



# Ryefield

Main Street, Church Lench, Worcestershire

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## Archaeological recording

NGR: SP 02390 51387

Site code: CL18

HER activity no: WSM70269

OASIS ID: 110archa1-321700

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16<sup>th</sup> July 2018

one ten archaeology

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Front cover; the site during development, view south-west

## SUMMARY

Archaeological recording was carried out during April 2018 at Ryefield, Main Street, Church Lench, Worcestershire. Planning permission had been granted for the erection of an annex extension to the main house conditional on a programme of archaeological recording or 'watching brief' during groundworks. It was considered that the development may affect a known heritage asset of archaeological significance (WSM22995), the medieval village of Church Lench recorded as early as the C8. The site is on the boundary of an area recognised to be the Medieval settlement and there was a possibility that the development would disturb sub-surface archaeology which may help to explicate the extent of this settlement.

A small-scale excavation (WSM34258) undertaken in the small field to the north-west of the junction of Main Street and Cow Road revealed a large ditch, to the south of this feature were the slight remains of a bank and pottery from the surface of this deposit suggested a C11–C14 date for the ditch.

No archaeological deposits were encountered during the excavation at Ryefield. Instead, the results revealed a stratigraphic sequence indicative of an open agricultural landscape with little human activity within the development site and the lack of artefacts from the excavation supports this interpretation.



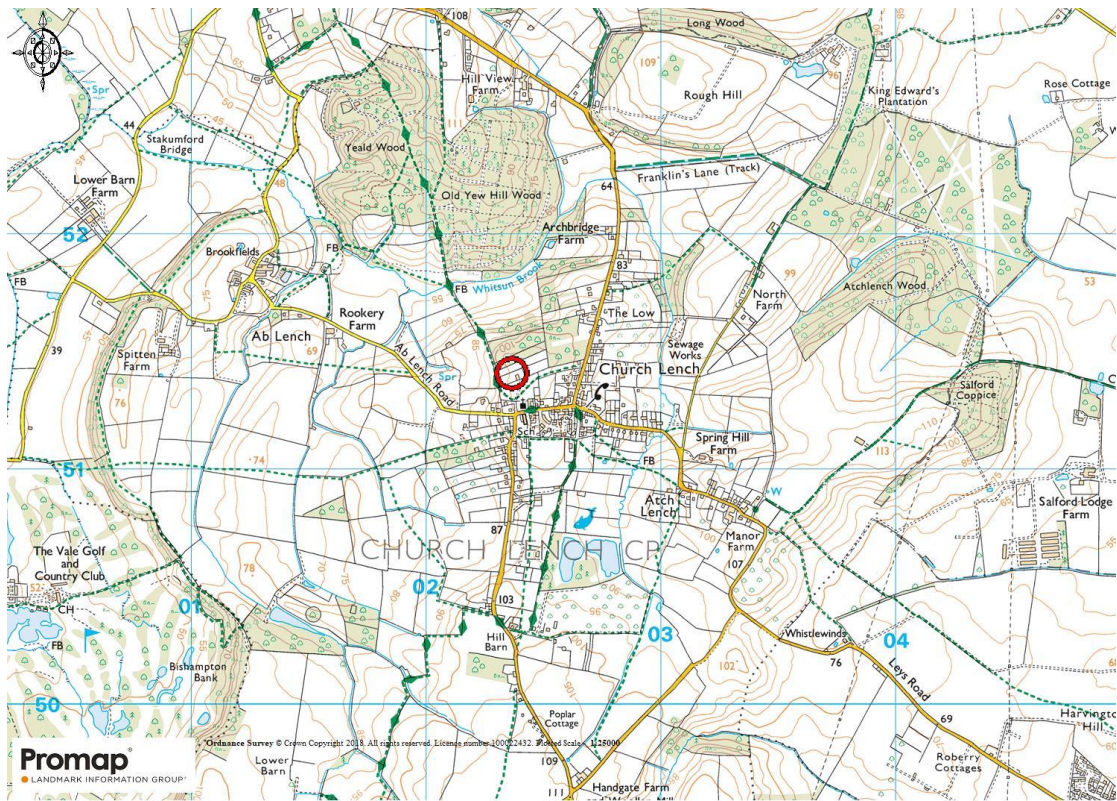


Fig. 1; site location (circled in red)

