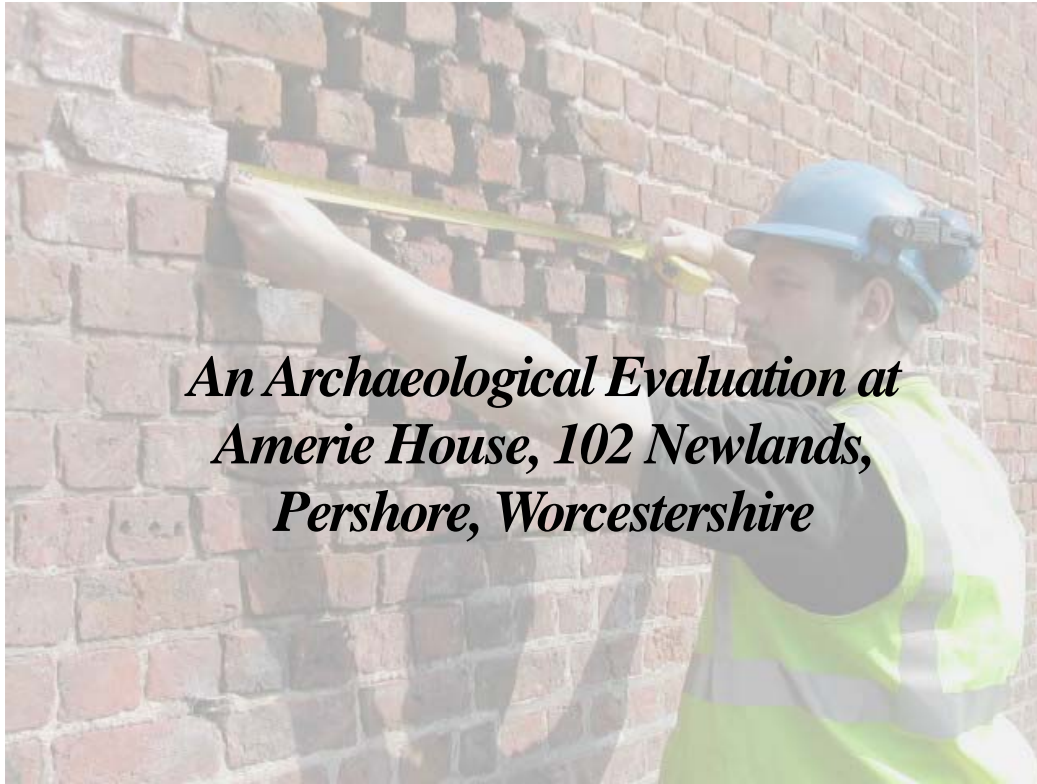


Mercian Archaeology

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*Archaeological Evaluation at Amerie House, 102
Newlands, Pershore, Worcestershire*



*An Archaeological Evaluation at
Amerie House, 102 Newlands,
Persore, Worcestershire*

A Report for Robin Eaton Building Contractor

October 2006

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Project: PJ 171

WSM 35950

***Mercian Archaeology** undertake archaeological projects across much of the West Midlands and the Welsh Marches. **We specialise in Historic Building Recording and Analysis.** We also undertake archaeological watching-briefs, evaluation and excavation, desk-based assessment, historic landscape assessment and osteological analysis. We now also carry out historic reconstruction and can produce illustrations for publication, website or interpretative panels.*

