A photograph of a person wearing a blue hard hat and a high-visibility yellow and white safety vest. The person is holding a yellow measuring tape against a red brick wall. The text is overlaid on this image.


*A Photographic Recording of  
Buildings and an  
Archaeological Watching Brief  
at Everton's Store, Main Street,  
Ombersley, Worcestershire*

*A Report for Firlands Developments Ltd*

September 2007  
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**Project: PJ 187**

**WSM 37311**



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# 1. Project Background

## 1.1. Location of the Site

Ombersley is located at the junction of the A4133 Tenbury Wells to Droitwich Road and the A49 Worcester to Kidderminster trunk road, which now bypasses the village on the eastern side. The site lies on Main Street, to the south of the central mini-roundabout Figure 1; NGR SO 8454 6361).

## 1.2. Project Details

A planning application was presented to Wychavon District Council for the replacement of single story buildings and alteration of existing buildings for retail and office space, at Everton's Store, Ombersley (W/06/2101). The planning process determined that the proposed development site lies within an archaeologically sensitive area, which may contain remains relating to medieval development of the village of Ombersley. It was determined that the demolition of existing buildings, and groundwork associated with the proposed development may disturb any buried archaeological remains. As a result, the Planning Archaeologist, Worcestershire County Council, placed a watching brief and photographic recording planning condition on the application, for which a brief of work was written (WHEAS 2007) and a written scheme of investigation (Mercian Archaeology 2007) for the work was subsequently approved.

## 1.3. Reasons for the Archaeological Project

The archaeological watching brief was suggested by the Planning Archaeologist as the appropriate response to the threat posed to the potential archaeological site by the development process. A watching brief is defined as:

*A formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be in a specified area on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed (IFA 2001).*

A watching brief at the site was proposed in order that a record of any archaeological remains or deposits encountered during excavations associated with the development may be made and placed into context.

The photographic recording of buildings earmarked for demolition was proposed so that a record may be made prior to their demolition.

## 2. Methods and Process

### 2.1. Project Specification

- ❑ The archaeological project conforms to the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief* (IFA 2001).
- ❑ The project conforms to a brief prepared by The Planning Archaeologist, Worcestershire County Council (Brief W/06/2101; WHEAS, March 2007), for which a project proposal and detailed specification was produced (Mercian Archaeology 2007).
- ❑ 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 archaeological deposits from any period.
  2. Make an analysis and interpretation of all identified natural and cultural deposits
  3. Make a basic record of buildings prior to their demolition.
- Based on the above, establish the significance, survival, condition and period of any archaeological remains and place them within context at local, regional or national level where relevant.

## 3. The Documentary Research

### 3.1. The Topography

Ombersley is a village lying within its an extensive parish some 4 kilometres to the north of Worcester. Watercourses demarcate the parish boundaries with the River Severn to the west, the Hadley Brook to the east, which flows into the River Salwarpe on the southern side; the parish of Hartlebury is to the north. It is recorded that the watercourses of the parish have been used to power mill machinery for over a thousand years, with mills recorded at Domesday. Many later mill buildings still survive (Winnall Mill, Hadley Mill, New Mill, Turn Mill and Tirlle Mill; VCH III, 460-8), some likely to be on the site of earlier mills. The parish extends to some 2885 hectares.

The underlying geology of the area is Mercian Mudstone (formerly known as Keuper Marl), which is overlain by glacially derived deposits of sand and gravel of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Terrace of the River Severn (British Geological Survey Sheet 182, 1:50,000 series). The overlying soils are of the Wick Association, being deep, well-drained loams (Beard *et al* 1986). The soil is ideally suited to growing wheat crops, peas, beans, barley, fruit and potatoes, which led to Agriculture being the principal industry until recent times.

### 3.2. A Brief Archaeological Overview

*Abbreviations used: WSM ~ Worcestershire Historic Environment Record number.*

The place-name 'Ombersley' derives from the Old English *Ambreslege* (Ambr's Leah), meaning Ambr's clearing / wood clearing / wood pasture; the first element is also noted in *Ombreswelle* (Ambr's Spring) (Ekwall 1960, 349). Ambr's Spring was probably the spring lying to the south-west of the parish church (Hook 1990). During the Middle Ages, the forest of Ombersley formed part of Wyre Forest, but not being ancient demesne of the Crown was

disafforested by the charter of Henry III of 1217 (VCH III). There are no large tracts of the ancient forest surviving in the parish.