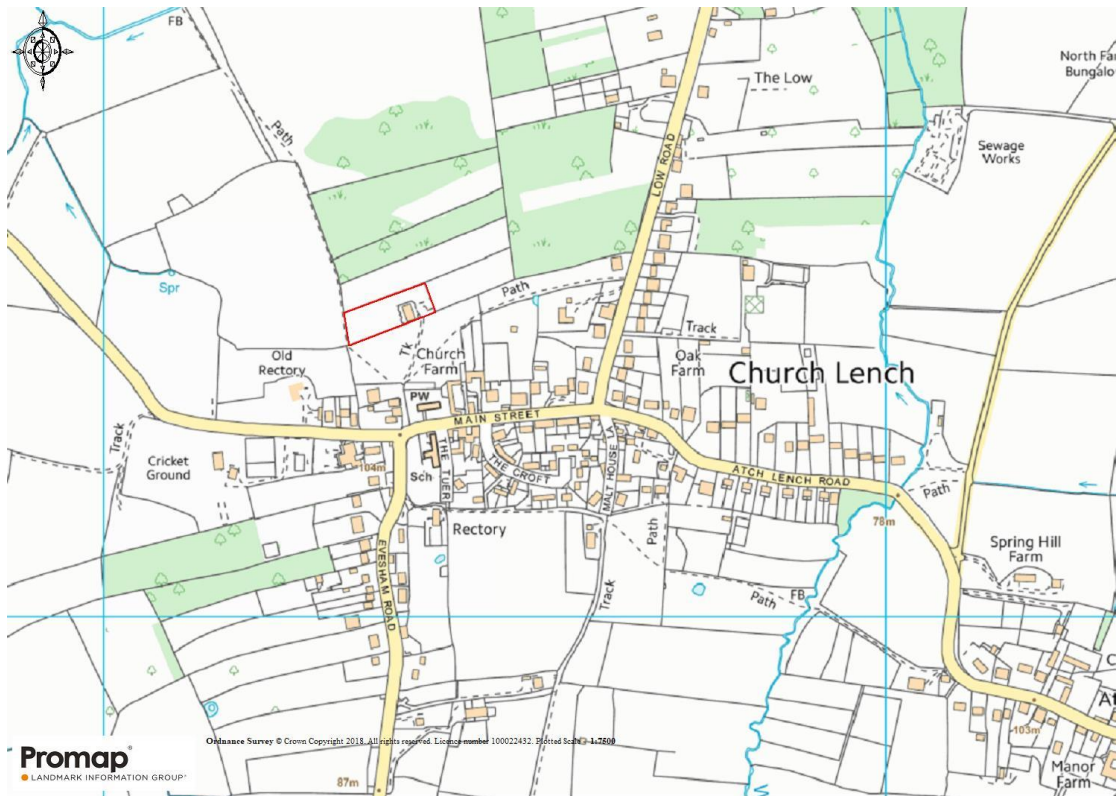


Fig. 2; area of study (outlined in red)

## INTRODUCTION

### *Location and scope of works (Figs. 1 & 2)*

This document sets out the results of archaeological recording ('watching brief') carried out during 24<sup>th</sup> April 2018 at Ryefield, Main Street, Church Lench, Worcestershire, WR11 4UE at the request of the owners Dr David and Anne Quickenden. Planning permission had been granted (planning Ref: 17/02238/HP) for the erection of an annex extension to the main house conditional on a programme of archaeological recording or 'watching brief' during groundworks.

It was considered that the development may affect a known heritage asset of archaeological significance (WSM22995), the medieval village of Church Lench. The 'historic environment' encompasses all those material remains that our ancestors have created in the landscapes of town and countryside. It includes all below and above-ground evidence including buildings of historic and architectural interest. The site is on the boundary of an area recognised to be the Medieval settlement and there was a possibility that the development would disturb sub-surface archaeology which may help to explicate the extent of this settlement.

