

Marches Archaeology

St Giles Church Downton Herefordshire

**A report on an
archaeological watching brief**

February 2005

Marches Archaeology Series 370

Archaeological Consultants and Contractors

This report is produced by

Marches Archaeology

**Marches House
6 High Street
Clun
Shropshire
SY7 8JB**

Tel:- 01588 640976

Fax:- 01588 640796

e-mail:- archaeology@marches.plus.com

For:-

**The Parochial Church Council
St Giles Church
Downton
Herefordshire**

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**St Giles Church
Downton
Herefordshire**

**A report on an
archaeological watching brief**

NGR: SO 438 743

SMR: HSM 41531

**Report by
Jo Wainwright**

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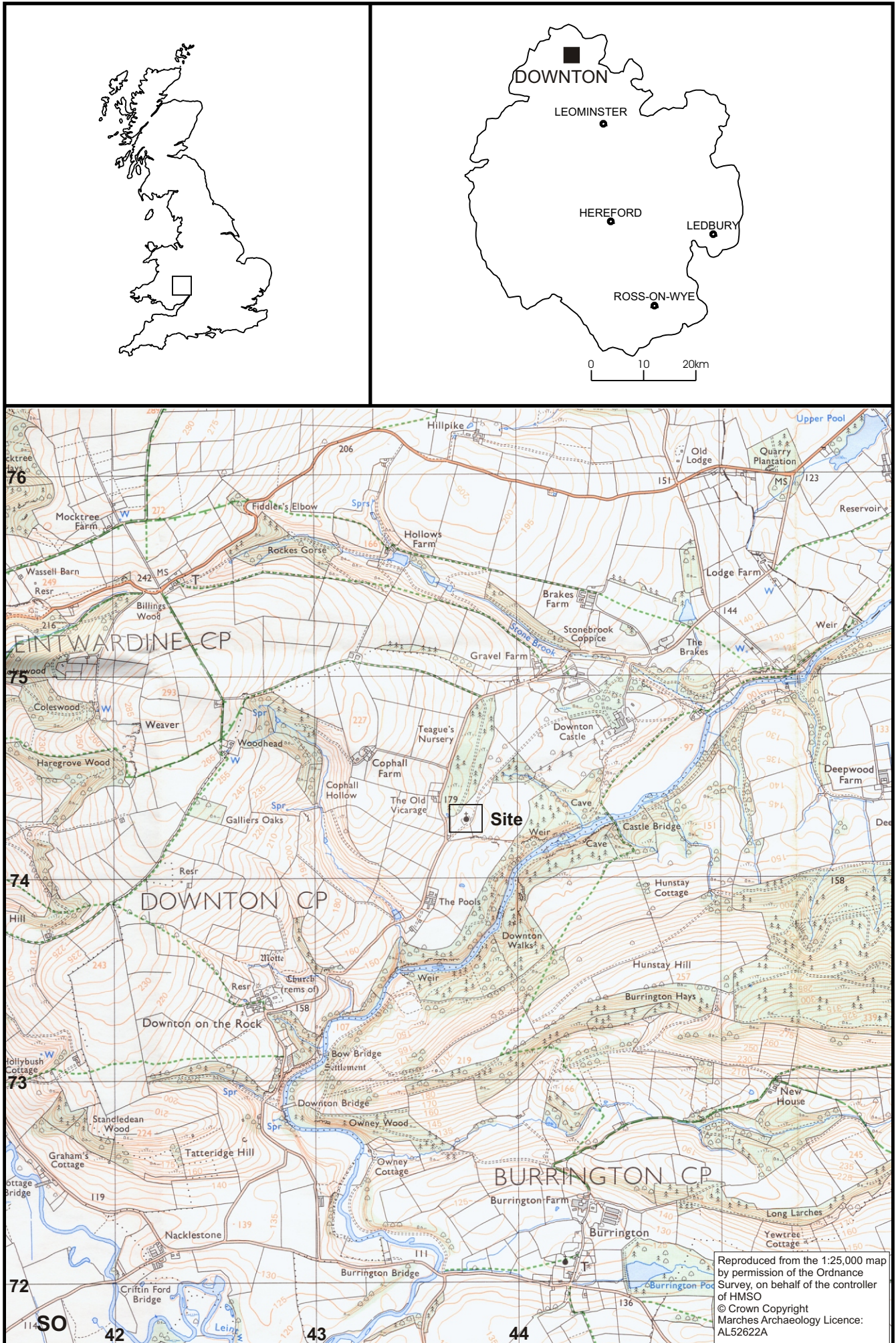