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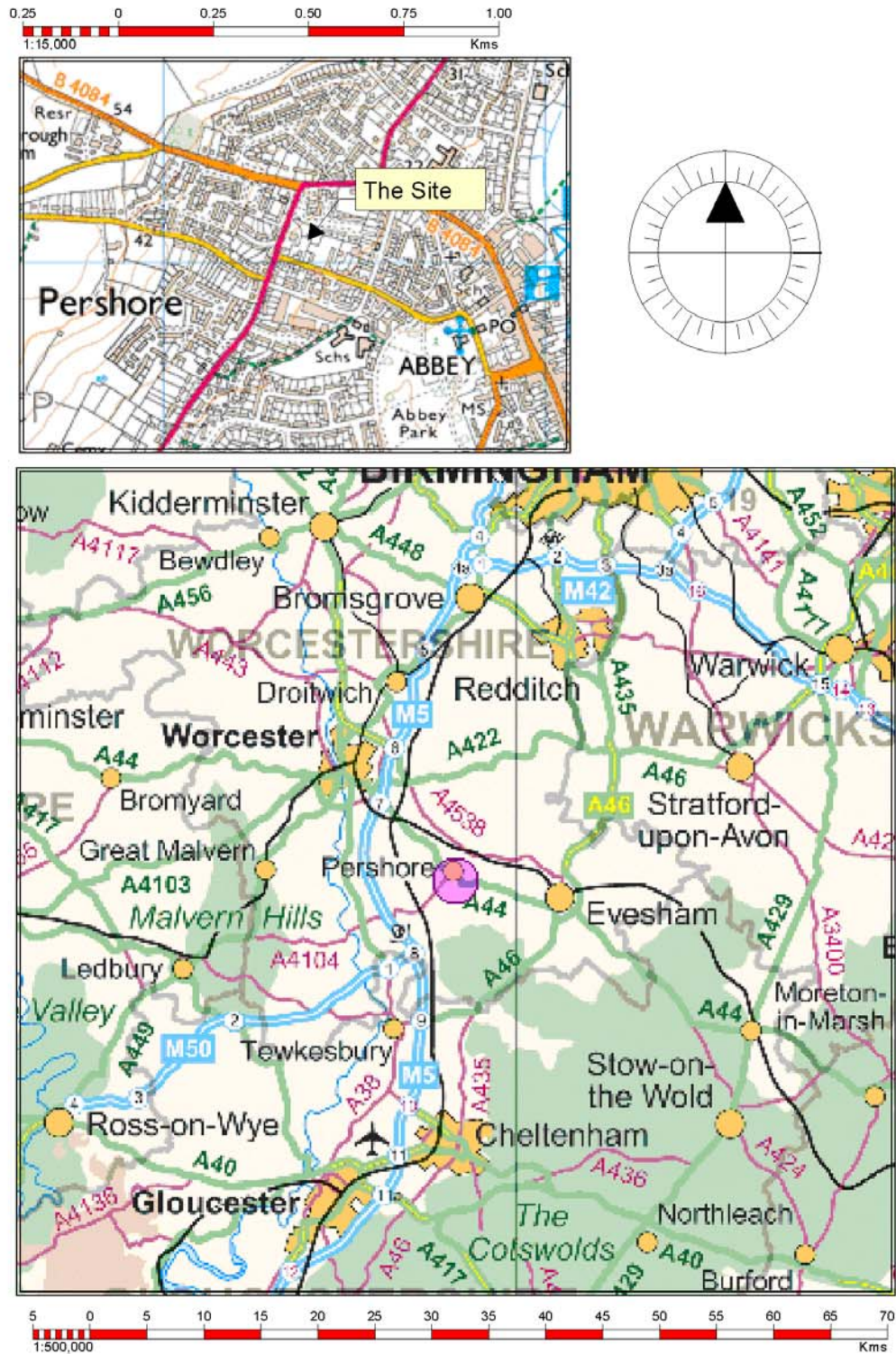
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Figure 1: Location of the Site



Location of the Site at Head Street,
Pershore

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1. Project Background

1.1. Location of the Site

The market town of Pershore lies around 8 kilometres to the south-east of Worcester and around 6 kilometres to the north-west of Evesham, the A44 linking the three. Newlands runs parallel to the south side of the western end of Pershore High Street. Amerie House stands at the far western end of Newlands (NGR SO 9437 4604; Figure 1).

1.2. Project Details

A planning application was presented to Wychavon District Council for the construction of a detached dwelling with associated services on a plot to the rear of Amerie House (W/05/0126). The planning process determined that the proposed development site might affect a site contained on the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (WSM 16052) as a 'site of archaeological interest'. As a result, the Planning Archaeologist, Worcestershire County Council, placed an 'archaeological evaluation' planning condition on the application, for which a brief of work was written (WHEAS, May 2006).