### *Geology and topography*

Church Lench is a village in the civil parish of South Lenches, in the Wychavon district, on the eastern border of the county in the county of Worcestershire, approximately 5.5 miles north of Evesham and 13 miles west of Stratford-upon-Avon. The Whitsun Brook flows northward and then westward through the parish, and the land gradually rises from the valley of this stream, which near the western boundary of the parish is 47m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). It is the largest of the surrounding Lenches, and includes the hamlets of Rous Lench, Ab Lench or Hob Lench, Atch Lench and Sheriff's Lench.

The development site (approx. 100m<sup>2</sup>) currently used as a garden lies adjacent to the north side of Ryefield which itself is situated on the northern perimeter of the village at approximately 107m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The underlying geology comprises a glacial deposit of sand and gravel (BGS, 1974) and this was confirmed as alternate overlying layers during excavation.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (HER) was consulted with a 500m radial search area centred on the site. The search location is situated in an area of lias clay overlain in part by sand and gravels with poorly draining soils. The historic landscape character of the area is that of piecemeal and Parliamentary enclosure with areas of modern sub-division to the south east of the search area. There are two areas of post 1880's orchard recorded within the area. There is an area of woodland to the north just inside the search boundary together with adjacent assorted enclosure. The village of Church Lench located in the southern half of the search area is a nucleated settlement with significant C20 expansion.

There are 15 historic buildings located within the search area, of which 7 are listed. These range in date from the C17 to the C20 with the Church of All Saints being the oldest building dating to the C12. A war memorial commemorating the fallen of WWI and WWII is located to the south of the church. An English Heritage project to identify the Historic Farmsteads of Worcestershire also recorded 4 farmsteads within the area ranging in date from the C17 to C19 of which 3 are still extant. The project also recorded 2 out-farms dating to the C19, of which 1 has been demolished.

In addition to the built environment there are also monument records for the site of field barns to the south of The Low and a now demolished out-farm to the south-east of The Low. The origins of the village of Church Lench (WSM22995) are at least medieval in date as evidenced by the C12 Church of All Saints (WSM07730) and documentary evidence. An excavation carried out in 2005 just off Main Street (WSM34258) uncovered two ditches which appear to be boundary ditches, one of which was quite substantial, and which were dated tentatively as medieval (WSM70273). Ridge and furrow is recorded within the search area (WSM35256, WSM35257 & WSM70275) although its condition is currently unknown. Lime kilns (WSM32048, WSM57032 & WSM57033) have also been recorded in the area through historic map and place name evidence. The Defence of Britain project recorded an observation post (WSM36513) to the north of the village which was used by the Home Guard during the Second World War.

No finds have been recorded under the Portable Antiquities Scheme within the search area although parish records note that unstratified finds of Romano-British pottery were discovered in 1953 near Rough Hill, Church Lench.

Very little archaeological fieldwork has been carried out in the area although there is potential for archaeological features to survive in the area as evidenced by the results of an excavation in 2005. A small-scale archaeological excavation (WSM34258) was undertaken in the small field to the northwest of the

junction of Main Street and Low Road, to the eastern end of the village, prior to the construction of a private dwelling. A small updated ditch/gully was found running in an east to west direction and likely served as a small drainage ditch or field boundary. A much larger ditch being at least 3m in width and 1m deep was also exposed to the southern end of this field. Although also undated it is possible that it was created somewhere between the post-Roman and medieval period. This ditch, which terminated within the excavation area, was of considerable size. To the south of this ditch were the slight remains of a bank, pottery from the surface of which indicated an C11–C14 date. The extent and nature of the ditch was unclear in the excavation, although its size suggests the feature is of some significance (Sworn, 2005).

The name 'Lench', shared by the five local villages, comes from an Anglo-Saxon word 'linch', meaning 'rising ground, hill'. There are five Lenches. In descending order of size, they are Church Lench, Rous Lench, Atch Lench, Sheriffs Lench and Ab Lench. The earliest recorded history reveals that Church Lench was gifted by Kenred of Mercia to Evesham Abbey in 708. It also appears in Domesday (1086) with the church of All Saints (VCH, 1913).

