

Land south of

# Christ Church

Harley Road, Cressage, Shropshire



Land south of

# Christ Church

Harley Road, Cressage, Shropshire

## Archaeological recording

NGR: SJ 59221 03961

Site code: HRC17

OASIS ID: 110archa1-322364

Sean Cook BA MCIfA

Illustration by Jill Atherton MCIfA

19<sup>th</sup> July 2018

one ten archaeology

6 Elm Close, Pebworth, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, CV37 8XL

## Contents

SUMMARY .....	2
INTRODUCTION .....	4
<i>Location and scope of works (Figs. 1 &amp; 2) .....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Geology and topography .....</i>	<i>4</i>
ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.....	5
RESULTS (Figs. 3-5).....	6
<i>Method and nature of the excavation .....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Description of deposits.....</i>	<i>7</i>
FINDS.....	11
<i>Environmental data .....</i>	<i>11</i>
DISCUSSION (Figs. 6 & 7).....	12
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	14
<i>Archive Location.....</i>	<i>14</i>
APPENDIX 1: OASIS .....	22

Front cover; the site during development, view east

## SUMMARY

Archaeological recording was carried out between July 2017 and March 2018 during the erection of two dwellings at land to the south of Christ Church, Harley Road, Cressage, Shrewsbury, Shropshire. The work was carried out to record any remains associated with the former road where it appears to be represented by a hollow-way near the Harley Road frontage and a possible former cottage/outbuilding on the eastern side of the site.

Excavation revealed at the east end of the site some of the masonry remains of what was probably one of the former buildings depicted on the 1747 map occupying the southern edge of the site. Finds from the associated subsoil layer suggests occupation during the mid/late-C17. This is supported by fragments of brick observed within the fabric of the walls which probably formed the foundation for a timber-framed structure. The date would also be consistent with pottery retrieved from the evaluation trenches located to the north of the site which were dated from the C17-18, their deposition possibly related to the occupation of the earlier farmstead to the north (Cook, 2015). The lack of any earlier residual finds suggests little activity within the study site before this period.

The possible in-filled remains of a hollow-way were partially recorded at the west end of the site which appears to coincide with the alignment on the 1747 map of the ancient route-way (to Broadwas) crossing the southern boundary of the study site. It appears to have comprised a rudimentary track hollowed out through continued use rather than some form of deliberately deposited road material such as metalling. The road alignment follows the flat east-west ridge between sloping contours and was probably chosen as a convenient route utilising the existing topography on an elevated position. The evidence suggests that its course diverges southwards at the west end of the site continuing along the southern boundary of the site.





Fig.1; site location (circled in red)



Fig. 2; development site (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 27<sup>th</sup> July 2017 and 28<sup>th</sup> March 2018 at land to the south of Christ Church, Harley Road, Cressage, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY5 6DF at the request of KBR Ltd. Planning permission (Ref: 16/04489/FUL) had been granted by Shrewsbury District Council for a revised scheme for residential development of the site conditional on an approved programme of work comprising archaeological recording and in accordance with advice from the Historic Environment Team, Shropshire Council to, firstly record any remains associated with the former road where it appears to be represented by a hollow-way near the frontage of plot three, and also the possible former cottage/outbuilding on the eastern side of the site in the location of plot 4.

Documentary information indicated that a former road of probable medieval date crossed the southern edge of the site and that a number of buildings stood on and immediately adjacent to the site in the mid-C18. It was therefore possible that archaeological remains relating to the medieval and later development of the village existed on the site and for these reasons it was deemed to have moderate to high archaeological potential. An earlier evaluation of the site through trial trenching (Cook, 2015) investigated this area, but found no deposits related to these features.