The earliest reference to the parish is contained in an 8<sup>th</sup> century Anglo Saxon charter of Aethelward, which grants Ombersley to Bishop Ecgwine of Worcester. The boundaries described in the charter still form the parish boundary today (Hook 1990).

At Domesday (1086), Ombersley was held by the monks of Evesham Abbey had at Ombersley in 1086 had been reckoned at 15 hides in the time of Edward the Confessor. Three of these hides were free of geld, but in ancient times, so it was said, the whole manor was assessed at only 3 hides.

Ombersley was held by Evesham Abbey until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. The manor became the possession of the Sandys family and remained with them until recent times (Guyatt 1995).

Little archaeological fieldwork has been carried out in the vicinity of the site; field walking and survey to the west and south-west of the site during 1994 retrieved a small quantity of finds including prehistoric flint, medieval pottery and post-medieval pottery (WSM 20834 and WSM 20835); a watching brief carried out during building work at Cresswells, Main Road, to the north-west of the site, identified material from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (WSM 31038) and a further watching brief at Conygree Cottage, School Lane, identified primary building phases of the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century (WSM 32192).

Many of the buildings within the village, such as the Everton's Stores building, which fronts the development site, date from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Buildings from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries also survive in numbers; The Dower House, which is located close to the traffic island on the A4133 dates from this period (WSM 12438), as does the Kings Arms Public House (WSM 12435), Ewers Cottage was probably originally built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (WSM 15205), Myrtle Cottage (WSM 15234), Grafton House (WSM 15235) also date from this period. Earlier 15<sup>th</sup> century founded also survive in the village, at The Thatched Cottage (WSM 20252) and Cresswells (20253). The present Ombersley Court was built in 1723 for the 1<sup>st</sup> Lord Sandys (WSM 07204); the present St Andrew's Church dates from a century later (WSM 08016), having replaced an earlier century church (WSM 08018) with recorded 13<sup>th</sup> century fabric, though the foundation may well be much earlier.

The Everton's Stores building (also known as Church Villa) was built in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, with later extension and alterations; the building is Grade II Listed.

### 3.3. The Cartography

#### Cartographic Sources Consulted

Source	Reference Number
Tithe Apportionment Map of Ombersley (1840)	Worcester Records Office BA 1572, f760/500a
Ordnance Survey 1 <sup>st</sup> edition Worcestershire Sheet XX.5 (1885) 25" to 1 mile	Worcester Records Office (Figure 2)

Other sources used are referenced within the report.

The earliest map consulted was the 1838 Tithe Apportionment Map of the area (Figure 2). This plan appears to show the site undeveloped, though close inspection of the map suggests some detail has been lost through wear and tear.

The 25” to 1 mile 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885 shows the development site with orchards laid out around it and a series of enclosed fields to the east (Figure 2).

The 25” to 1 mile 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map of 1903 shows the development site in similar configuration (Figure 3).

## 4. The Fieldwork

### 4.1. The Photographic Record

A photographic record was made of the exterior of buildings on the site that were proposed for demolition as part of the development project. The buildings were of modern breezeblock and cement mortar, with asbestos cladding and roofing. They were of no architectural merit or historic interest, having been constructed in the mid-1960’s. Sample images are reproduced below (Plates 2-4).

### 4.2. Watching Brief: The Fieldwork Methodology

Paul Williams of Mercian Archaeology undertook the watching brief on groundworks at the site during August 2007.

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 watching brief was carried out on two areas of the site; the areas are shown in Figure 4.

### 4.2. The Results of the Watching Brief

*Abbreviations used:*

*AOD ~ Above Ordnance Datum (Newlyn)*



The watching brief was carried out in two stages, the first monitored the reduction of ground levels on the eastern side of the site and the second element of the fieldwork (Stage 2) monitored the excavation of foundation trenches for new buildings on the flat area to the rear of the Everton's building (see Figure 4).

