

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS AT
LAND ADJOINING NIBLETTS,
CHURCH END,
HANLEY CASTLE,
WORCESTERSHIRE

WSM 43237



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Summary

An archaeologically controlled site strip was undertaken at Church End, Hanley Castle Worcestershire in January 2011 by Mike Napthan Archaeology. The project was intended to provide a full record of buried deposits prior to construction of a single dwelling within the gardens of an existing house.

The project produced few finds of note, and only a small number of sherds of post medieval pottery dating from the late 17th Century to early modern period. There were no cut features other than those relating services and to the modern garden. The topsoil was unusually deep, and this appears to relate to the long use of the ground for vegetable cultivation. Several large tree stumps had been removed from the area as part of the site clearance, and there were traces both of this disturbance and extensive root systems.

There was only limited evidence on the excavated part of the site for the known historic occupation of the area. This is despite it being a cottage garden since the late 16th or early 17th C when the adjoining "Niblets" Cottage was constructed. It would seem that any early waste disposal features lay outside the area of the present building footprint. It is considered that the new building (now under construction) will have no impact on archaeologically significant deposits.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 An archaeological strip and recording was undertaken by Mike Napthan Archaeology The project is being undertaken on behalf of the landowner Mr Philip Stephenson of Stephenson & Son (the Clients). The site is located to the south-east of the village centre of Church End. The project was based upon a brief supplied by Mike Glyde of WHEAS (Planning reference MH/09/0479 condition 11) .
- 1.2 The site location is at NGR SO 8392742101 (Fig 1). It should be noted that the building occupying the western part of the site is "Niblets", a Grade II Listed Building, the present property is a part of Niblets garden recently sold off for infill development, and has not yet got a name or street number .
- 1.3 This report represents the findings of the watching brief on site stripping. The project was designed to provide a record and assessment of the historical and archaeological significance of the site recorded as WSM 43237 on the County HER . The project design was prepared in accordance with the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994). Codes of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists and Worcestershire County Council's Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire December 2010 were followed.

2 Aims

- 2.1 The aims of the archaeological project were to gather high quality data from the direct observation of the below ground archaeological resource in order to provide sufficient information to establish the

nature of the resource within the site (including presence or absence, character, extent, date, state of preservation and quality)

These aims were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:

- i) to define and identify the nature of the archaeological deposits present on the site of the new house, and to date previous phases of historic activity where possible;
- ii) to attempt to characterize the depositional sequence and recover as much information as possible about the any discrete archaeologically significant features or structures surviving .
- iii) Identify any significant features threatened by the proposed works and to indicate appropriate mitigation strategies.

3 Methodology

- 3.1 Cartographic and published historical sources were searched for information relating to the site and its environs. Trade directories were consulted from copies held “in house” and those held in Worcester Family History Centre, but the present property does not appear to be listed (not unusual with smaller rural properties). A search of the County Councils’ HER database revealed some records of archaeological interventions in the vicinity. Searches at the County Record Office revealed no records directly relating to the present property, probably because it was until recently part of the extensive Lechmere estates but mapping of 1789 (Fig 3) was obtained. There is no tithe awards plan for this part of the parish.
- 3.2 The survey was conducted in January 2011. The area of the new building footprint was stripped of recent surfaces (including a concrete garage base and apron) by a 360° tracked excavator working under archaeological supervision. Due to the intended foundation design of the building (suspended beam floor on 0.9m deep cast foundations supported off the natural gravel at that depth) there was no necessity to remove natural subsoil, and this was therefore left in situ. The area of the house was subsequently hand cleaned as necessary and recorded with scale drawings at 1:20 and 1:50. The photographic archive accompanies this report on DVD.

4 Site Development

4.1 *Historic background*

- 4.1.1 The first direct documentary references to Hanley are found in two charters dated 962 and 972, which refer to the northern and southern boundaries of *Hanlee*, indicating that there was an Anglo-Saxon parish or estate in this area. At the time of the Norman Conquest the area retained its native vegetation of “bushy thickets” to the extent that the historian William of Malmesbury described it as “the Wyldreness of Malvern” (Amphlett, ed, 1895, 267). The Domesday Book returns are rather confusing as the parish appears not as Worcestershire but twice elsewhere (once in Gloucs and once in Herefordshire) with slightly different entries that indicate a population of around 200 (Hurle, 1978, 15-18). The duplicate entries reflect the fact that the parish was part of the lordship of Tewkesbury, but also part of the Royal estates seized from the Earl of Hereford in 1074. In medieval times the parish of Hanley Castle extended from the river Severn to the Malvern Hills and from Powick in the north to Upton and Welland in the south, an area of around 6000 acres. There was an important wharf on the Severn at Severn End from which all manner of merchandise was supplied to south Worcestershire and a large part of Herefordshire. Hanley lay within Malvern Chase, which belonged to the crown, who had exclusive hunting rights under the Forest Law. The Grammar School stands to the northeast of the church and bears an inscription stating that it was founded in 1544. “*Here were held the sessions for tryal of offences committed in the forest, the room of meeting was where the school house now is. The gaol and gallows were near the Worcester road; the latter at a place called Hangman’s Lane*” (Nash, 1781, 557 note).
- 4.1.2 Henry I gave the hunting rights in the Chase to his illegitimate son, Robert Fitzroy, 1st Earl of Gloucester. It was around this time that the two main routes through the parish were named: Gilberts End, after Gilbert de Hanley, chief forester in 1147-65, and Roberts End, after his son. Hanley was given by Henry III, ‘*in the 1st year of his reign anno 1216*’ to Gilbert de Clare, in marriage with the