### *Geology and topography*

Cressage is a village and civil parish in Shropshire. It lies on the intersection of the A458 and the B4380, near to the River Severn and is 4 miles from the nearest town, and 8 miles south-east of Shrewsbury. The development site lies within the historic centre of Cressage village straddling the east side of the main A458 (Harley Road) and is represented by a roughly L-shaped plot of land comprising approx. 2,100m<sup>2</sup> situated adjacent to the south of Christ Church at a height of about 48-50m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The underlying geology is Shington Shales (BGS, 1978), this was confirmed during excavation as a variation between sand and gravel and red clay in trench 1 and from clay and gravel to clay in trench 2.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Shropshire Historic Environment Record (HER) was consulted in 2015 during the evaluation carried out as part of an earlier application with a search carried out over a 500m radius centred on the site. A total of 40 monument and 9 event records were listed and the more significant monument records showed that Cressage has its origins at least in the Late Saxon/early Norman period. The village was originally called Christesache, or "Christ's Oak", and this over time has been corrupted to form the word "Cressage". In 584, Saint Augustine reputedly preached under the Cressage Oak. The oak tree was part of a forest (which no longer exists), and a cutting from it was planted near the village in 1616. This was later relocated due to railway construction. The small green in the centre of the village is the traditional site of Christs Oak and Market Cross site (MSA2674). A stone cross is said to have stood here in the Middle Ages. In a field nearby lie the buried remains of St Samsons Chapel (MSA774) which is of probable late Saxon date. In the same field as the chapel lies a number of earthwork features interpreted as the deserted remains of Cressage medieval village (MSA2177). The main features are a group of linear ditches which define at least two quadrilateral enclosures, probably toft/ crofts, related to the present A458 road. The western enclosure contains very slight ridge and furrow running parallel to the road.

The Old Hall (SA 13267) stands on the site of a manor house first mentioned in 1369. It overlooks a ford across the Severn and occupies the bailey of an earlier motte and bailey castle (MSA1333), the motte of which was partially destroyed when the railway was built. When a wall garden below the east front of the Old Hall was being made in 1923 the surface below the present lawn was found to be flagged, probably the remains of the paved bottom of the moat (VCH, 1908).

The parish church of Christ Church (MSA10117) which lies adjacent to the north side of the church was built in 1841 by Edward Haycock, the circular Romanesque-style font (1842) is said to be a copy of that formerly in St Samson's which was demolished in 1640 and Christ Church built as its replacement.

At the north end of Harley Road lies The Eagle Inn (MSA30245), a farmstead first identified and classified by the Historic Farmsteads Characterisation Project, 2008–2010 (ESA6427), largely from the digital version of the c.1900 OS large scale mapping.

Out of the nine event records only one relates to archaeological fieldwork, a watching brief (ESA7543) carried out in 2015 at Fingerpost Cottage, Cressage during ground work associated with the construction of an extension. The Cottage is a Grade II Listed building of mid-17th century date and formerly the gardener's cottage to the Old Hall at Cressage. Despite being a site of potential archaeological interest, no archaeological features were uncovered (Frost, 2015).

To the south of the site, along the southern boundary are the remains of an ancient medieval road that may have been constructed by the monks of Buildwas Abbey to connect their farm at Harnage Grange (Hill, 2015), the trace of this can be seen today following the hedge-line. Before the current road to Sheinton was built the route connecting Cressage and Sheinton as shown on the Manor Map of 1747 was along a road that met the Harley Road at a crossroads. Hill's redrawn plan (based on the 1747 map) also showed that there were some structures (?cottages) to the south and north before the church which was built in the 1840s. The Tithe map of 1842 indicates that the route of the old road to Sheinton had been abandoned and a new road constructed. The only section of ancient road surviving today is that which is contained within the southern edge of the study site.

In October 2015 trial trenching was carried out in connection with an earlier proposal for residential development of the site. The results showed that in the location of trenches 1 & 2 on the northern edge of the site there was no evidence of the former structures (cottages?) suggesting that they were in fact sited further to the north in the plot now occupied by the current church. Their demolition is likely to have been carried out in 1841 in order to make way for the construction of the newly dedicated Christ Church built to replace the earlier St. Samsons Church.

