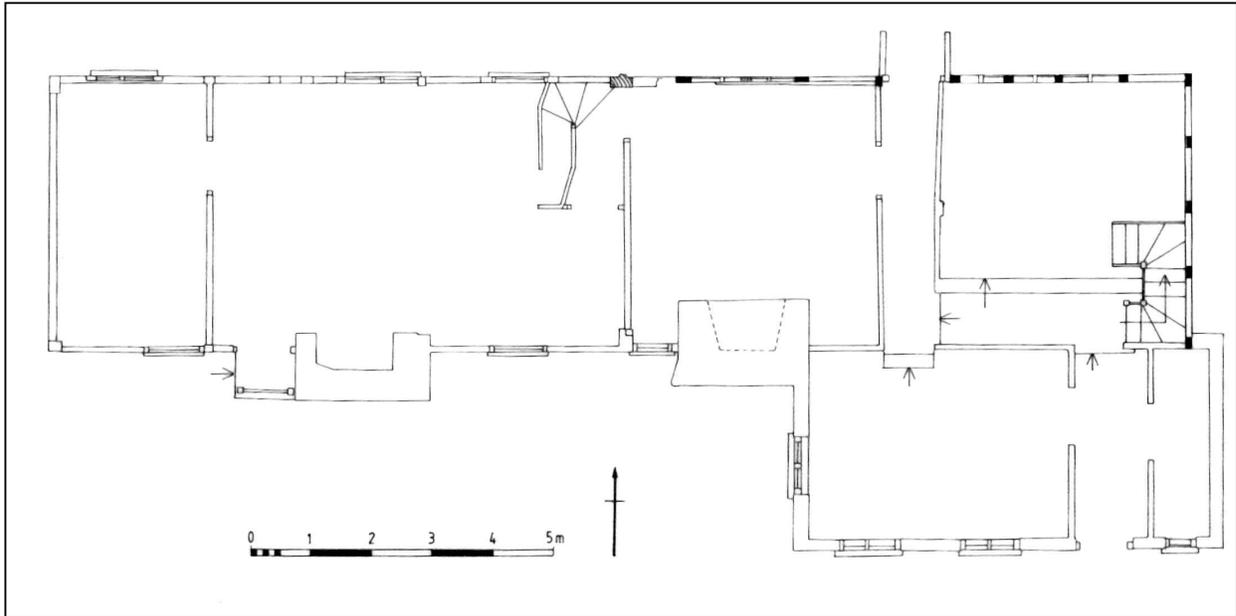


Figure 3: Ground plan of Castle Cottage, Wigmore

### 5.1 The Building Recording Project.

A superficial survey of the house (Herefordshire Sites and Monuments number 9456) was recorded and it was noted that many of the timbers were re-used and that the building has had many repairs over a long period both internally and externally.

A plan at a scale of 1:50 based on the architect's drawing was annotated to include archaeological details mainly to areas where alterations were to be made to the house (see figure 2). This was mainly on the north façade where the sill beams were being replaced.

Scaled photographs were taken of all areas where alterations were to be made both internally and externally using a 35 mm camera with colour film.

Much of the renovation work had already been done to the building before Archenfield Archaeology were informed but the client had taken several photographs of work in progress and these are included in the archive.

The building was visited during the period of June and July 2002.

Huw Sherlock (BA, AIFA) and Robert Williams (AIFA, AAIS) conducted the site recording and analysis.

#### ***The Building in general***

This is a grade II listed timber framed building that lies on an east west axis on the south side of Castle Street, Wigmore and is of boxed frame construction three panels high set on a shallow brick plinth. The east and west gable frames are four panels wide. The north façade fronts directly on to a main road. It is of single storey with attic and has a cellar entrance at the south elevation, which is at the rear of the house.

Today it is one long building but the Royal Commission for Historic Monuments describes the building as a former cobbler's shop and two dwellings and when

visited in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century it was described as being in a poor condition.



The external timbers have been heavily painted and many details of the original construction (such as the position of peg holes) are obscured. Many of the original timbers have been replaced with re-used or modern ones.

**Plate 1: The front entrance. The beam that was inserted is in the foreground.**

### ***The Roof***

The gabled roof is covered in slate and towards the western end the slates have been replaced with modern ones. The south pitch of the roof has been raised to a two-storey height.