## RESULTS (Fig. 3)

### *Method and nature of the excavation*

The archaeological fieldwork and post-excavation was carried out in accordance with standards and guidance for archaeological watching briefs produced by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA, 2014).

The objective was to obtain an appropriate record of any archaeological deposits or finds exposed during excavation of the foundations for the new development. Excavation was carried out by machine using a toothless grading bucket under archaeological supervision. The continuous trench was excavated to a maximum width of 0.60m and a depth varying between 0.90-1.20m.

### *Description of deposits*

*Context 102 (natural substrate); context 101 (relict subsoil) & context 100 (topsoil)*

The surface of the geological horizon (102), or the natural substrate was encountered throughout the trench at approx. 0.45m below ground level at a height of about 106.70m AOD. The deposit comprised a stiff light reddish-brown



clay with thin occasional thin bands of gravel. No archaeological features or deposits were observed either cut into or overlying this context.

Sealing the natural clay was a layer of undated relict subsoil (101) consisting of a mid-greyish-brown, silty-clay varying between 0.20-30m thick. Overlying this was the modern topsoil (100) also at approx. 0.20-30m thick.

## FINDS

No finds were recovered during the excavation.

## *Environmental data*

None of the deposits exposed during the excavation proved suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling.

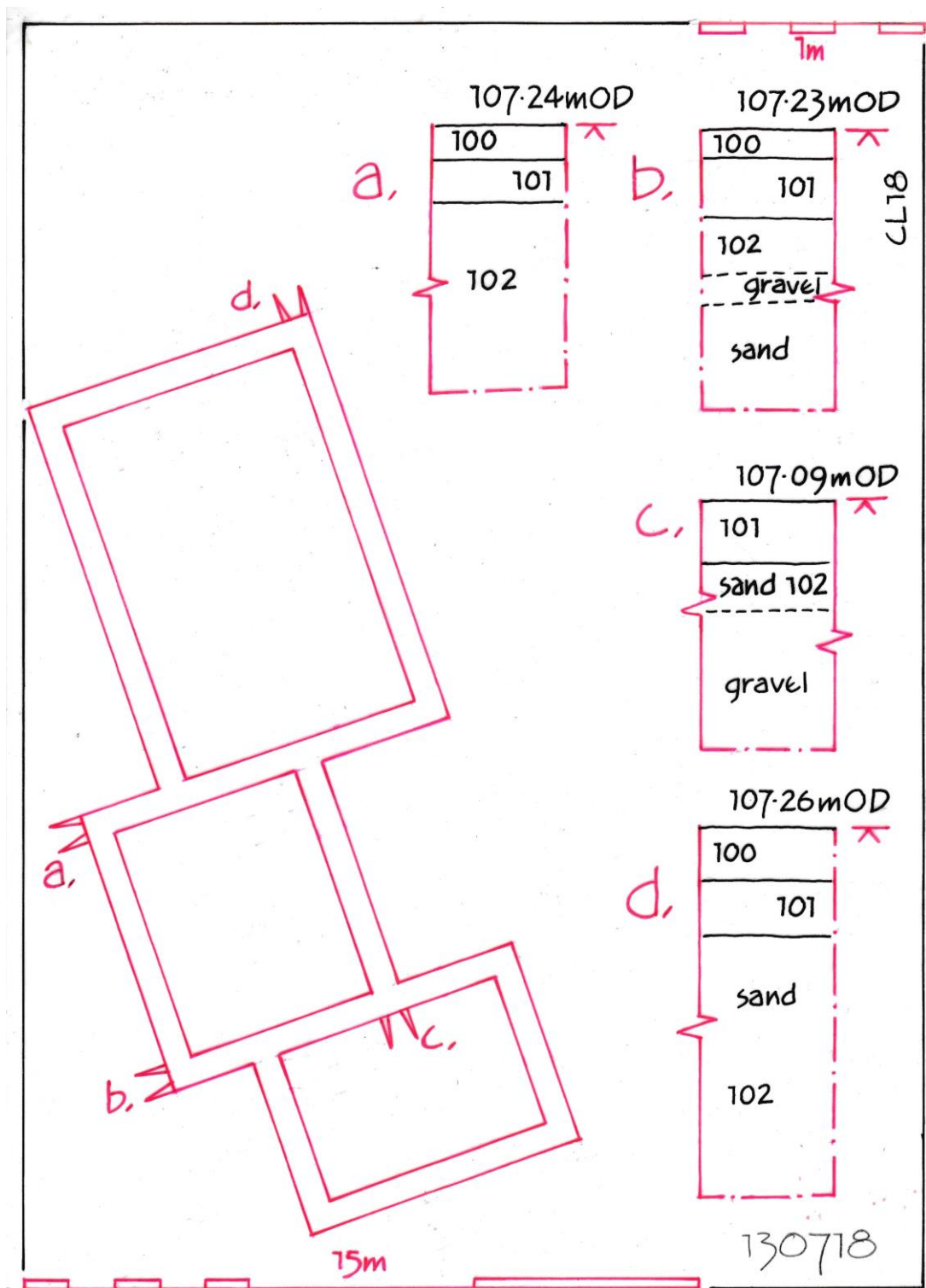


Fig. 3; site plan showing excavated trench and section locations

## DISCUSSION (Fig.4)

The Historic Environment Record (HER) has shown that the site lies historically in an area where there is potential for significant archaeological deposits associated with the medieval period. It is situated on the northern periphery of the conjectured medieval settlement of a Church Lench (WSM22995), one of five hamlets or villages recorded as early as the C8 and again in the