### **Stage 1: The Ground Reduction**

The ground reduction work in this area highlighted the slope of the site to the east (Plate 5), with the eastern side of the site levelled to a flattish terrace, with a ramp connecting the upper and lower levels. The concrete raft of the ramp up the slope to the upper terrace was removed by machine, along with all hard standing [100]. This revealed a layer of dark brown silt with a moderate percentage of fine sand [101]. The layer was some 25-centimetres deep and contained abundant charcoal, clinker and ash, with crushed brick fragments and some iron work (modern). This was interpreted as a levelling layer following the construction of the buildings (referred to above) in the mid-1960's.

This sealed a layer of sterile friable greyish-brown silt with a small percentage of fine sand, which contained occasional small sub-round stones and moderate charcoal flecks [102]. This represented the upper level of a sub-soil, which was noticeably sandier towards the base, with a diffuse boundary between the upper levels [102] and that below [103]. The subsoil [102 and 103] was some 60-centimetres thick at its maximum, with shallower deposits higher up the slope to the east; the only cultural material within the layer was an occasional brick fragment, with a noticeable lack of pottery.

The natural sterile sub-stratum was noted below; this was a bluish-grey and red silty clay-marl [104].

The reduced level was reached at a maximum of 1.10 metres below the ground level.

There were no finds retrieved during this element of the work.

### **Stage 2: The Foundation Trenches**

The excavation of foundation trenches on the east of the site was not monitored, as undisturbed sterile natural [104] had been reached during the Stage 1 ground reduction works.

The excavation of foundation trenches for the new building directly to the rear of the Everton's Store building, was monitored; the concrete surface [200] was cut and carefully excavated out, along with the remnant bases of stanchions from the demolished 1960's buildings.

The 28-centimetre thick layer of concrete overlay 15-centimetres of brick hardcore, which also contained occasional sandstone fragments [201].

The hardcore had been laid down straight onto the natural sub-stratum [202=104], indicating that there had been some clearance of the site during the 1960's construction phase.

The foundation trenches were excavated to a depth of 1-metre.

There were no finds retrieved during this element of the work.



## 5. Comment on the Physical and Documentary Evidence

The background research indicates that the site was not developed until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, though the location of the site almost opposite the site of the medieval church and within the proposed core of the medieval settlement of Ombersley, suggests that there may have been earlier activity on the site, which was not detected by the watching brief, though it may also be that the medieval core of the village was further to the south and this area was always peripheral. The lack of significant archaeological deposits or features may also be skewed, as the physical evidence suggests that the site was cleared and levelled in the 1960's for the construction of ancillary buildings. It is also likely, that the building works of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century has destroyed or masked evidence.

## 6. Conclusion

*The results of the archaeological watching brief demonstrate that there was no significant archaeological remains or deposits located within the area of the watching brief. The evidence suggests that the immediate area of the site was likely to have been orchard until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when it was gradually replaced by buildings, including the Everton's stores and associated ground levelling.*

## 7. Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank all those connected with Firlands Developments for their help and co-operation. Thanks are also extended to Stephen R. Bell Architectural Technologist, for supply of the site plans, the Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service for undertaking the Historic Environment Record search, Mike Glyde, Planning Archaeologist, Worcestershire County Council and the staff of Worcester Records Office.

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Plate 1: Everton's Store looking north-east from Main Street



Plate 2: Modern buildings to the rear of the store looking south-west (scale 1-metre)





PLATE 3: Modern buildings to the rear of the store looking south-east (scale 1-metre)