- daughter of William Marshall (marginal note by Sir Thos. Phillipps in Middle Hill copy of Nash). Gilbert was recognized as Earl of Gloucester in 1218. He died in 1230 and his son Richard died in 1262 seised of the manor of Hanley. Richard's heir Gilbert was then a minor, and his lands were in the king's care (VCH 4, pp95-7) Until the late 15th century, the de Hanley family lived at Hanley Hall, which still exists although rebuilt in the 17th century, off Gilberts End.
- 4.1.3 In the 13th century King John built a castle in the parish, serving primarily as a hunting lodge. Described by Nash as “*not far from the Severn stood a castle formerly the residence of the Duke of Warwick, and after him the Lord Despencer, of which there are no traces at this time. It was a large square building with four towers, surrounded by a moat; the keep was placed in the north-west corner*” (Nash, 1781, Vol I, 557). The work was probably begun about 1210, for from that date until 1212 sums are entered on the Pipe Rolls as having been expended in work at the king's houses of Hanley. King John stayed here in July 1209 and November 1213. In 1211–12 assizes were held at the castle. It was given by Henry III to Gilbert de Clare, and then followed the descent of the manor until it was surrendered by Hugh le Despencer to King Edward II. Between 1291 to 1327 there are accounts for work done at the houses of Blackmore and Hanley. During the rebellion against the Despensers Hanley Castle was attacked and damaged. The king appointed wardens till 1328. A schedule dated 1327 gives a list of arms and ammunition in the castle and includes 'nails and wood prepared for raising a chapel' there. The castle was granted with the manor in 1330 to Roger Earl of March, Some extensions were apparently made about 1349, when houses are mentioned as having been lately built there. The castle was at that time assigned to Elizabeth widow of Hugh le Despencer as her dwelling-place. In 1416 Eleanor widow of Richard le Despencer had a third of it assigned to her in dower, viz., a great room at the end of the hall to the west with two towers of stone and a third of the pantry and buttery under the said room, two rooms called 'les Guestenchambres,' three towers in the south with a fourth in the corner of the castle towards the south, a third part of the bakehouse and kitchen also in the said corner, and a third of the palisade and moat adjacent to the said four towers towards the south. She was also to have free access to the chapel. Henry, afterwards Duke of Warwick, was born here in 1425 and died here twenty-one years later.
- 4.1.4 Constables of the castle were appointed by the Crown during the minority of Edward son of George Duke of Clarence. In 1480–1 the gate-house, drawbridge, pool, mill and floodgate were repaired, the sum spent amounting to £4 17s. 10d. The castle was surrendered with the manor to the Crown in 1487, and the last entry of repairs occurs in the following year. Constables were appointed until 1512, but soon after this the castle must have fallen into decay (VCH IV, p94). Leland describes it as much dilapidated. Hanley, he says, '*is an uplandisch Towne. The Castelle standith in a Parke at the Weste Parte of the Towne. Syr John Savage and his Fauther and grauntfather lay much aboute Hanley and Theokysbyri as Keepers of Hanley. The Erles of Gloster were owners of this castel and lay much there. Mr. Cometon clene defacid it yn his tyme beyng keeper of it after Savage.*' Writing a little later Habbington the county historian wrote : “*Hanley Castell...appeareth nowe but a lyttlell rubishe and a seely bare to teache us that the glory of this world vanishethe to nothings*”.' (Amphlett ed., 1895, 271) Much of it became a source of local building material and its last remnants were used by Thomas Hornyold to rebuild the bridge at Upton in the late 18th century (VCH IV).
- 4.1.5 From the Wars of the Roses until the 17th century, Malvern Chase reverted to the crown. Within the chase, landowners could not use their land in any way that was detrimental to hunting, such as clearing it for farming, without first acquiring licence from the crown. Even then, forest law restricted agricultural development by allowing deer free access.
- 4.1.6 Because of the wide availability of good clay in the area and a plentiful supply of trees for charcoal, Hanley developed a flourishing pottery industry, mainly along Roberts End, from the 12th to the early 17th century. An Inquisition post mortem of 1295 refers to 16 potters making clay pots and paying 6s6d. for the right to dig clay (Hurle, 1978, 23).
- 4.1.7 In 1632 Charles I took one-third of the chase (around 2700 acres) in lieu of hunting rights and sold it to raise money. To discourage paupers from putting up hovels, no new cottage was allowed to be built on this land unless it had at least 20 acres attached (Hurle, 1978, 44). Some two dozen farmhouses and cottages in the parish date from this period.
- 4.1.8 The disafforestation of part of the chase in the mid 17th C led to the gradual enclosure of smallholdings. Over the next 100 years, as well as mixed arable and livestock farming, the planting of apple and pear orchards developed at a rapid rate until by the end of the 18th century most properties included an orchard. Near Gilbert's End is Hanley Hall, now a farm-house, but once a manor, the seat of the Hanley family, the chief foresters of the chase. It has a simple timber and plaster front with gables at either end, and is probably of 16th-century date, though parts of the walls may be older (VCH IV, 95).
- 4.1.9 The common lands in this parish were inclosed by Act of Parliament, 1794–5, the award being made in 1797. The Act was amended in 1816–17 and another award was made in 1818. The majority of the land