C11 during Domesday. clearly indicating an early medieval settlement had been established before the Norman Conquest. Although very little archaeological fieldwork has been carried out in the area there is potential for archaeological features to survive towards the eastern end of the village as evidenced by the results of a small-scale excavation (WSM34258) undertaken in the small field to the northwest of the junction of Main Street and Cow Road. This revealed a large ditch of considerable size, to the south of this feature were the slight remains of a bank and pottery from the surface of this deposit suggested a C11–C14 date for the ditch (Sworn, 2005).

The cartographic sources and the recent if limited archaeological work in 2005, appear to confirm that the early settlement at Church Lench lies along Main Street with the Evesham road marking the western extent and the Malt House Lane and Cow Road alignment the eastern limit. The village appears to consist of a series of small farmsteads along Main Street some of which probably have their origins in the medieval period. One of these is Church Farm where there is a large brick in-filled timber-framed building, possibly a former barn. This characteristic of Church Lench as a collection of closely placed farms rather than a ribbon of timber-framed cottages with long thin tenements is perhaps why the settlement was not densely populated.

The archaeological recording at Ryfield comprised observation of the excavation of the strip foundation trench for the new attached annex. The natural clay (102) was encountered throughout the excavation revealing no archaeological cut features within the surface and no overlying deposits. Instead this clay was sealed throughout by an undated layer of homogenous relict subsoil (101) to a consistent depth varying between 0.20-30m which was in turn sealed by the modern topsoil (100). The evidence suggests a stratigraphic sequence indicating a landscape with little human activity and the lack of artefacts of all periods from the excavation supports this interpretation.