The trusses in the roof space were not looked at in any detail but are of a collar and tie beam construction with V struts above the collar. The building is divided into five bays.

There are two externally placed stone rubble chimneys with offsets situated along the south rear wall and have brick upper stacks. Set within the stonework on the west stack is a moulded architectural stone (Plate 3).

**Plate 2: Inserted architectural fragment in base of western chimney stack.**

### ***External Elevation North***

The northern façade has had recent repair that includes a new sill beam situated east of the central doorway and replacement windows at the ground floor level. The sill beam west of the doorway has also been replaced. The porch on this elevation is of a modern design and also the dormer window above.

A door set in the eastern corner has been made redundant; although a new door has been inserted it has been blocked internally. However peg holes on the corner post reveal that an original mid rail went across the door and therefore this doorway was not part of the original plan when the building was built.

A centrally located post on this elevation (see hatched timber shown on figure 1) has the remains of a raised moulding on the external face. There are no other

moulded timbers on the external faces of the building and therefore this timber is probably inserted.

### ***East and West Elevations***

Both of these frames have had repair work done to them over a period of time but still retain their original form.

The eastern gable elevation has had the brick plinth replaced and has been re-pointed during recent works.

It was noted that on the east face of the north post to this gable frame, that there were a series of four cuts with corresponding cuts on the next stud going south. This probably indicates that there was some form of structure running off in an eastern direction.



**Plate 3: The western gable end.**

The west gable frame has had modern repairs or replacement of selective timbers and the in-fill of the panels have been replastered and painted over recently.

### ***South***



A new extension situated at the south east corner of the building has been built. This extension overshoots an earlier extension that has now been demolished. Much of the timber framing on the south elevation has either been replaced or the timbers are re-used. Plate 4 shows the exposed timbers at the south east part of the building.

**Plate 4: The south east corner of the building exposed during a previous phase of renovation work, The photograph clearly shows a raised sill beam on a stone plinth and a door entrance slightly west. The floor in this part of the building was formed by cobble stones (see plate 5).**



**Plate 5: The cobbled floor within the cobbler's shop.**

### ***Conclusion***

Much of the timbers to this house are re-used as disused peg holes appear both internally and externally on timbers in random places that do not make sense. Internal partition walls as well as ceiling beams do not relate to any constructional form in the way this building was built originally. On the other hand this building may have been built using re-used timbers.

The only frames that relate to a certain style of build are the east and west elevations and possibly dates to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century.

## 5.2 The stratigraphy

A shallow trench was excavated by the contractor, under archaeological supervision, along the line of the northern elevation to the immediate west of the main front entrance. This trench was 400 millimetres deep and 500 millimetres wide by 3.2 metres long and was excavated to allow the insertion of the new sole plate (the base of the trench was at 142.57 OD). The fill of this trench was a very loose, dark humic soil with frequent inclusions of small stones, brick, decayed wood and mortar. A number of nineteenth and twentieth century glass bottles were recovered from the trench, which have been retained. No archaeological features or deposits were recorded during the excavation of this trench.



**Plate 6: The base of the trench excavated in order to remove the old sill beam and insert the replacement beam.**

## 6.0 Conclusions

Taken together, the architectural evidence and the stratigraphic sequence that was available for examination during the fieldwork confirmed that the origins of castle cottage lie in the seventeenth century. Extensive alterations have taken place both latterly and during the evolution of the building. It is a good example of artisans dwelling that combined both workshop space and a domestic environment.

## 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 Hereford City 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 Hereford City 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 Herefordshire Council, Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record and Hereford City Library. A short note on the project will be prepared for publication in the Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists Club.

CDs of this report, together with the supporting archival material will be available from Archenfield Archaeology.

Archenfield Archaeology will retain the complete photographic record, including the negatives.

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## **Cartographic material**

Tithe Commissioners, 1841

Ordnance Survey, 1903

Ordnance Survey, 1903

Wigmore Parish Tithe Map

2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1:2500 plan. County Series, Herefordshire Sheet VI.7

2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1:2500 plan. County Series, Herefordshire Sheet VI.8

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