Fig. 1 Location of the site

**St Giles Church
Downton
Herefordshire**

NGR: SO 438 743

**A report on an
archaeological watching brief**

Summary

A watching brief on remedial drainage works at St Giles Church, Downton, Herefordshire revealed no features or deposits of archaeological significance. It seems highly likely that before the church was built in 1861 the site was utilised for purely agricultural purposes.

1 Introduction

Remedial drainage works were proposed at St Giles Church, Downton, Herefordshire. The site is situated at NGR: SO 438 743 (Fig. 1).

Dennis Vickers, on behalf of the Parochial Church Council (the client), commissioned Marches Archaeology to carry out a watching brief on the remedial works. There was no Brief for these works. The Herefordshire Sites and Monuments number for the watching brief is 41531.

2 Aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of the project were:

- ◆ observation of all topsoil stripping, other earthmoving and trench excavation until natural subsoil was reached
- ◆ the recording of the sequence of soil deposits present and all archaeological deposits and features
- ◆ The collection, identification and cataloguing of all artefacts
- ◆ if significant archaeology had been identified the archaeologist on site should have informed the County Archaeological Officer and Project Engineer immediately in order that appropriate action could have been taken to minimise the damage to such deposits and to record them appropriately.

The purpose of an archaeological watching brief is defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists as:

‘to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be

established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works’

and:

‘to provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support a treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard’.

3 Methodology

Documentary research

No documentary research was carried out for the project. If archaeological significant features and deposits had been encountered then documentary research would have been carried out to place those findings in an historical context.

Fieldwork

Observations and appropriate recording were undertaken of all ground breaking activity in association with the development. An archaeologist was on site for one day in November 2004 and one day in January 2005.

The recording system included written, drawn and photographic data. The primary written record was by means of site notes, accompanied by sketches. Context numbers were allocated and trench record sheets completed. A plan of the location of the trenches was made. The photographic record was made using black and white negative and colour transparency film.

Office work

On completion of fieldwork a site archive was prepared. The written, drawn and photographic data was catalogued and cross-referenced.

4 Site description

St Giles Church is situated within the grounds of Downton Castle on a ridge at about 167m O.D. The site is bounded by a roughly rectangular wall and consists of the church and graveyard.

5 Archaeological and historical background

St Giles Church was built by Pountney Smith in 1861 (Fig. 1). This church replaced an earlier church situated in the hamlet of Downton on the Rock about 1 kilometre to the south-west. The new church is situated in the grounds of Downton Castle and is surrounded by pastureland. It is unlikely that any archaeological remains pre-dating the church exist on the site.

6 The watching brief

The drainage trenches were excavated to a maximum of 750mm deep and were about 500mm wide (Fig. 2). The earliest layer encountered was a mid orange brown clay with frequent sub-angular stones [103]. This is probably the natural subsoil. Above this and about 350mm thick was a light orange brown clay with moderate sub-angular stones [102]. Overlying this was the topsoil which was a light grey brown humic clay with very frequent sub-angular stones [101]. This was a maximum 400mm thick.

7 Discussion

No archaeologically significant features or deposits were excavated. It seems highly likely that before the church was built the site was utilised for purely agricultural purposes.

8 References

Published references

Pevsner, N, 1963, *The Buildings of England: Herefordshire*

9 Archive

The site code is DEC04A. The archive consists of:

- 1 trench sheet
- 1 annotated architect's plan
- 1 sheet of site diary and notes
- 2 photographic record sheets
- 1 film of black and white photographic negatives
- 1 film of colour photographic transparencies

The archive is currently held by Marches Archaeology awaiting transfer to Herefordshire Heritage Services.

