

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit  
**Project No. 640**  
November 1999

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION  
AT LITTLE HEATH COTTAGE,  
ASTLEY, WORCESTERSHIRE**

by  
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# **An Archaeological Evaluation at Little Heath Cottage, Astley, Worcestershire.**

## **1.0 Introduction**

This report describes the results of a below ground evaluation of an area on the north-east fringe of the village of Astley, in the county of Worcestershire, hereinafter referred to as the site. The site (Figure 1) covers c. 0.25ha. to the south of Astley Gardens just off the B4196 (centred on NGR SO 8032 6888).

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) was commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation of the site by G. Herbert Banks, on behalf of The Oakhampton Estate.

## **2.0 The Site and its Setting**

The site is located within an area known to contain material dating to the prehistoric period. A pit and a series of postholes (WSM 11093) were discovered in an adjacent field during groundworks for the Blackstone to Astley aqueduct. The pit contained fragments of Beaker pottery, flint artefacts, burnt stones, bone and carbonised grain dating to the late Neolithic period, the assemblage being interpreted as waste from a settlement site. Other prehistoric material recovered from the surrounding area includes a flint pick (WSM 2217) and sherds of prehistoric pottery (WSM 20801-2).

## **3.0 Aims**

The primary aim of the evaluation was to establish the presence or absence of archaeological deposits. Secondly, should archaeology be present, to determine the location, extent, date, and character of the deposits, and to assess the significance and quality of the remains. The overall aim of the project was to produce evidence which would provide the basis for possible mitigation strategies within the future development.

## **4.0 Methodology**

Due to the size of the area, a single trial trench was proposed for the evaluation. The trench was located to cut across the middle of the site.

Topsoil layers were removed mechanically, using a JCB, under direct archaeological supervision, to expose the uppermost levels of the natural subsoil and the gravel was then examined for archaeological deposits.

Recording was by means of pre-printed pro-forma recording sheets, supplemented by scale drawings, plans, sections, and photographs, as appropriate, which are all held in the archive.

## **5.0 The Archaeological Results**

The trench was aligned north-south, and was 30m long and 1.6m wide. The natural sand was overlain by a ploughsoil (1000) that varied in depth from c.0.30m at the southern end of the trench to 0.50m at the north end. This topsoil produced a fragment of 18<sup>th</sup>-century brick, a sherd of black ware and a sherd of willow pattern pottery. An interface of ironpanning between the natural and the topsoil, suggestive of seasonal waterlogging, was concentrated towards the northern half of the trench where the natural subsoil shelved down slightly. The upper horizon of the natural sand was disturbed by root action.

The deficiency of archaeological deposits means that no section drawings or plans are reproduced in this report, although they are held in the archive.

## **6.0 Discussion**

The trial trench failed to locate any archaeological features and the paucity of finds may infer that the land has been under pasture for an extended period, without manuring taking place.

Monitoring of development groundworks on the site, in the form of a watching brief, may be an appropriate mitigation response here, though a final opinion on the significance of the evaluation results must be sought from the County Archaeological Officer.

## **7.0 Acknowledgements**

The evaluation was carried out by Edward Newton and Kirsty Nichol. The report was produced by Kirsty Nichol with illustrations by Nigel Dodds. Iain Ferris edited the report and managed the project. Thanks are also due to Steven Noble for his careful and precise machining.

## **8.0 References**

Worcester County Council 1999, *Brief for an archaeological field evaluation at Little Heath Cottage, Astley, Worcestershire.*

# PLANNING REFERENCE MH/99/0729

## LOCATION PLAN

Compiled by the Planning Advisory Section

County Archaeological Service  
Woodbury Hall  
University College Worcester  
Henwick Grove  
Worcester  
WR2 6AJ