PLATE 4: The site after demolition of the 1960's buildings





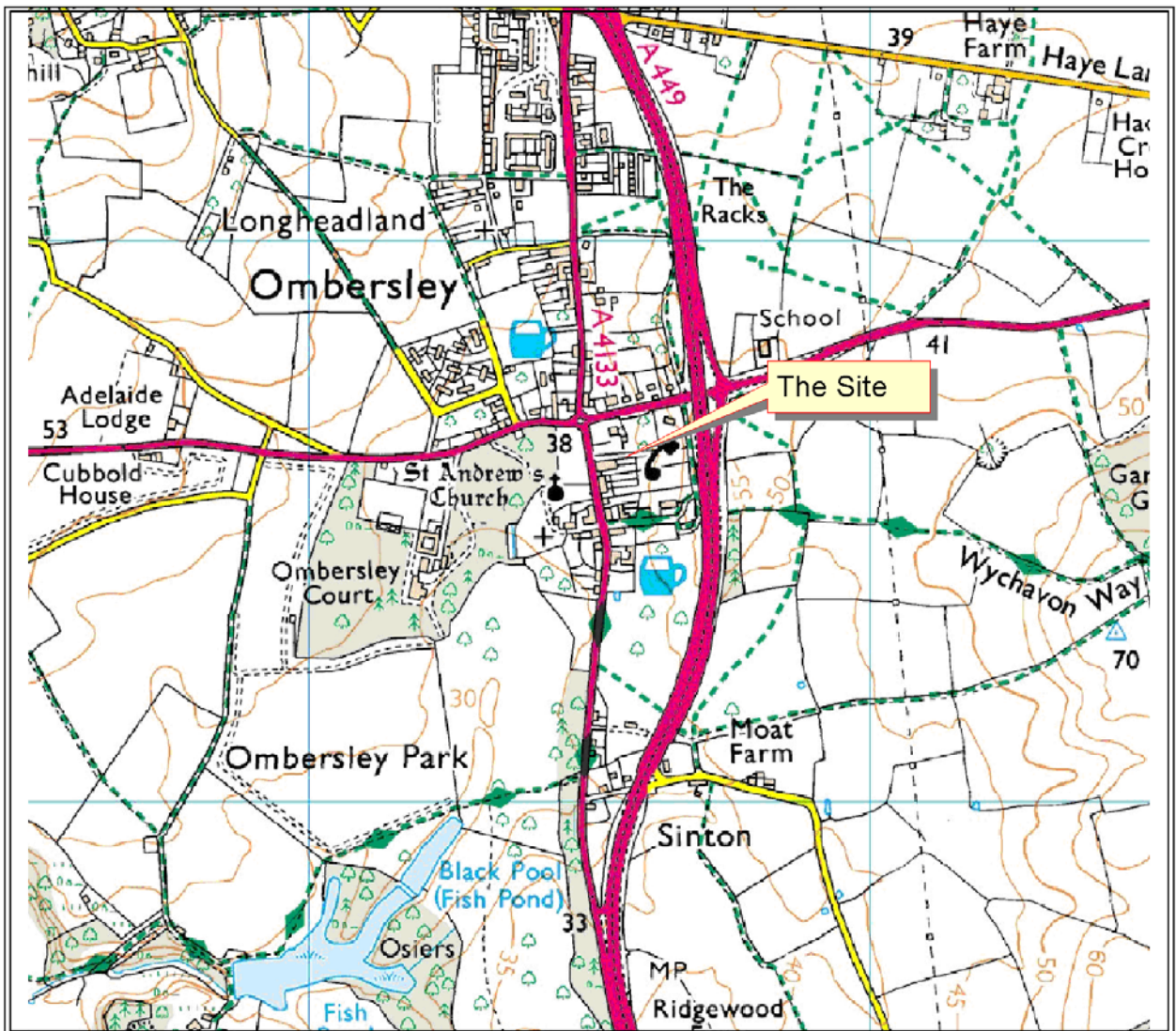
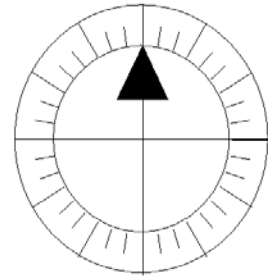
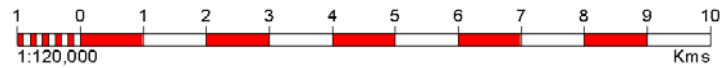
PLATE 5: The slope up to the flatter area to the east of the site (scale 1-metre)



PLATE 6: The general soil / deposit profile on the eastern side of the site (scale 1-metre)