Pottery was retrieved from all the trenches and was generally dated from the C17-18, those collected from trenches 1 & 2 where the largest quantity was found, were all residual and their deposition possibly related to the occupation of the earlier farmstead to the north. A lack of any earlier residual finds suggested little activity within the study site before this period.

## RESULTS (Figs. 3-5)

### *Method and nature of the excavation*



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

The work was undertaken to obtain a record of any archaeological deposits or finds disturbed or exposed during excavation of plot 3 located, in the area of the medieval road at the junction of Harley Road, and plot 4 in the location of the former cottage/outbuilding. Excavation comprised strip foundations 0.60m wide and approx. 0.90m deep using a machine equipped with a toothless bucket carried out under archaeological supervision.



Fig. 3; site plan showing location of trenches 1 & 2 (building plots)

#### *Description of deposits*

##### *TRENCH 1 (plot 4)*

The surface of the geological horizon or natural substrate (102) was exposed throughout the trench at a level height of about 48.50m AOD where it comprised a variation between sand and gravel and a reddish-brown clay. The remains of two undated walls (103 & 104) situated on the surface of the natural substrate were recorded within separate arms of the trench. The more substantial of these (103, see plate 2) consisted of linear deposit of large and small stones crossing the trench on a north-east to south-west alignment and sat on a 0.05m bed of

sand and gravel. These remains, consisting of a single course of masonry 0.65m wide and 0.15m deep with fragments of brick within the fabric of 103, probably represented the foundation of a former building. Although no construction trench for this feature was observed within the trench, the wall was probably built within the overlying relict subsoil layer 101.

The other walled remains (104) were aligned north-west to south-east and may represent the west elevation of the former building associated with wall 103. Wall 104 was less intact and seemingly considerably disturbed, consisting of a loosely constructed linear deposit of masonry surviving to width of approx. 0.50m and a depth of about 0.15m. A fragment of brick was also observed within the fabric.

The overlying subsoil deposit (101) varied in thickness from 0.15-30m comprising a homogenous layer of light to mid-yellowish-brown, sandy-silt with a component of small to medium-sized rounded pebbles. It produced residual pottery dating from the mid/late-C17 to C18 and was sealed by the modern topsoil (100) to a depth of about 0.15-20m.

#### *TRENCH 2 (plot 3)*

The surface of the natural substrate (209) was exposed throughout the trench at a level height of about 48.50m AOD and comprised a variation between sand and gravel and a reddish-brown clay. Truncating the surface of this deposit along the southern edge of the excavation were a series of features (202, 204, 206 & 207), the only dating evidence from some of the fills consisted of a few small fragments of red brick.

Feature 204 (see sections a & b) was at least 3.50m wide and about 0.30 deep with a flat base and exposed in two places indicating a linear feature aligned north-east to south-west for a distance of at least 3.50m and continuing beyond the excavation in both directions. It was filled by a single deposit (203) consisting of a mid-yellowish-brown, sandy-silt with a component of small to medium sized rounded pebbles and the occasional stone fragment. A few small fragments of red brick represented the only finds from this deposit.

In both the locations where fill deposit 203 is recorded, it is truncated by a later feature (202) which is 1.40m wide and about 0.40m deep, whilst in the other trench only the northern edge is exposed, the opposite edge lying outside the excavation. It is filled by a single deposit (201) consisting of a dark greyish-brown, clayey-silt with a component of small to large rounded pebbles.