Scale 1:2500

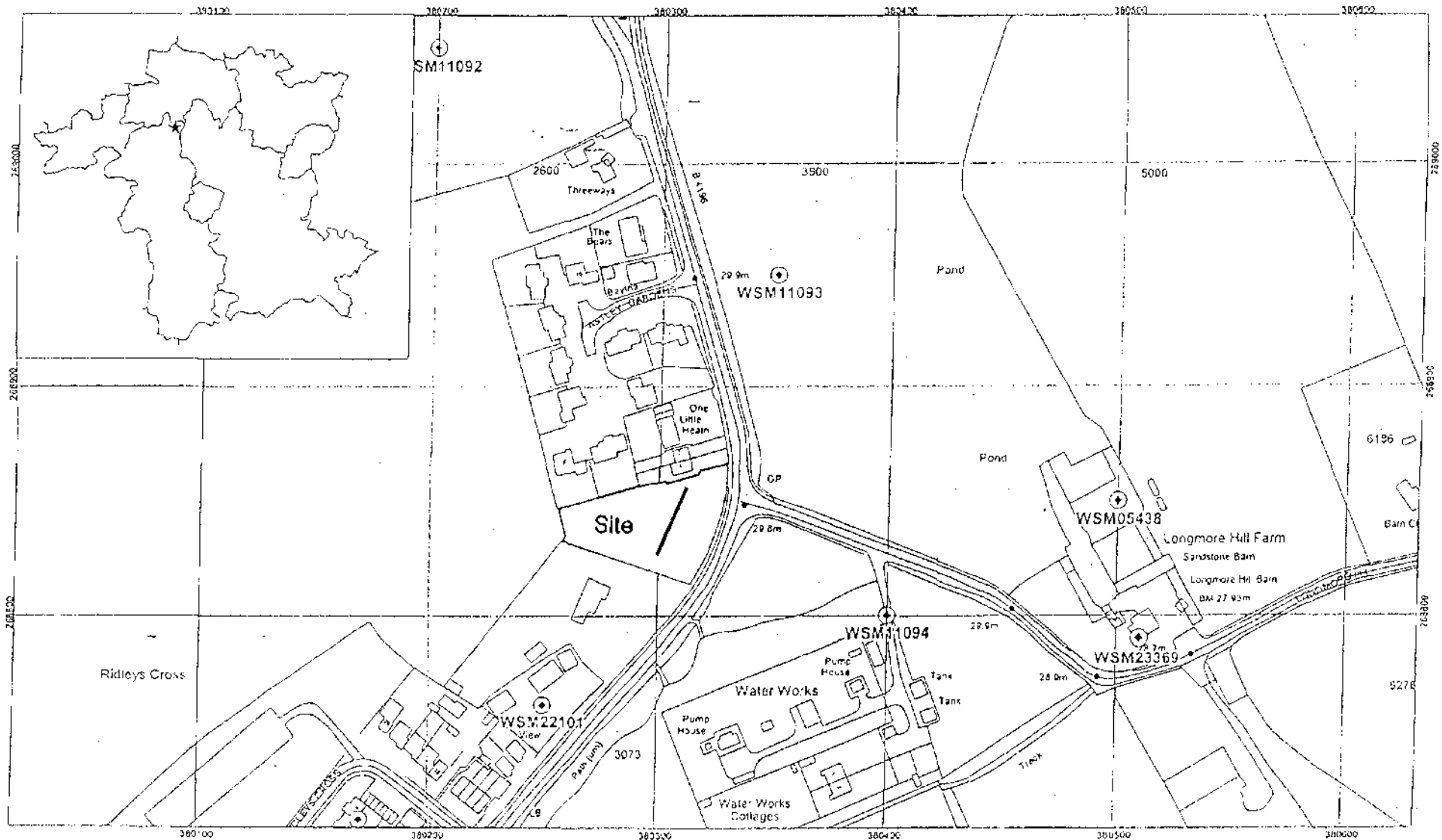


Figure 1

**Appendix 1**  
**Brief for an Archaeological Field Evaluation at Little Heath Cottage, Astley,**  
**Worcestershire.**

**BRIEF FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION  
AT LITTLE HEATH COTTAGE, ASTLEY,  
WORCESTERSHIRE.**

**Planning Application reference: MH/99/0729**

**Archaeological Planning reference: WSM 27905**

**Date: 6 October, 1999**

**All archaeological projects carried out in the County must fulfil the requirements set out in the  
*Requirements and Guidelines for Archaeological Projects in the County of Worcestershire.***

This brief was prepared by:  
Planning Advisory Section  
County Archaeological Service  
Worcestershire County Council  
Woodbury Hall  
University College Worcester  
Henwick Grove  
Worcester WR2 6AJ

## Brief for an archaeological field evaluation at Little Heath Cottage, Astley

WSM 27905

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### Definition

'Field Evaluation is defined as a limited programme of non-intrusive and/or intrusive fieldwork which determines of the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area or site (land-based, inter-tidal or underwater). If such archaeological remains are present Field Evaluation defines their character and extent, and relative quality; and it enables an assessment of their worth in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate.' *IFA Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations*

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### 1 The site

The site is located at NGR SO 8032 6888 as shown on the attached plan. The planning application indicates that the site covers an area of 0.25 ha, and that the current land-use on the site is agricultural.

