

Archaeology Wales

Brompton View Church Stoke, Shropshire

Archaeological Watching Brief



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Report No. 1081

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Brompton View Church Stoke, Shropshire

Archaeological Watching Brief

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Non-Technical Summary

This report results from work undertaken by Archaeology Wales Ltd (AW) for Mr & Mrs Geoff Ferguson, Foggy Bottom Holiday Park, Brompton View, Churchstoke, Shropshire. It draws upon the results gained by an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the erection of a new dwelling and associated service runs. Part of the application area lies within a Scheduled Monument (Shropshire 308 - 3 Roman Camps, NW of Brompton Mill, Including Tumulus and Section of Offa's Dyke, Shropshire).

The methodology to be employed during the watching brief, and the associated archaeological excavation of the areas of a proposed septic tank and soak-away, was agreed with English Heritage and Shropshire County Council beforehand. However, the two excavations did not take place, as an existing cellar was used to house the septic tank, thus minimising the impact on the archaeological resource.

The watching brief exposed a total of fifteen features (pits, post holes and linear features), all of which were subsequently preserved in situ. Two sherds of Roman domestic pottery were recovered from the upper fills of two of the pits.

1 Introduction

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In November and December 2010, and July 2011, Archaeology Wales Ltd (AW) carried out an archaeological watching brief on land at Brompton View, Churchstoke at the request of their clients, Mr and Mrs Geoff Ferguson of Foggy Bottom Holiday Park, Churchstoke. Work was undertaken prior to erection of a new dwelling and associated service runs.
- 1.1.2 The area of the proposed development was centred on NGR SO 24728 93208 (Fig 1). Part of the site lies within a Scheduled Monument (Shropshire 308 - 3 Roman Camps, NW of Brompton Mill, Including Tumulus and Section of Offa's Dyke, Shropshire).
- 1.1.3 A Specification for the work was drawn up by Mark Houliston (AW) and was approved by English Heritage and the Historic Environment Officer of Shropshire County Council.
- 1.1.4 The watching brief was undertaken during all trenching for wall foundations, trenching for service runs, and ground level reductions, associated with the new dwelling (Fig 2).
- 1.1.5 The proposed excavations of the septic tank and soakaway areas were not carried out as the septic tank was relocated to an existing cellar, thus minimising the impact on the archaeological resource.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The underlying solid geology of the area is comprised of undifferentiated Wenlock Rocks, including mudstone, siltstone and sandstone (Geological Survey Map, 2001).
- 1.2.2 The site lies in a relatively flat area of land at approximately 140m above sea level. The sparsely wooded landscape is predominantly made up of large, open, pastoral fields and small hamlet settlements. The larger town of Montgomery is located 4km to the north-west whilst Churchstoke itself is located 2km to the north-east. Higher ground exists to the south, west and north-east, rising to 406m, 353m and 246m respectively.

1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 1.3.1 The following information regarding the archaeological and historical background of the assessment area and its relationship with the surrounding landscape was accessed via the Shropshire HER Heritage Gateway (Accessed July 23rd 2011). The evidence gathered relates to past activity from the Neolithic period onwards.
- 1.3.2 Information of prehistoric activity comes from a round barrow to the north west of Brompton Hall (PRN No. 01210), a Neolithic pit, bowl and flint scatter (PRN No. 04481) as well as a ring ditch (PRN No. 04146) east of Pentrehyling Farm. Other finds and features of prehistoric date, including a Neolithic axe head, a further ring ditch and various cropmarked enclosures are all present within 1km of the assessment area.
- 1.3.3 Roman activity is perhaps the most frequent within the area. The site itself lies within the scheduled area associated with the Brompton Roman fort at Pentrehyling (PRN 01214). Other features of Roman date in the surrounding area include Brompton Marching Camps 1, 2 and 3 (PRNs 01211, 01212 and 01213), all north west of Brompton Mill, and the site of a possible *Vicus*, with associated industrial activity, to the west of Brompton View (PRN No. 04482).
- 1.3.4 The site is also less than 300m to the west of the line of Offa's Dyke, the 8th century boundary between Wales and Mercia (Welch, 1992). Further evidence of pre-Norman activity can be seen in the small settlement of Brompton (PRN No. 08488), with the 'ton' ending of the place name itself suggesting an origin in the late Saxon (Mercian) period, probably around the 9th century.
- 1.3.5 Evidence of Norman and later medieval activity in the area can be found in the motte and bailey castle (PRN No. 01215) adjacent to Brompton mill. The castle was constructed over the route of Offa's Dyke in a strategic position overlooking an important crossing point of the Caebitra brook.