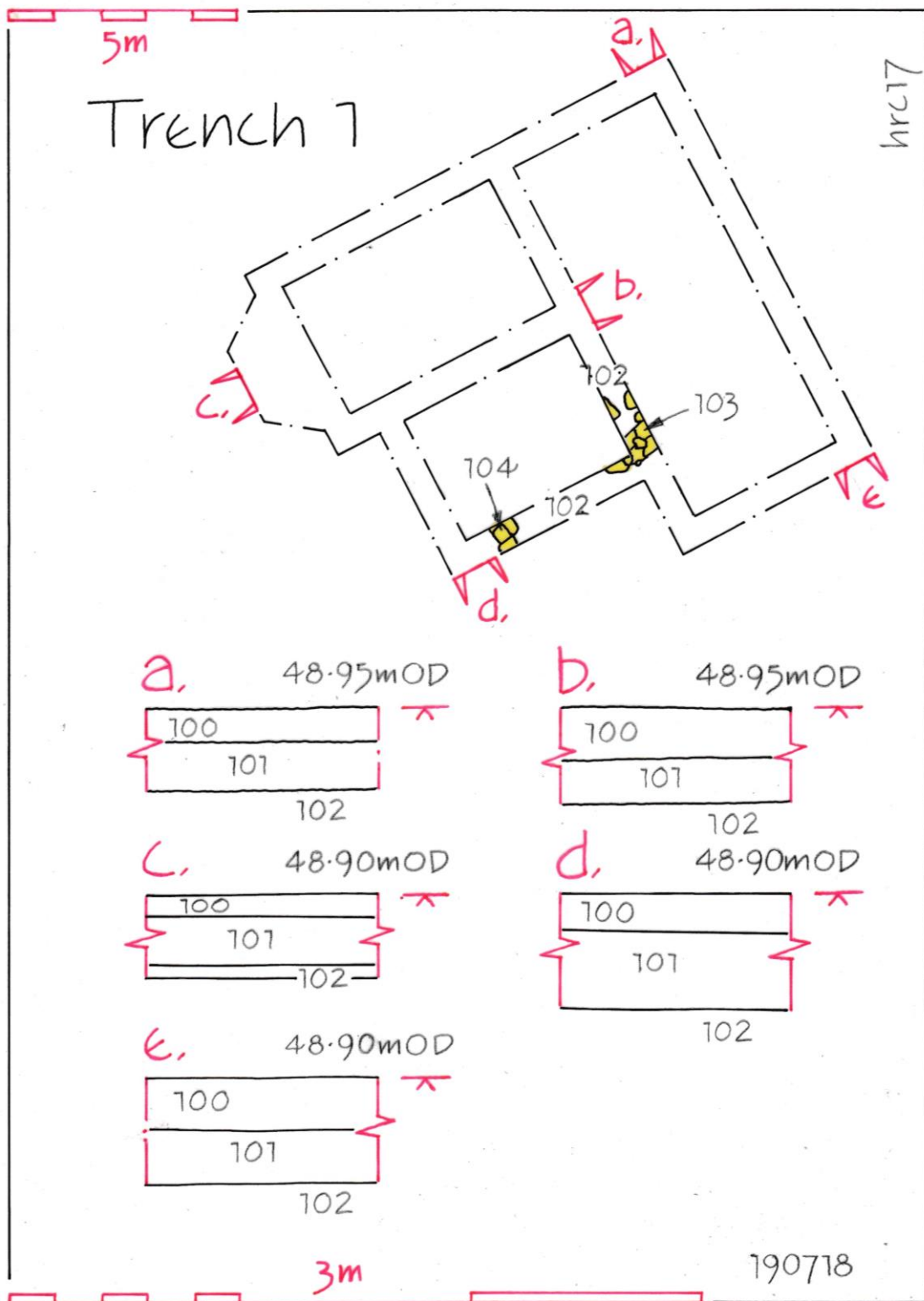


Fig. 4; trench 1 plan & sections

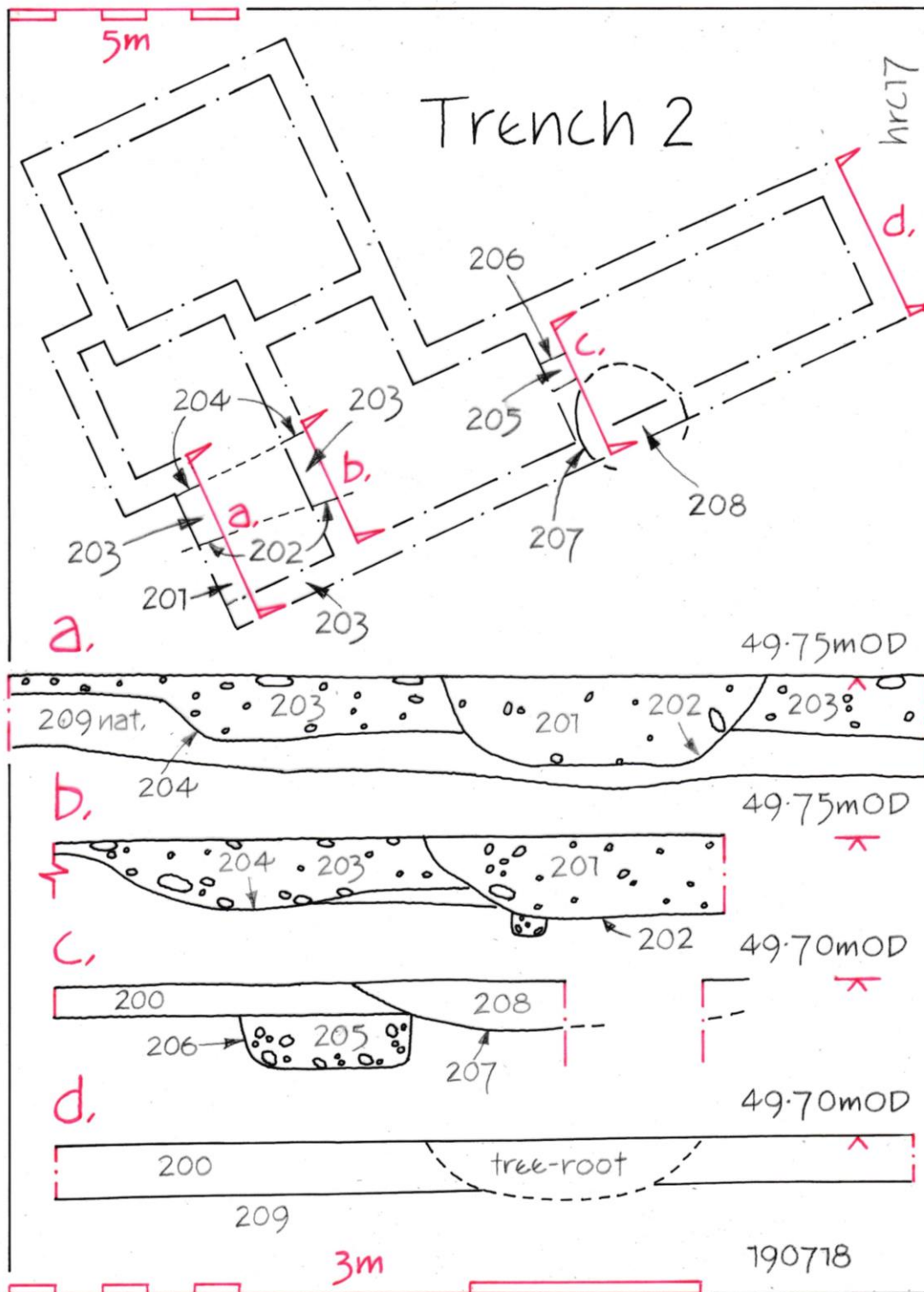


Fig. 5; trench 2 plan & sections

There was also frequent charcoal flecking whilst finds comprised a few small fragments of red brick.

Another pit-like feature (206) was recorded aligned across the trench towards the west end (see section c) truncating the surface of the natural substrate, this was about 0.75m wide and 0.25m deep with almost vertical sides. It was filled by a single deposit (205) equivalent in composition with the fill deposit 203 which was recorded in association with the trench-like feature 204. This was in turn sealed by a 0.35m thick deposit of undated subsoil (200). A large shallow, sub-circular pit-like feature (207), possibly up to 2.50m in diameter and about 0.20m deep truncated layer 200 within the vicinity of feature 206. It was filled by the undated deposit 208, consisting of a dark, greyish-brown, clayey-silt.