1.3. Reasons for the Archaeological Project

The conditional archaeological evaluation has been suggested as the appropriate response to the threat posed to the potential archaeological site by the development process. This would involve the excavation of foundation trenches and service trenches for the proposed new building.

An archaeological evaluation is defined as:

'A limited programme of non-intrusive and / or intrusive fieldwork which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. If such archaeological remains are present, fieldwork should determine their character, extent, quality, preservation and their worth at a local, national or international level as appropriate' (IFA 2001).

A conditional evaluation at the development site was proposed in order that an assessment of the nature, extent, period and condition of any archaeological remains or deposits encountered could be made and informed decisions made regarding mitigation of deposits and structures.

2. Methods and Process

2.1. Project Specification

- ❑ The archaeological project conforms to the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IFA 2001).
- ❑ The project conforms to a brief prepared by The Planning Archaeologist, Worcestershire County Council (Brief W/05/0126, WHEAS, May 2006), for which a project proposal and detailed specification was produced (Mercian Archaeology 2006).
- ❑ Mercian Archaeology adhere to the service practice and health and safety policy as contained within the *Mercian Archaeology Service Manual* (Williams 2003)
- ❑ The record archive will be offered to the appropriate museum after discussion with the client and / or archaeological curator.
- ❑ *The Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists* (1997) will be adhered to.
- ❑ *The Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology, Institute of Field Archaeologists* (1997) will also be followed
- ❑ *Guidelines for Finds Work, Institute of Field Archaeologists* (2001) will be followed.
- ❑ The project and any recommendations will conform to the government advice contained in *Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology and Planning* (DoE, PPG 16 1990).
- ❑ The documentary research will follow the guidelines contained within the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment* (2001)
- ❑ *Guidelines for the Preparation of Archives for Long-Term Storage* (Walker 1990) and *Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections*, Museum and Galleries Commission (1992) will be followed.
- ❑ *Conservation Guidelines No 2*, United Kingdom Institute of Conservation.
- ❑ *Management of Archaeological Projects 2*, English Heritage 1991
- ❑ Environmental Archaeology and Archaeological Evaluations: Recommendation Regarding the Environmental Archaeology Component of *Archaeological Evaluations in England*, Association for Environmental Archaeology Working Paper Number 2 (1995)

2.2. Aims of the Project

The archaeological project aimed to: -

- ❑ Use the results of the archaeological work to produce a report highlighting: -
 1. The survival and location of any archaeological deposits.

2. Make an analysis and interpretation of all identified natural and cultural deposits
 - Based on the above, establish the significance, survival, condition and period of the archaeological remains and place them within context at local, regional or national level where relevant.

3. The Documentary Research

3.1. The Topography

The market town of Pershore lies within a loop in the River Avon at around 20m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The soils are gleyed clayey pe-lo-alluvial of the Fladbury Series with stagnogleyic argillic brown earths of the Bishampton Series further away from the river course (Beard et al 1986). Below the soils the geology is of Lower Lias clay laid down in the Jurassic period (British Geological Survey 1:50,000, Sheet 199). The geological setting is an alluvial river terrace above the current floodplain.

A Brief Archaeological Overview

There is limited evidence for Roman activity in Pershore, with Black Burnished ware pottery sherds having been found somewhere in the Priest Street area of the town (WSM 16059). Further Roman pottery has been identified from two sites at Newlands (WSM 02222; WSM 16037). Other Roman finds from the town include a coin hoard (WSM 15733).

Like the majority of the county and indeed the west of Britain in general, there is little evidence for the transition period from Roman to Anglo-Saxon, the period usually termed the Dark Age. The Minster Church of Pershore was established around AD 689 by Oswald, prince of the Hwicce (Hooke 1998, 13), which is likely to have been the catalyst for the foundation of a settlement spreading out from the church precinct that later developed into the town of Pershore. Pershore Abbey that we see today dates from the late 11th century onwards and was built on the site of the existent Anglo Saxon Minster. There is a suggestion that Pershore was the site of a royal mint within a defended *burh* by the mid-11th century (Bond in Dalwood *et al* 1996), although the evidence for this is conjectural (Dalwood *et al* 1996). The artefactual evidence for Anglo-Saxon Pershore is scarce; a pit was excavated during archaeological work at Priest Lane, which included a sherd of glass tempered pottery dateable to the 5th to 7th centuries AD (Dalwood *et al* 1996), with later Anglo-Saxon finds of a spearhead (WSM 15893) and the 'Pershore censer-cover' (WSM 15751) (Cook 2005).