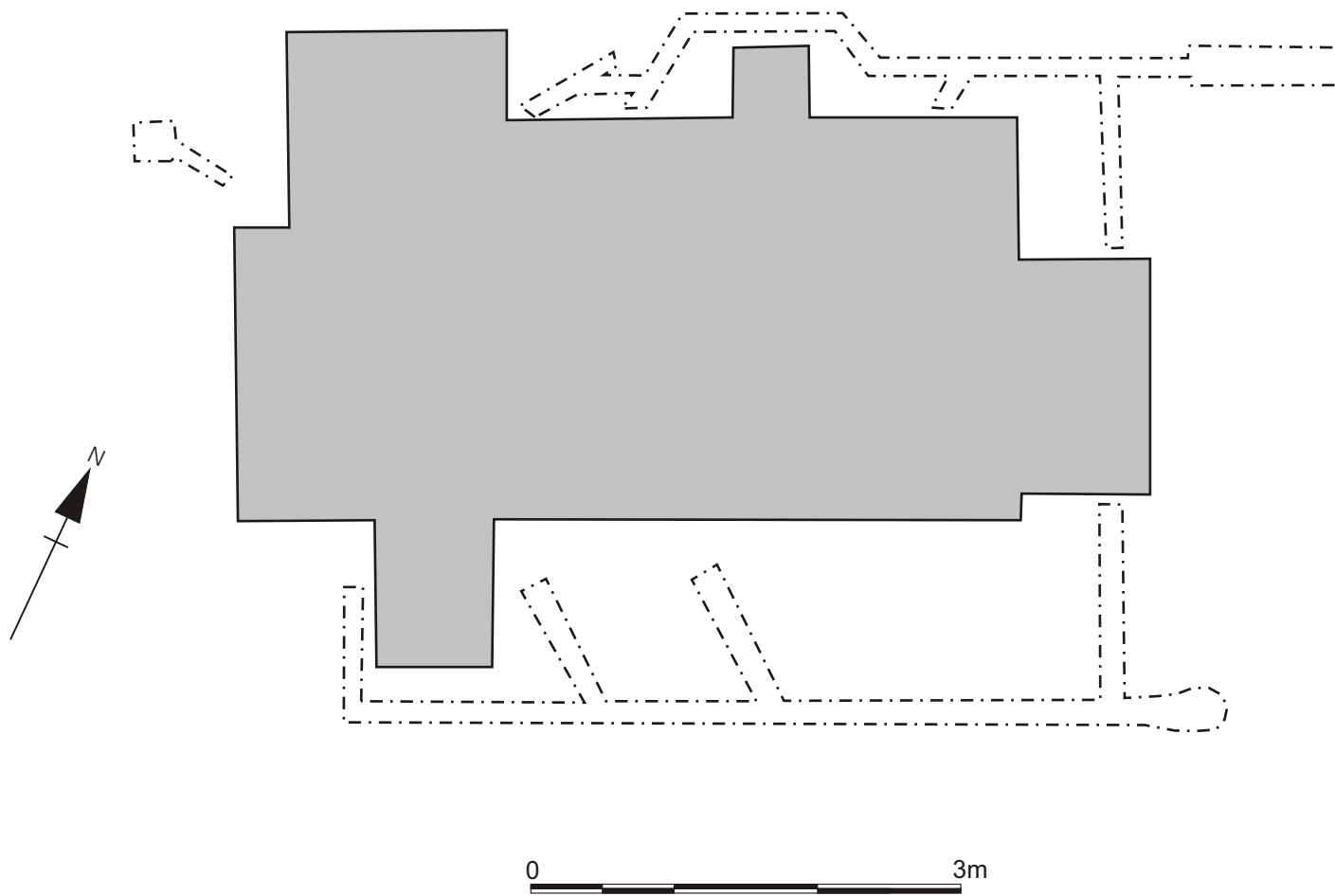


Fig. 2 Location of the areas of excavation