The solid geology is of the Bromsgrove/Helsby Sandstone Formation (British Geological Survey, 1990, 1:50,000). The soils are Typical Brown Earths of the Bromsgrove association (Soils of England and Wales, 1993, 1:250,000).

### 2 Planning background

A planning application has been submitted to Malvern Hills District Council by Oakhampton Estate (reference MH/99/0729). The application proposes the construction of four cottages.

The proposed development may affect an archaeological site registered on the County Sites and Monuments Record (reference WSM 27905, Statutory Instruments 1988 no 1813). Consequently, the Planning Authority have been advised that further information on the archaeological site is required before they can decide whether to grant planning permission. This information should be obtained by means of an archaeological evaluation (PPG16, sections 21-23; Planning Policy Guidance note 16: Archaeology and Planning, Department of the Environment, November 1990). The Applicant is responsible for commissioning the evaluation.

The evaluation is necessary to fulfil the aims of the County Structure Plan (Hereford and Worcester County Council 1993; policy CTC5) and the district local plan, Malvern Hills District Local Plan, May 1994 (deposit draft), conservation policies 17 and 18.

### 3 Archaeological background

Previous archaeological work in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development has produced important evidence of Prehistoric activity in the area. Of most significance to date was the discovery of a late Neolithic pit and postholes during archaeological salvage recording of the Blackstone to Astley aqueduct (WSM 11093). The pit contained a large amount of fragmentary Beaker pottery, a flint scraper and nearly 300 flint spalls. In addition a pounding stone, burnt stones, bone and carbonised grain was identified. This assemblage was interpreted as waste from a nearby settlement. Further



evidence for Prehistoric activity in the area has come from the discovery of a flint pick (WSM 2217) and prehistoric pottery (WSM 20801-2). Consequently the proximity of these sites and finds indicates a settlement focus and it is possible that similar deposits survive in the area of the development.

*The above is not a documentary study as required by this brief.*

#### **4 Scope of the project**

- The following techniques will be used:
- Trial excavation trenches.

A suggested trench location is attached, although the precise location will be finalised following further details concerning location of services and other possible logistical problems.

#### **5 Research aims**

An archaeological evaluation aims to establish the presence and significance of archaeological deposits, and of artefactual and ecofactual assemblages. The results should inform the research cycle and should take into account local, regional and national research frameworks. Evaluations carried out within historic towns must be designed and carried out to further the understanding of these towns achieved by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey.

Fulfilment of the research aims will be by the submission of a final report, in accordance with the IFA Code of Conduct, Principle 2.

#### **6 Requirements**

- The Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists will be followed.
- Fieldwork must be carried out in accordance with the *Requirements and Guidelines for Archaeological Projects in Worcestershire*. Copies are available from the Planning Advisory Section on request.
- Before the project commences a methods statement must be submitted to and approved by the Planning Advisory Section.
- Final trench locations must be agreed with the Planning Advisory Section before commencement of fieldwork.
- The County Sites and Monuments Record must be consulted before fieldwork commences, and must be appropriately cited. A charge will be levied for this service.
- Primary and secondary documentary sources must be consulted.
- The project must include appropriate specialist provision.
- An assessment of the state of archaeological preservation and significance must be undertaken. Physical, artefactual and environmental aspects must all be considered.

- The landowner must be encouraged to deposit artefacts with a local or relevant specialist museum. This must have Museum and Galleries Commission approved storage facilities. Artefacts may only be deposited in accordance with the selected museum's collections policy.
- A written report must be produced and disseminated as part of the project.
- For pre-determination evaluation reports, the report must be submitted to the County Archaeological Service's Planning Advisory Section at least ten working days in advance of the relevant planning officer deadlines, unless otherwise agreed.
- A second copy must be lodged with the County Sites and Monuments Record within three months of completion of fieldwork.
- The Planning Advisory Section of the County Archaeological Service must be invited to monitor the fieldwork. Trenches should not be backfilled without consultation.
- One week's notice shall be given to the Planning Advisory Section prior to commencement of fieldwork, unless otherwise agreed.