At Domesday, there were 28 burgesses in Pershore (Thorn and Thorn 1982) who would have paid rents to the church. A year earlier in 1065 King Edward gave much of the estate of Pershore Abbey to Westminster Abbey, with the Abbot of Pershore retaining the remainder, including burgess plots in High Street and at Newlands (new lands), which appears to have been planned and laid out by the 13th century (Dalwood *et al* 1996). Recent archaeological work on the site of St Agatha's Hall on the eastern side of Head Street located a substantial boundary ditch aligned approximately east-west and dateable to sometime before the 14th century (Cook 2005; WSM 33856; WSM 33857) and it seems likely that this feature represents

the back boundary of the burgage plots aligned on High Street and consequently the limit of medieval activity. Further archaeological evaluation work has produced supporting evidence for medieval Pershore; pits and building foundations were located at 14-16 Newlands (WSM 32257) and work at the former council yard on Newlands (close to the Head Street junction) retrieved a small assemblage of medieval pottery (Wichbold 1997, WSM 29621); more recent work at 67 Newlands identified cut features and a well dating to the 13th- 14th centuries (Goad 2005, WSM 34266); stratified medieval deposits were identified at Little Priest Lane (WSM 16037) and buried road surfaces noted in Priest lane are also likely to be medieval (WSM 16039); further medieval remains have been identified at 37 High Street (WSM 15293) and 25 High Street (WSM 15825).

The Central Marches Historic Town Survey for Pershore (Dalwood *et al*) indicates that the town was fairly prosperous with a thriving wool trade, which was bolstered by good communications to the south-east aided by the medieval bridge over the Avon and to Worcester in the opposite direction, where the navigable River Severn allowed trade further afield.

At the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539, Pershore Abbey was taken into private ownership. The English Civil Wars left their mark on Pershore and the medieval bridge was partly destroyed by Parliamentary forces during skirmishes with the Royalist garrison in the town.

Post-medieval Pershore retained a wealth of diverse trades with glove making, silk weaving, tanning and leather working predominant (Dalwood *et al*). The coming of the railway in 1853 further fuelled the wealth of the town.