- 1.3.6 Post-medieval features in the landscape surrounding the assessment area are the most plentiful, the most obvious being the large late 17th century farmhouse, Brompton Hall (PRN No. 19866), which is a grade II listed structure.

2 Aims and Objectives

2.1 Watching Brief

2.1.1 The watching brief was undertaken:

- 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.
- 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 treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.
- To establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on a site.

3 Methodology

3.1 Watching Brief

- 3.1.1 Excavation of foundation and service trenches, along with reduction in ground levels, was undertaken by mechanical excavator under close archaeological supervision. Exposed areas were subsequently cleaned by hand using a pointing trowel and hoe.
- 3.1.2 The on-site work was undertaken by Irma Bernardus. The overall management of the project was undertaken by Chris E Smith (MifA). All areas were photographed using high resolution (8MP) digital photography
- 3.1.3 All on-site illustrations were made on drafting film using recognised conventions and scales (1:10, 1:20, 1:50) as appropriate.
- 3.1.4 All works were undertaken in accordance with the IfA's *Standards and Guidance: for an archaeological watching brief* and current Health and Safety legislation.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and bagged by context.

3.3 Palaeo-Environmental Evidence

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the excavation.

4 Watching Brief Results

4.1 Soils

- 4.1.1 The topsoil deposit removed across all areas covered by the watching brief was composed of a uniform dark brown silt horizon, between 0.2 and 0.4m deep, with occasional small sub-angular stone inclusions.
- 4.1.2 The subsoil deposits in all areas were composed of mid-brown to orange silty clay with frequent small stone inclusions, although at 0.2m to 0.7m., they showed more variation in thickness than the overlying topsoil.
- 4.1.3 Where exposed, the natural deposits were made up of mid-brown to orange clay with very frequent small gravel inclusions, the gravel making up at least 70% of the context.

4.2 Ground Conditions

- 4.2.1 The majority of the watching brief was undertaken during a period of freezing temperatures and sporadic snowy weather. As a result ground conditions were largely wet and frozen.
- 4.2.2 The service run was excavated in July 2011 in sunny and bright conditions. The ground was thus dry.

4.3 Watching Brief Areas

- 4.3.1 For ease of description, the watching brief results will be broken down into component areas. These include:
- Access Road
 - New Dwelling Footprint
 - Service Run

4.4 Access Road (Plates 1&2, Fig 2)

- 4.4.1 The area of the access road measured approximately 50m in length by 6m in width (300 square metres). Excavation was undertaken by mechanical excavator under close archaeological supervision. Because the design of the road required only a 0.4m truncation along its length, only topsoil was removed. However, the top of the underlying subsoil was exposed.
- 4.4.2 No features or finds of archaeological significance were located.

4.5 New Dwelling Footprint (Plates 3-15, Figs 2&3)

- 4.5.1 The footprint of the new dwelling measured approximately 14m x 10m. Excavation was undertaken by mechanical excavator under close archaeological supervision. The required depths of the foundation trenches for the dwelling were approximately 0.6m on average. However, a slight slope in the ground meant that towards the north-eastern edge of the site this increased to 0.9m.
- 4.5.2 Initial removal of the topsoil exposed the top of the subsoil deposit, which was similar to that seen along the length of the access road. Subsequently, mechanical excavation of the trenches revealed the tops of a relatively large amount of archaeological features that had been cut from within the subsoil.
- 4.5.3 Owing to the presence of these archaeological features, the entire footprint of the new dwelling was subject to hand cleaning by the watching brief archaeologist. This revealed a total of fifteen distinct features.
- 4.5.4 Of the fifteen features, three were narrow, linear anomalies, which were most likely modern land drains, though possibly plough scars of unknown date.
- 4.5.5 A further seven of the features appeared to be postholes or small pits, each containing charcoal flecks and a distinctly darker fill than the surrounding orange - brown subsoil.
- 4.5.6 The remaining five features appeared to be pits rather than post holes and ranged in size from 3m x 2m to 0.5m x 0.5m. Each contained charcoal flecks and a fill that was darker than the subsoil into which they were cut. Initial cleaning of the features revealed pottery of clearly Roman date protruding from the upper fills of two of the pits.
- 4.5.7 After the initial cleaning, photographing and recording in plan of the features, it was agreed with Andy Wigley of Shropshire County Council that they should be protected *in situ*, as no further depth of foundations was required. To achieve this, the entire area of the footprint of the new dwelling, including the exposed features, was subsequently covered by a Teram membrane and a layer of ballast material.