## FINDS

### *Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn*

The pottery assemblage comprised 5 sherds with a total weight of 139g. It all occurred in a single context, 101. The following fabric types were noted:

IGW: Black-glazed Buff Ware, late C17-C18 (Crossley 1994). 2 sherds, 16g.

OGW: Orange-glazed Buff Ware, late C17-C18 (*ibid.*). 1 sherd, 83g.

SS: Staffordshire Slipware, mid-C17-C18 (*ibid.*). 2 sherds, 38g.

The sherds were all in fairly good condition and are typical of sites in the region. The same context also produced a small assemblage of fired clay building material. This consisted of three fragments of tile (weight = 69g) and two of hand-made brick (57g). Of the former, one fragment (32g) is in a fine, red sandy fabric and is 12mm thick, and likely to be of late medieval or early post-medieval date. The other two fragments appear to be of recent date. The brick fragments are somewhat abraded and rounded, with none of their original surfaces remaining. They are probably post-medieval but are somewhat difficult to date due to their condition.

### *Environmental data*

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



## DISCUSSION (Figs. 6 & 7)

Archaeological recording at the east end of the site in the location of plot 4 revealed some masonry remains of what was probably one of the former buildings depicted on the 1747 map occupying the southern edge of the site. The walls themselves were undated but finds from the associated subsoil layer (101) suggests occupation during the mid/late-C17. This is supported by fragments of brick observed within the fabric of the walls which probably formed the foundation for a timber-framed structure. The date would also be consistent with pottery retrieved from the evaluation trenches located to the north of the site which were dated from the C17-18, their deposition possibly related to the occupation of the earlier farmstead to the north (Cook, 2015). The lack of any earlier residual finds suggests little activity within the study site before this period.

Feature 204, although only partially exposed, shows a profile characteristic of what could be interpreted as the remains of a hollow-way and its position appears to coincide with the alignment on the 1747 map of the ancient route-way (to Broadwas) which crosses the southern boundary of the study site. The 1747 map showed this former road feature, which is currently marked by an existing hedge-line and in places, as the shallow visible remains of a 'hollowed-out way' along its northern edge, which is particularly prominent at the junction of Harley Road at the west of the site. Feature 204 probably represents the remains of this former monastic road, comprising a rudimentary track hollowed out through continued use rather than some form of deliberately deposited road material such as metalling. This road alignment follows the flat east-west ridge between sloping contours and was probably chosen as a convenient route utilising the existing topography on an elevated position. Because of this the course of the road is more likely to be variable than direct.

Feature 204 was only partially exposed at the west end of plot 3 where it was truncated by two of the foundation trenches, the remainder of the feature lay outside the southern edge of the plot. This probable hollowed out route-way does not seem to re-appear in the foundation trenches towards the east end of the plot suggesting that after it crosses Harley Road its course diverges southwards continuing along the southern boundary of the site. The fill of the hollow-way was truncated by the linear pit-like feature 202 which although undated appears to be of recent origin. Further pitting (features 206 & 207), also probably of recent construction was recorded towards the west of the plot.