3.2. The Cartography

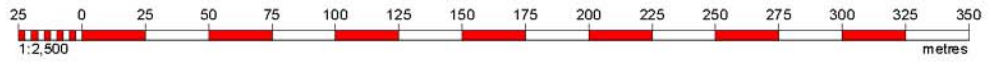
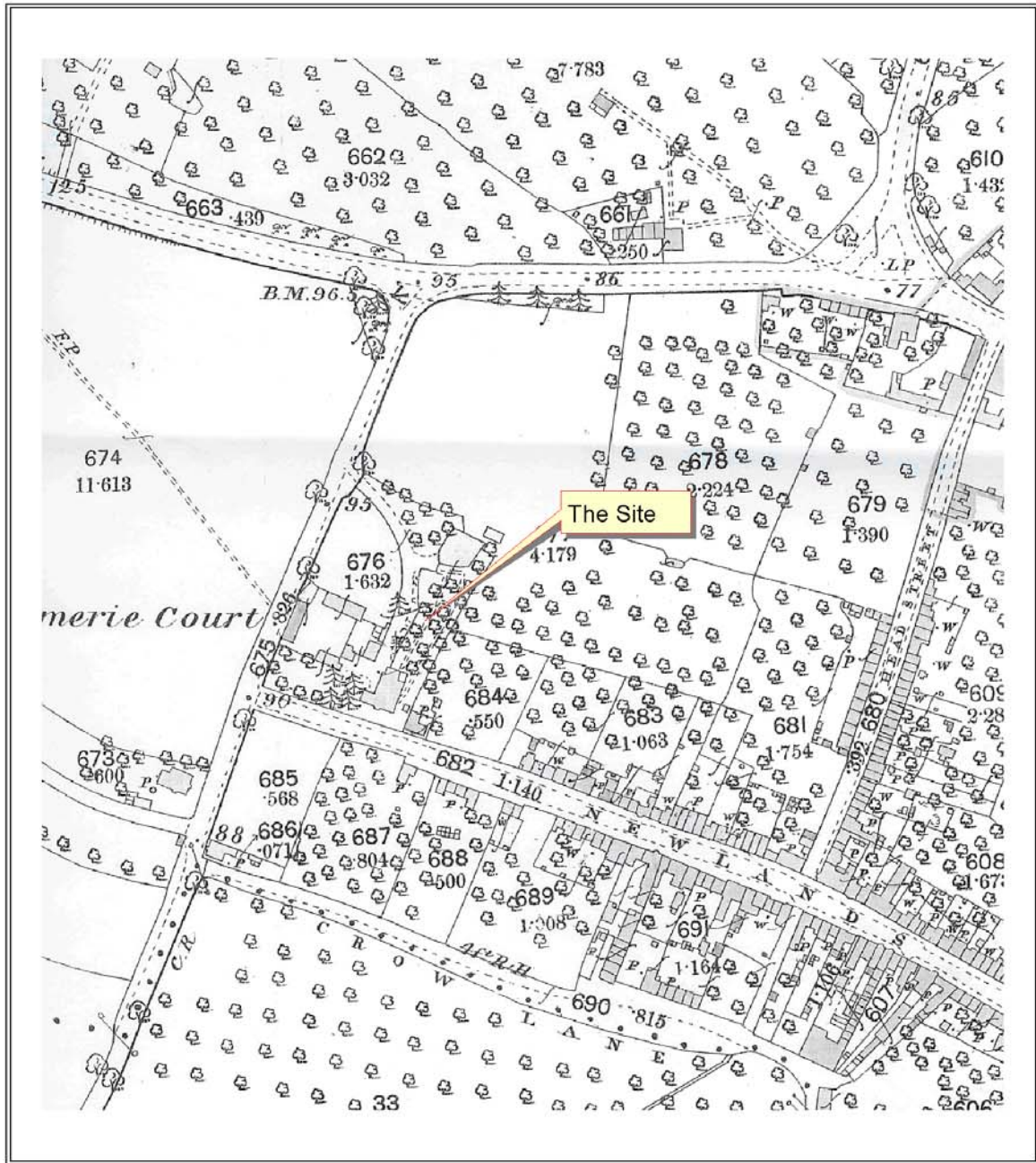
The detailed 25” to 1 mile 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885 shows Amerie House as part of Amerie Court. There is an expanse of with orchard and ornamental woodland to the rear of the property, on the development site. A driveway sweeps round into the property from the road to the west; this now forms the boundary of a later property. Narrow former medieval burgage plots can be identified on the map, fossilised within modern property boundaries, but these do not appear to extend as far west as Amerie House (Figure 2).

The later edition map of 1938 shows the site in similar configuration, although the tree coverage is not depicted.

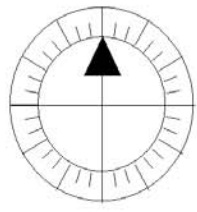
Cartographic Sources Used

Source	Reference Number
Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 25” (1885) Worcestershire Sheet XLI.11	Worcester Records Office
Ordnance Survey Provisional Edition 1:2500. Worcestershire Sheet XLI.11 (1938)	Worcester Records Office

Figure 2: 1st Edition Ordnance Survey (1885)



The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map with the development site arrowed



3.4. The Fieldwork Methodology

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken on 9th October 2006 by Paul Williams of Mercian Archaeology assisted by Steve Rigby. The evaluation trench was excavated by a JCB fitted with a 1.60 metre wide toothless ditching bucket after the site had been cleared of trees.

The site photography was carried out using digital format. A 1-metre scale was used where possible.

Proforma Record Forms were used to record the site stratigraphy in tandem with site notes to produce the final record contained within this report.

The methodology adopted and the favourable working conditions meant that the aims and objectives of the brief could be fully met and the fieldwork was successfully concluded.