#### **7 Disclaimer**

- This brief has been prepared on the basis of information available through the County Sites and Monuments Record. If the Applicant has further information which may be relevant to the site they should contact the Planning Advisory Section as soon as possible.
- The Planning Advisory Section cannot accept responsibility for the following:
  - \* notification of hazards, e.g. services, contaminated ground
  - \* obstacles to fieldwork
  - \* access to the site
- It will be the responsibility of the contractor, any sub contractors and the applicant to establish safe working practices based on Construction Design and Management (regulations) and other current health and safety legislation.

**Appendix 2**  
**Specification for an Archaeological Evaluation at Little Heath Cottage, Astley,**  
**Worcestershire.**

# **ARCHAEOLOGICAL SPECIFICATION**

## **Archaeological Evaluation**

### **At Little Heath Cottage, Astley, Worcestershire**

#### **1.0: INTRODUCTION**

This document is based upon information contained in a brief prepared by the Planning Advisory Section County Archaeological Service.

While the broad aims and methodology described in this Archaeological Specification will be followed, certain specific details may require to be altered as further information becomes available. Such variations would be agreed in advance with the appropriate Planning Archaeologist.

The evaluation is to be undertaken in advance of a proposed residential development.

#### **2.0: SITE LOCATION**

The site comprises an area of approximately 0.25 ha. of agricultural land at Astley, Worcestershire (centred on NGR. SO 8032 6888). The site is bounded by residential development to the north and south, the B4196 to the east and open fields to the west.

The site lies on the Bromsgrove/Helsby Sandstone Formation (British Geological Survey, 1990, 1:50,000).

#### **3.0: ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

Previous archaeological work and finds around the area has provided evidence for prehistoric settlement in the vicinity.

Finds include a late Neolithic pit and postholes (WSM 11093), a flint pick (WSM 2217) and prehistoric pottery (WSM 20801-2). The pit contained Beaker pottery, a flint scraper and debitage, a pounding stone, burnt stones, bone and carbonised grain. These finds have been interpreted as waste from a settlement site that has so far not been located.

The site may contain similar remains dating to the prehistoric period.

## **4.0: EVALUATION**

### **4.1: Aims**

The main objective of this archaeological evaluation is to define the nature, extent and significance of archaeological remains within the area proposed for development, to permit the formulation of a mitigation strategy, if appropriate.

### **4.2: Method**

It is proposed to open a single trench measuring 30m by 2m, providing a total sample of 2.4% of the proposed development area. The trench will be located to avoid services and other possible logistical problems.

A JCB excavator, or similar, as appropriate would be used to remove the modern overburden, under archaeological supervision. The subsoil surface, or the uppermost horizon of archaeological deposits so exposed would be hand cleaned, and a representative sample of the features present would be hand-excavated to provide information concerning the survival and complexity of feature fills, and to recover artifactual and ecofactual samples for analysis.

The trial-trenching would be undertaken over a maximum period of 5 days.

20 litre soil samples would be collected from a representative sample of datable features for the recovery of charred plant remains.

Arrangements for the deposition of the artifacts and the paper archive will be negotiated with the landowner and the County Archaeology Office prior to the commencement of fieldwork.

## **5.0: STAFFING**

The evaluation would be Monitored for BUFAU by Iain Ferris (Director, BUFAU), with the assistance of an experienced Field Officer, and one experienced Archaeological Site Assistant.

Specialist staff will be, as appropriate:

Dr Ann Woodward, BUFAU – prehistoric pottery.

Lynne Bevan, BUFAU – flint.

Marina Ciaraldi, BUFAU – charred plant remains

Umberto Albarella, Birmingham Environmental Laboratory - animal bone.

## **6.0: REPORT**

The results of the fieldwork will be described in an illustrated report, which will contain the following:

- (a) Description of the archaeological background.
- (b) Methodology.

- (c) A narrative description of the results and discussion of the evidence, set in their local and regional context, supported by appropriate plans and sections.
- (d) Summary of the finds and environmental evidence.
- (e) An assessment of the potential of the artifactual, faunal and ccofactual evidence for further study.
- (f) A predictive model of surviving archaeological remains, where affected by development proposals, and their relative importance.

A report will be prepared within 2 weeks of the completion of the fieldwork.

## **7.0: ARCHIVE**

The site archive will conform to the guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of the Management of Archaeology Projects.

## **8.0: GENERAL**

All project staff will adhere to the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

The project will follow the requirements set down in the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994).

*Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit 15 November 1999*