# Figure 1: Location of the Site

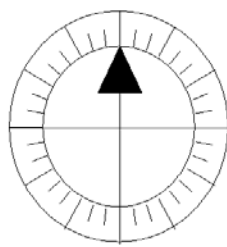
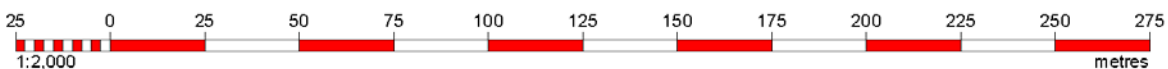
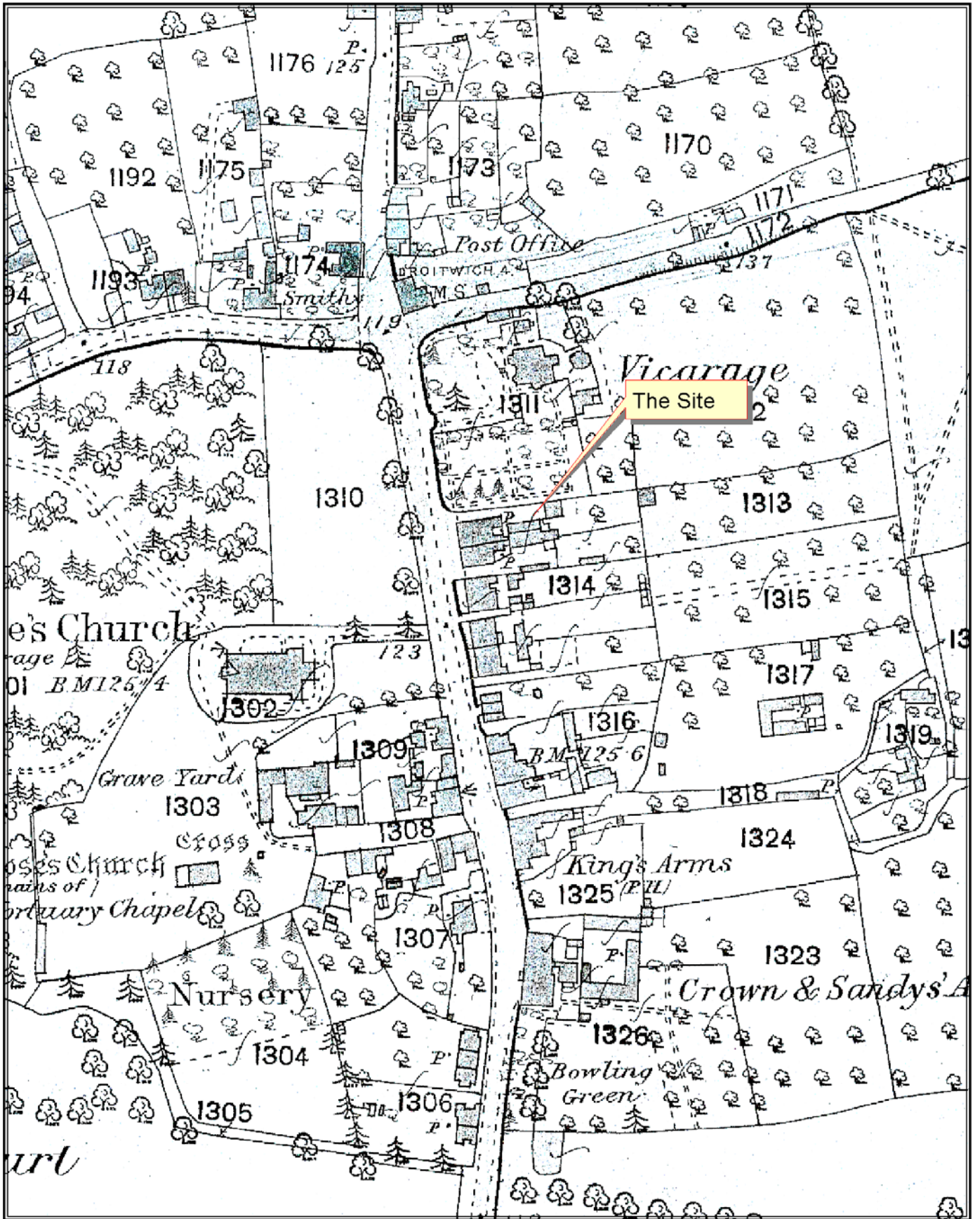