4. The Field Evaluation

One 10 metre x 2 metre trench was excavated, diagonally across the site of the proposed new build by JCB, as directed by the brief (WHEAS 2006).

The undisturbed glacial sub-stratum was encountered at between 0.80 and 1.20 metres below the present ground level. The natural undulated, with a dip centrally within the ditch. It was initially thought that this may represent a cut feature, but further investigation and cleaning ruled this out. The natural material was a compact orangey-brown sandy clay with areas of gravel in a darker red clay; this had been penetrated by tree roots. It is possible that medieval ploughing caused the hollow in the natural, although this was inconclusive, as evidence of ridge and furrow could not be seen in the trench section.

The natural [104] was sealed by very compact orangey-brown sandy-silty-clay subsoil [102]. This averaged 50 centimetres thick and included frequent small to medium rounded stones (gravel), tree roots, occasional brick fragments and rare, very degraded animal bone. One sherd of late 11th to 14th century unglazed Evesham micaceous ware (Worcestershire Fabric Series: 148.1) and three sherds of late 17th to 18th century post-medieval red sandy ware ceramic (Worcestershire Fabric Series: 78) were retrieved from this layer, together with two fragments of late medieval flat roof tile (Worcestershire Fabric Series: 2b). The wide date range of the finds suggests that the layer had been well disturbed, possibly by tree planting, growth and felling. A dump of gravel and grey clay including brick fragments [103] had been deposited onto this layer at the northern end of the trench. This probably was during clearance of the site after building works at Amerie Court, sometime during the 19th century, demonstrating further disturbance at this end of the site.

The site was overlain by a greyish brown loamy soil, containing fine roots, small round stones and occasional brick fragments [101], with a layer of loamy topsoil and turf [100] to ground level.

There were no significant archaeological deposits or cut features identified during the evaluation.