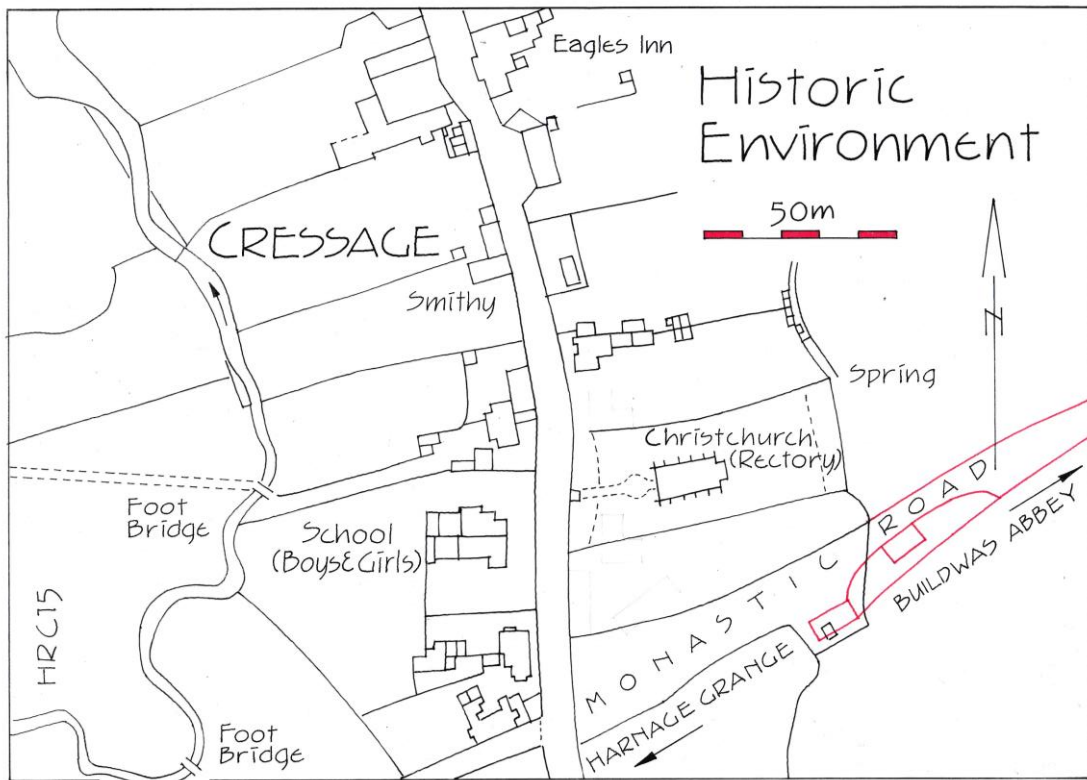


Fig. 6; Cressage historic environment plan; black (OS 1882-3), red (1747)