4.6 Service Run (Plates 16-19, Fig 2)

- 4.6.1 A service run was excavated running north from the existing road edge towards the new dwelling. It measured approximately 40m in length by 0.5m wide and was on average 0.8m deep.
- 4.6.2 Within the service run trench, approximately 2m from the south-westerly corner of the new dwelling footprint, a pit was partially exposed. A 1m section of the pit was observed. In the exposed portion, approximately half, was circular in plan and contained a fill of mid brown silt that was heavily flecked with charcoal and fired clay fragments. As the required depth of the foundation run had already been reached, the feature was recorded but not excavated.
- 4.6.3 Whilst further service runs were initially proposed, it was found possible to plumb into existing drains on the site. Similarly, rather than excavate an area for a new septic tank and soak-away, it was deemed more cost effective to utilise an existing cellar on the site to house the septic tank.

5 Finds

- 5.1.1 Despite a relatively large area of the watching brief, most of the soils examined comprised topsoil, which contained no finds of archaeological significance.
- 5.1.2 Two pieces of Roman ceramics were recovered from the upper fills of pits 4 and 10. These consisted of a piece of highly abraded, undecorated, Samian ware and a rim sherd from a Mortaria vessel.
- 5.1.3 Both of these ceramic types are domestic in nature and typical of what would be expected from within a Roman fort or its associated extra-mural settlement (the *Vicus*).

6 Discussion and Interpretation

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 6.1.1 The overall findings of the watching brief were seemingly consistent with the known past use of the area. Although the features located during the watching brief were not excavated, it seems likely that the majority were Roman in date given their location within the scheduled area and the presence of Roman pottery within the upper fills of pits 4 and 10.
- 6.1.2 The preservation of the features *in situ*, the re-routing of proposed drains to utilise existing services, and the siting of the septic tank within an existing cellar, all helped to minimise the impact of the development on the archaeological resource.
- 6.1.3 As a result, the entire scheme was undertaken with minimal archaeological impact.

6.2 Overall interpretation

- 6.2.1 The overall interpretation gained by the watching brief at Brompton View, Church Stoke, is that intact features exist at a depth of approximately 0.5m below the contemporary ground surface. These appear to be mostly post holes and pits.
- 6.2.2 Based on an examination of the two pieces of ceramics that were recovered from the upper fills of pits 4 and 10, at least some of the features are likely to relate to Roman period domestic activity.
- 6.2.3 This may indicate that the area of the development formed part of the *Vicus* and not the fort itself.

6.3 Acknowledgements

- 6.3.1 Thanks are due to: Irma Bernardus (AW) for her on site work, Bill Klemperer (English Heritage), Andy Wigley (Historic Environment Officer, Shropshire County Council) and Mr & Mrs Ferguson.

7 Bibliography and references

British Geological Survey, 2001, *4th Edition. Solid Geology Map, UK South Sheet*

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Welch, M. 1992, *Anglo Saxon Britain*, BCA, London

Shropshire HER Heritage Gateway -

http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/advanced_search.aspx - Accessed July 23rd 2011