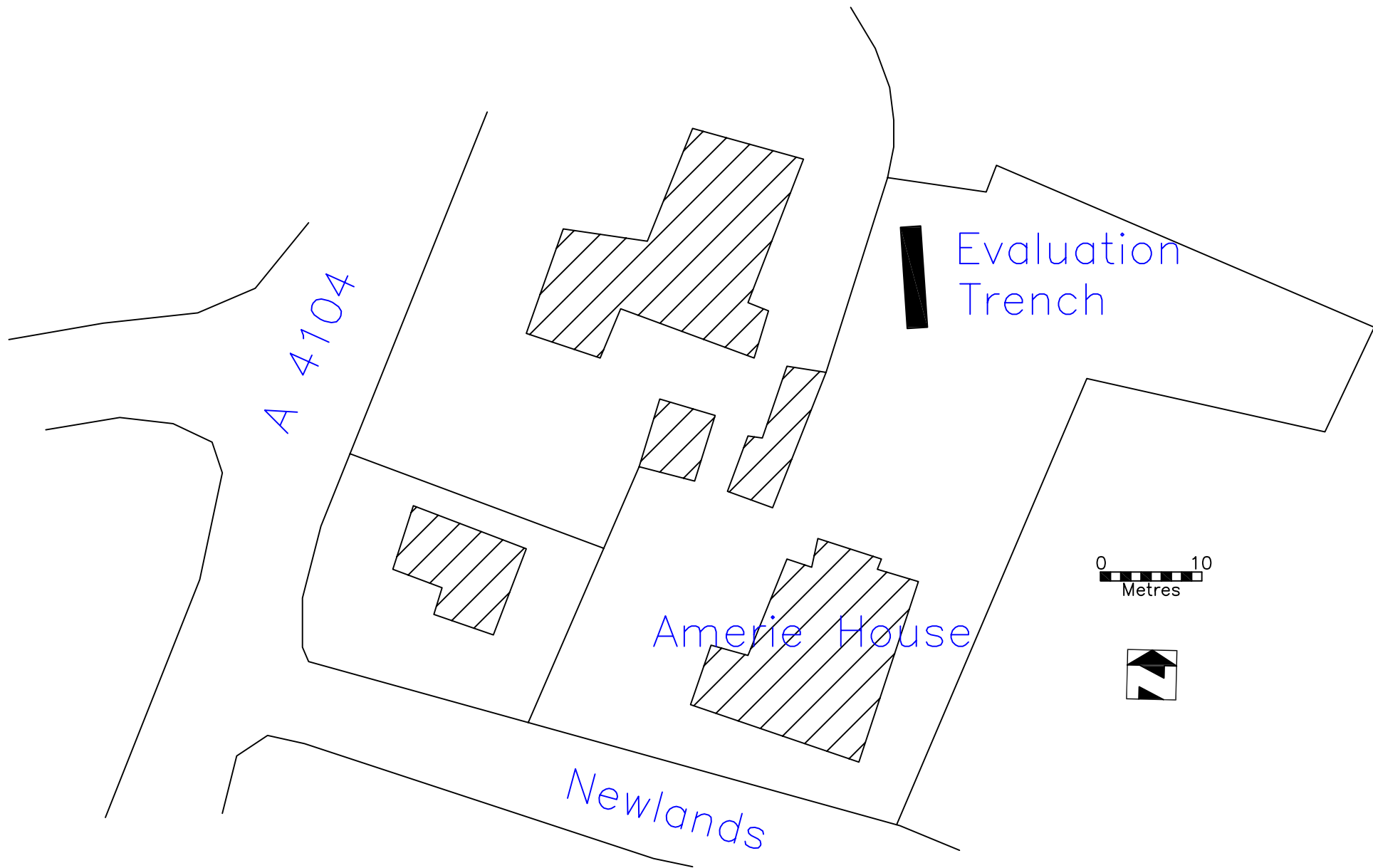


Figure 3: Trench Location Plan at Amerie House, Newlands



Plate 1: *The trench during excavation*



Plate 2: *West facing section (Scale 1 metre)*

5. Discussion of the Physical and Documentary Evidence

The evaluation determined that there were no significant archaeological features or deposits within the trenched area and the evidence suggests that the site was open field and orchard until the 17th century, when the earliest occupation at Amerie Court began. Timber-framed buildings from this period survive on the south and to the west of the development site.

There was a distinct lack of ceramic sherds from the site, which also points towards long useage of the area as orchard, rather than for settlement or as open field, where manure spread over the fields would likely have also contained broken pottery. One sherd of medieval pottery and two small fragments of medieval roof-tile were residual and within a context containing 18th century ceramics, indicating that the site had been disturbed, probably during planting and grubbing up dead trees etc..

Previous archaeological work in Newlands has identified medieval activity, although it is noticeable that there is greater evidence for domestic activity further to the east, close to and beyond Head Street, with more ephemeral evidence from sites to the west; on the corner of Little Priest Lane at 16-19 Newlands, evidence for Roman activity was uncovered, with the site then lying redundant until the 12th century after which, medieval occupation was identified. Activity was evidenced into the post-medieval and modern periods and a substantial finds assemblage was recovered (Shaw 1977). A medieval garden soil containing a few sherds of pottery dateable to the 13th-14th century was noted at the site of the former council yard on Newlands (Wychbold 1997) and further to the west on the opposite side of the road at number 67 Newlands, evidence of medieval structures was uncovered (post-holes and a possible well) dateable by a reasonable assemblage of finds (Goat 2005). However, closer to the development site at number 96 Newlands, archaeological work encountered only 19th century material. This is likely to suggest that medieval settlement activity is confined to the eastern parts of Newlands and that the far western end was outside the medieval urban form.

6. Conclusion

The results of the archaeological evaluation demonstrate that there were no significant archaeological remains or deposits located within the trenched area. The overall amalgamated evidence from previous archaeological work at Newlands indicate that medieval settlement activity was focused further to the east than the development site and evidence from the evaluation suggest that the site remained as orchard into the 19th century, probably mirroring a long tradition of land-use at the western end of Newlands.

7. Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the client Robin Eaton. Thanks are also due to Steve Rigby for his assistance on-site; Mike Glyde, Planning Archaeologist, Worcestershire County Council, Emma Hancox of Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service for carrying out the SMR search and the staff of Worcester Records Office.

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