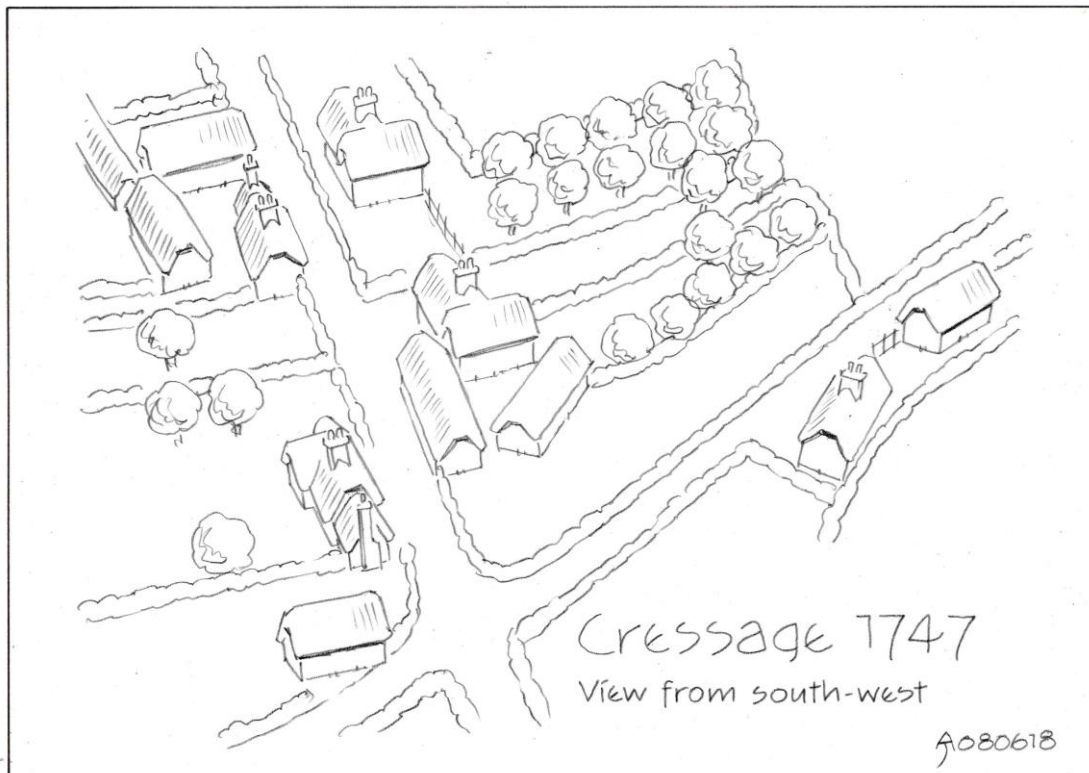


Fig.7; reconstruction of the historic topography based on cartographic sources and walkover survey of extant village buildings.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

British Geological Survey, 1978. *Geological Survey of England and Wales; Shrewsbury, sheet 152, solid and drift geology, 1:50,000.*

CIfA, 2014. *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Briefs*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.

Cook, S., 2015. *Land south of Christ Church, Harley Road, Cressage, Shropshire; archaeological evaluation*, One Ten Archaeology report

Crossley, D, 1994. *Post-Medieval Archaeology in Britain*, LUP.

Frost, P., 2015. *Fingerpost Cottage, Cressage, Shropshire: archaeological watching brief*, Castlering Archaeology.

Hill, T., 2015. *Letter of correspondence to Shrewsbury Planning Authority*, planning ref. 12/01206/FUL

1747 Manor Map of Cressage

OS 1882-3

Shropshire Historic Environment Record 2015.

Towner, D, 1978. *Creamware*, Faber and Faber, London.

Victoria County History, 1908. *County History of Shropshire; Cressage*, Vol. 1, 403.

### *Archive Location*

A digital (pdf) copy of the report (referenced with OASIS) will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service. A pdf copy of the report will also be deposited with the Historic Environment Record (HER).





Plate 1; overall view to the south-east of trench 1 (plot four)



Plate 2; remains of wall 103





Plate 3; remains of wall? 104



Plate 4; section 1a





Plate 5; section 1b



Plate 6; section 1c





Plate 7; section 1d



Plate 8; section 1e





Plate 9; overall view to the south-west of trench 2 (plot three)



Plate 10; section 2a





Plate 11; section 2b



Plate 12; section 2c





Plate 13; section 2d



## APPENDIX 1: OASIS

Project name	Land south of Christ Church Harley Road, Cressage, Shropshire; archaeological recording
Project dates	Start: 27-07-2017 End: 28-03-2018
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	HRC17 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 10 - Orchard
Monument type	BUILDING Post Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Post Medieval
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition
Country	England
Site location	SHROPSHIRE SHREWSBURY AND ATCHAM CRESSAGE Land south of Christ Church, Harley Road
Postcode	SY5 6DF
Study area	2100 Square metres
Site coordinates	SJ 59221 03961 52.631517420167 -2.602584602139 52 37 53 N 002 36 09 W Point
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 recipient	county museum
Physical Contents	"Ceramics"
Digital Archive recipient	OASIS
Paper Archive recipient	county museum
Paper Media	"Notebook - Excavation"," Research"," General

available	Notes", "Photograph", "Plan", "Report", "Section"
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Land south of Christ Church Harley Road, Cressage, Shropshire Archaeological recording
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Cook, S
Date	2018
Issuer or publisher	one ten archaeology
Place of issue or publication	Warwickshire
URL	<a href="http://www.oasis.ac.uk">http://www.oasis.ac.uk</a>
Entered by	sean cook (sean@onetenarchaeology.co.uk)
Entered on	18 July 2018