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APPENDIX I: Figures

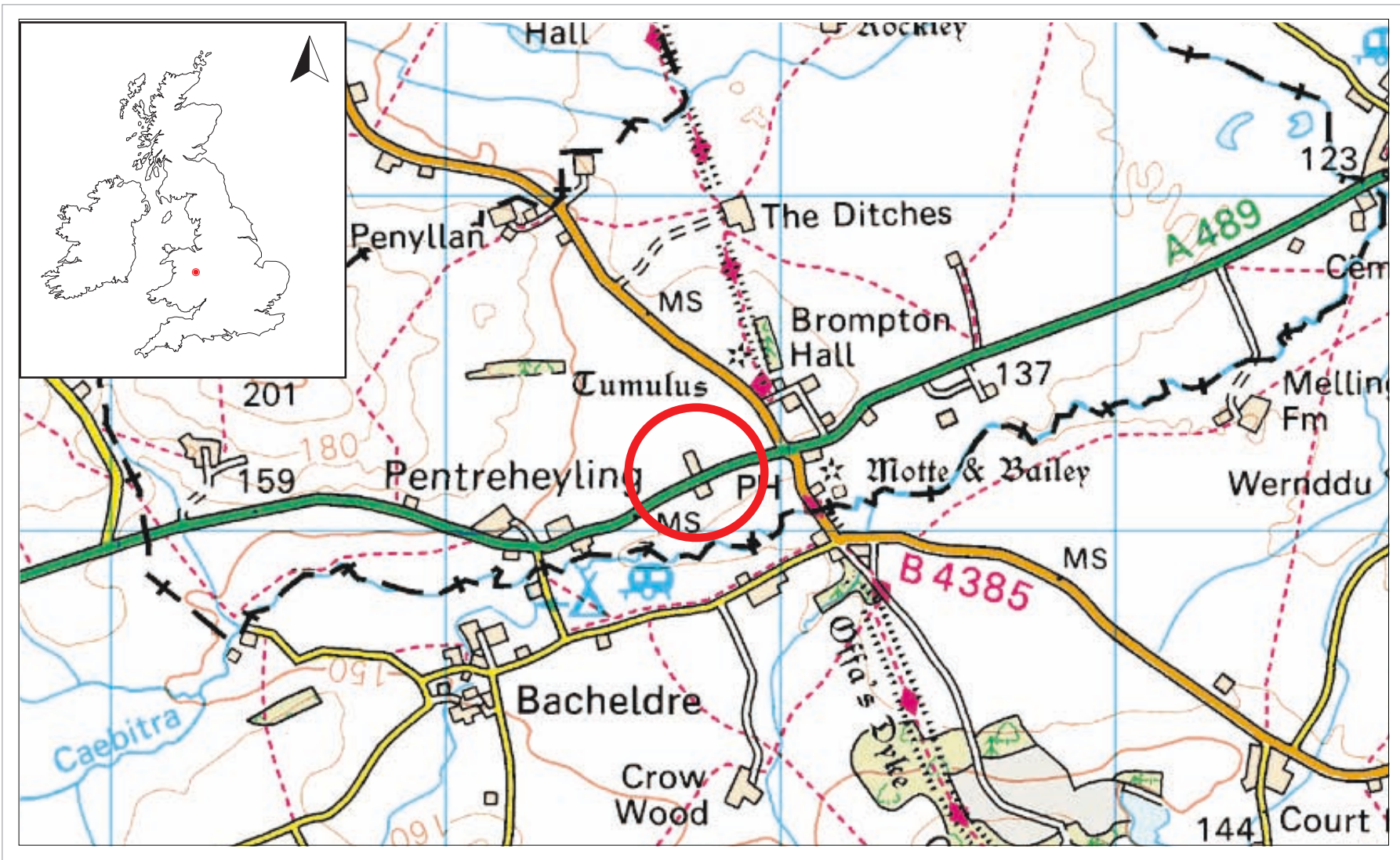
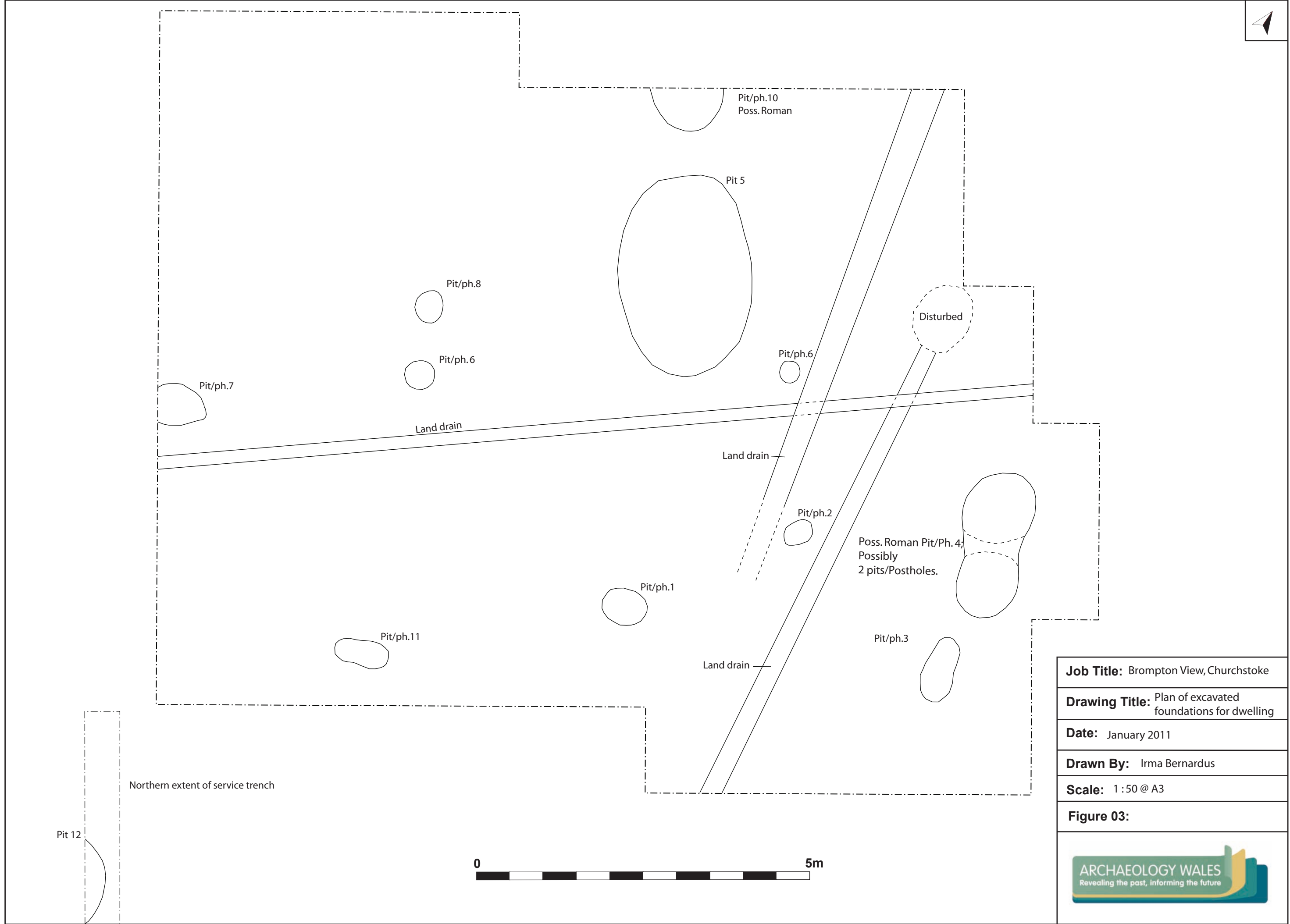