Location of the development site at Ombersley

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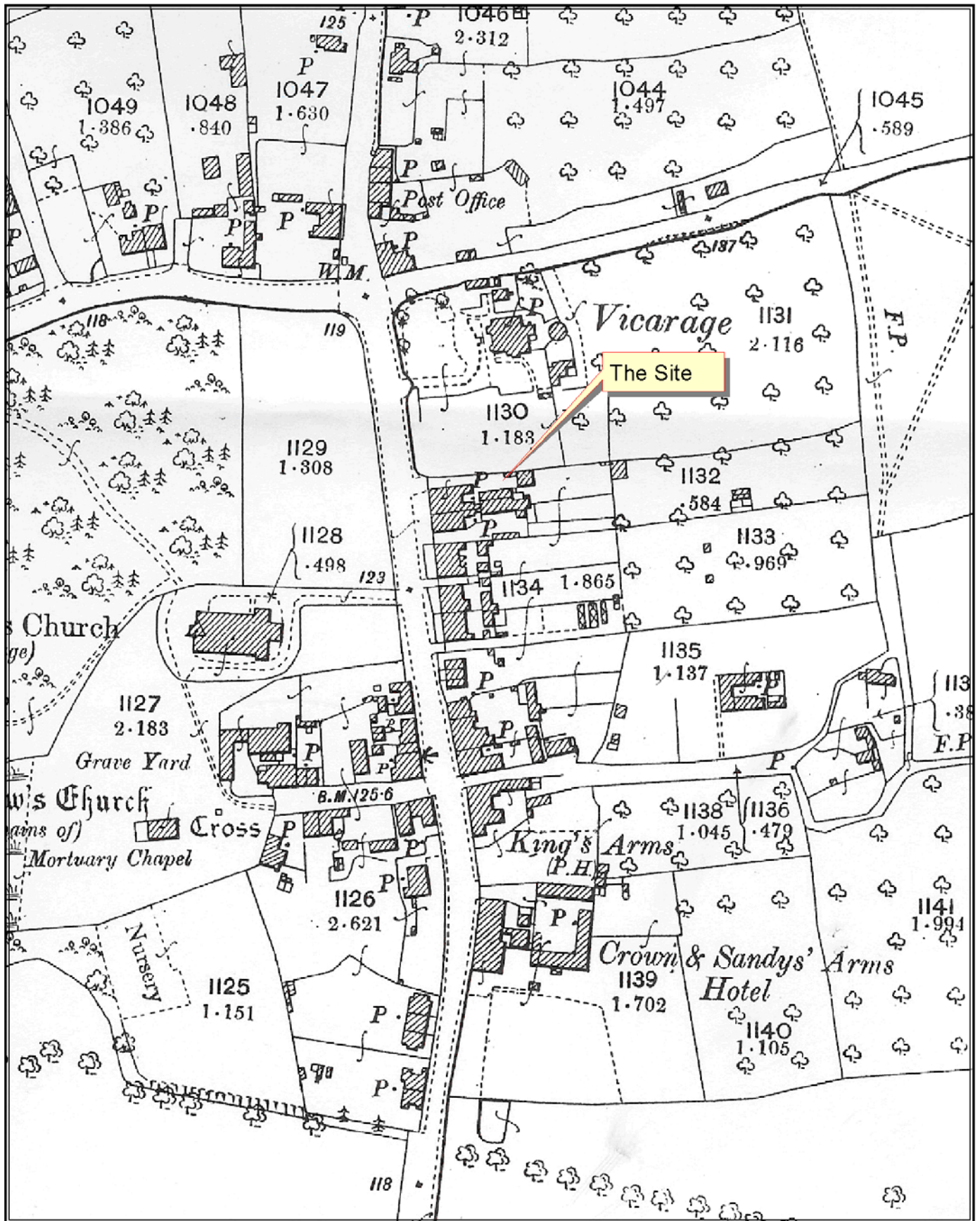
Figure 2: 1st Edition Ordnance Survey (1885)