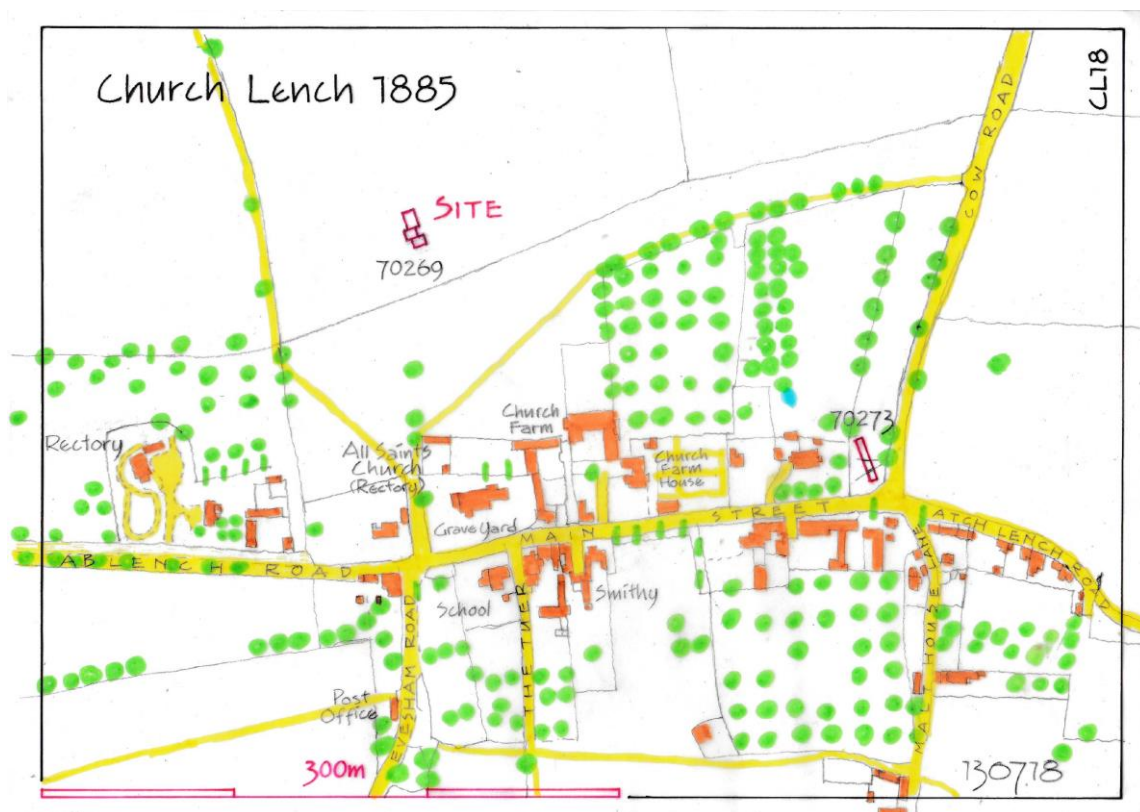


Fig.4; Church Lench historic environment plan based on the OS 1885 with the site location and the 2005 excavation (WSM70273)

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- British Geological Survey, 1974. *Geological Survey of England and Wales, Stratford upon Avon, sheet 200, solid and drift geology, 1:50,000.*
- CIfA, 2014. *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.
- Sworn, S., 2005. Archaeological Excavation at Main Street, Church Lench, Worcestershire. Archaeological Service Worcestershire County Council.
- Victoria County History, 1913. 'Parishes: Church Lench', in *A History of the County of Worcester: Volume 3*, 45-50. London,
- Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service 2018.

## Archive Location

A digital (pdf) copy of the report (referenced with OASIS) will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service.





Plate 1; overall view to the south-west of the trench



Plate 2; section 1a





Plate 3; section 1b



Plate 4; section 1c





Plate 5; section 1d

## APPENDIX 1: OASIS

Project name	Ryfield Main Street, Church Lench, Worcestershire; archaeological recording
Project dates	Start: 24-04-2018 End: 24-04-2018
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	WSM70269 - HER event no.
Any associated project reference codes	CL18 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	""Watching Brief""
Prompt	Planning condition
Country	England
Site location	WORCESTERSHIRE WYCHAVON CHURCH LENCH Ryfield, Main Street
Postcode	WR11 4UE
Study area	120 Square metres
Site coordinates	SP 02390 51387 52.16034476107 -1.965057672057 52 09 37 N 001 57 54 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 106.7m Max: 106.7m
Name of Organisation	one ten archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	one ten archaeology
Project director/manager	sean cook
Project supervisor	sean cook
Type of sponsor/funding body	Landowner
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	OASIS
Paper Archive Exists?	No
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Ryfield Main Street, Church Lench, Worcestershire; archaeological recording



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APPENDIX 2: Church Farm, Church Lench



Church Farm, view to the south-east



Church Farm, west elevation