Fig 01: Figure showing location of assessment area



Brompton View, Churchstoke
Drawing Title: Site location plan
Date: 19th November
Drawn By: Mark Houliston
Scale: 1:500 at A3
Figure 2



Job Title: Brompton View, Churchstoke

Drawing Title: Plan of excavated foundations for dwelling

Date: January 2011

Drawn By: Irma Bernardus

Scale: 1 : 50 @ A3

Figure 03:



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APPENDIX II: Plates



Plate 1: View of junction between new access road and route of A489. Looking north east



Plate 2: View of access road under excavation. Note shallow depth. Looking north



Plate 3: View across excavated new dwelling footprint, Looking west
Scale 1x1m



Plate 4: View across excavated new dwelling footprint, Looking east
Scale 1x1m



Plate 5: View of excavated new dwelling footprint, Looking north
Scale 1x1m



Plate 6: View across excavated new dwelling footprint, Looking south
Scale 1x1m



Plate 7: View of Pit 1 within new dwelling footprint
Scale 1x0.5m



Plate 8: View of Pit 2 within new dwelling footprint
Scale 1x0.5m



Plate 9: View of Pit 3 within excavated new dwelling area
Scale 1x0.5m



Plate 10: View of Pit 4 within excavated new dwelling area
Pit 4 is most likely comprised of two similarly sized pits
located adjacent to one another. Scale 1x1m



Plate 11: View of pit 5 within excavated new dwelling area
Scale 1x1m



Plate 12: View of posthole/pit 12 within excavated area of new dwelling. Scale 1x0.5m



Plate 13: View of pit 7 within excavated area of new dwelling
Scale 1x0.5m



Plate 14: View of postholes/pits 8 & 9 within excavated area of
new dwelling. Scale 1x0.5m