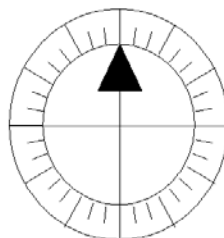
The 1st edition Ordnance Survey with the site arrowed



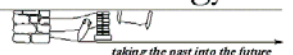
Figure 3: 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey (1903)



The 2nd edition Ordnance Survey with the site arrowed



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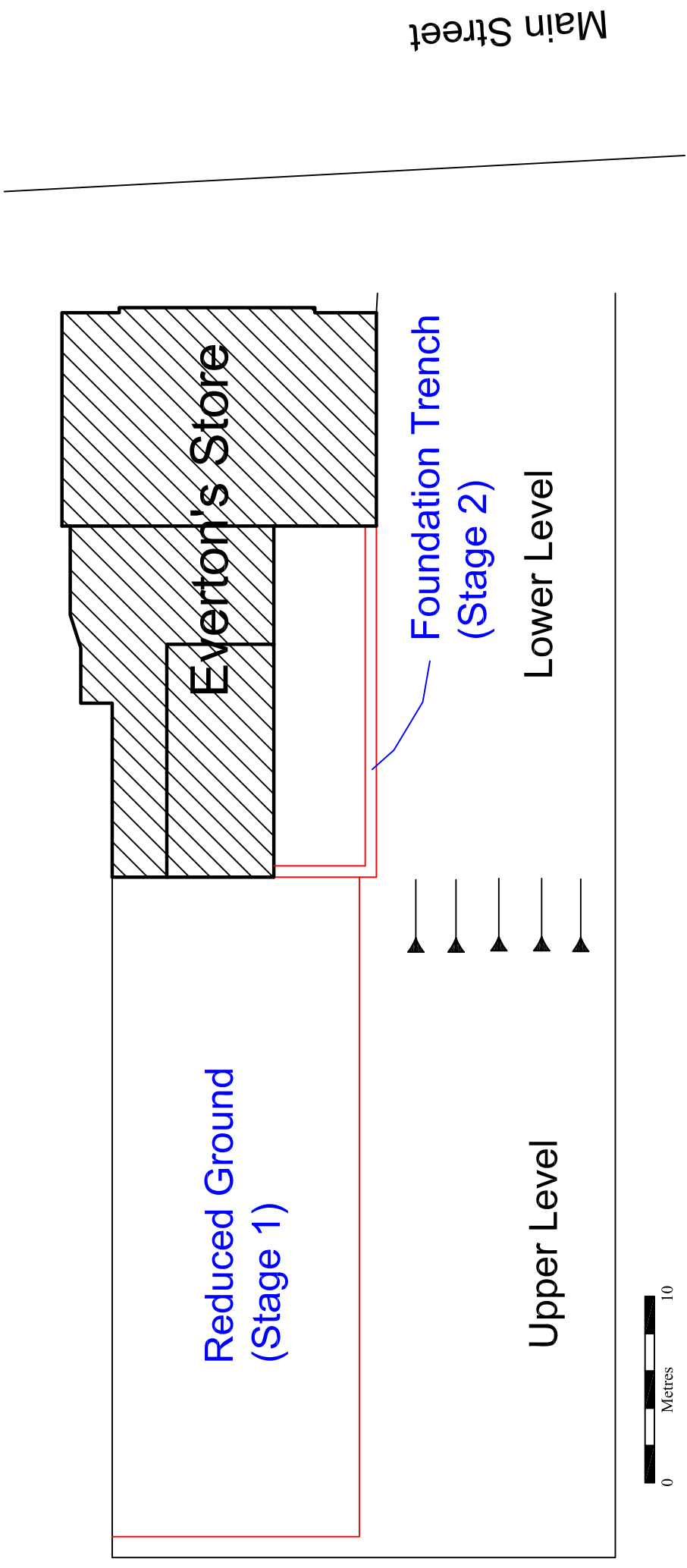


Figure 4: Site Plan, Showing Areas Monitored