Plate 15: View of pit 10 within excavated area of new dwelling
Scale 1x1m



Plate 16: View north from road along service run
Scale 1x1m



Plate 17: View south along service trench
Scale 1x1m



Plate 18: View north along northern extent of
service trench. Scale 1x1m

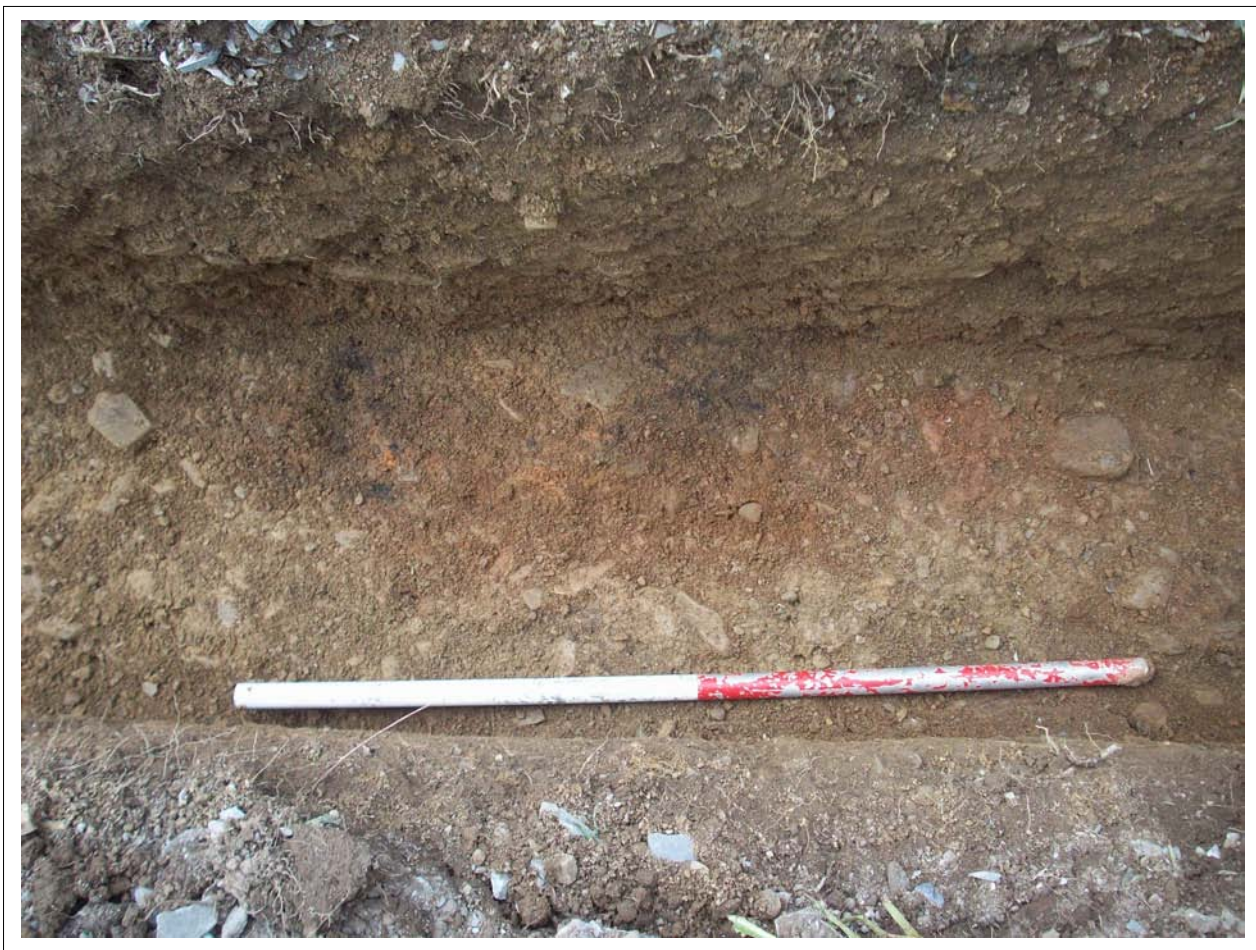


Plate 19: View of pit 12 within service trench. Scale 1x1m

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APPENDIX III: Archive Cover Sheet

ARCHIVE COVER SHEET

Brompton View, Church Stoke, Shropshire

Site Name:	Brompton View
Site Code:	BVC/10/WB
PRN:	-
NPRN:	-
SAM:	-
Other Ref No:	-
NGR:	NGR SO 24728 93208
Site Type:	New Dwelling
Project Type:	Watching Brief
Project Manager:	Chris E Smith
Project Dates:	November – December 2010, July 2011
Categories Present:	Roman
Location of Original Archive:	AW
Location of duplicate Archives:	-
Number of Finds Boxes:	-
Location of Finds:	-
Museum Reference:	-
Copyright:	AW
Restrictions to access:	None

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