was apportioned to the two major landowners in the parish: the Lechmeres, who owned most of the land to the east and south, and the Hornyolds, who dominated the north and west. The Lechmere family acquired their original holdings in the parish at the time of the Norman Conquest and subsequently added to it, particularly in the 17th Century. The present site and its neighbours were all until the recent (2010) sale still Lechmere property. Niblets Cottage remains as Lechmere property at present.

- 4.1.10 The enclosures dramatically changed the road pattern in the parish, obliterating one main route from Little Malvern to Rhydd Green and creating the straight roads east-west from Hanley Swan to the Malvern Hills and north-south between Blackmore End and Gilberts End. Although the original settlement of Hanley Castle had grown up around Church End and Quay Lane, little further development was possible along these cul-de-sacs, since the surrounding land largely belonged to the Lechmere estate. Instead the parish grew along Roberts End, and around the crossroads at Hanley Green. By the mid-19th century this had become the most populated part of the parish. When the post office was established at the grocer's shop opposite the pond in the mid-1890s, the area was variously known as Roberts End Street, Swan Green, Hanley Green and Hanley Swan.
- 4.1.11 From a population of around 200 in the early 12th century, the parish grew slowly to accommodate 700 by 1540 and 1000 at the time of the first census in 1801. During the 19th century the increase was more marked, 1653 in 1831 and 1677 in 1841, 1686 in 1851 but rising dramatically to 2167 in 1871, when Littlebury's Directory recorded that there were 444 families living in 417 houses and attributed the increase in numbers to "the healthy situation of this parish". But in 1894 the parish was split in two and half the population found itself in the new parish of Malvern Wells. As a result, Hanley Castle's population dropped to 1100, a figure that remained fairly constant for the next 70 years. From the 1960s onwards the development of small housing schemes began to push the numbers up again. By 1991 there were 1227 people in the parish and in 2001 the total had grown to 1483.

4.2 *Cartographic evidence*

- 4.2.1 The general maps of the county provide only limited evidence about the present site – Issac Taylors map of 1772 shows no individual buildings in the area of Church End excepting the Church. This plot is part of 479 in the 1795 draft Inclosure survey (BA 4959/7 ref b705:587). The plots 478 and 479 were listed as "E Lechmere Esq, not in settlement" – meaning that the lands were not included in the re-apportionment of property at that period. The Lechmere estates were generally excluded from the Inclosure process presumably because they had sufficient influence to resist it. The plots both remained in Lechmere hands until 2010 when 478 and part of 479 were sold.
- 4.2.2 Christopher Greenwood's map of 1822 appears to show the Niblets cottage itself, just north of the lane, and also a further building on the approximate site of the neighbouring house to the east.
- 4.2.3 The 1886-1940s Ordnance Survey mapping shows the cottage and its setting relatively unchanged over the period. Small outbuildings are shown in the area of the recently demolished outbuildings, the earliest elements of which are believed to have been pig sties. The brick rubble remaining at the time of survey suggested that they were of late 19th Century date.

5 **Archaeological background**

- 5.1 Other than a casually recovered prehistoric hand axe (WSM 03979) from the the river running through the parish and some undated but potentially prehistoric cropmark enclosure features there is little evidence of prehistoric activity in the vicinity. Roman pottery has been recovered during fieldwalking in the parish, but none is reported from the immediate area of the site, the nearest being from east of Church End Farm (WSM 05923). The same area has reported Roman and medieval coins (WSM 30520). A watching brief by Rebecca Smith in 1993 recovered Roman and medieval pottery from a pipeline easement near Quay Lane (Smith R, 1993, WSM 39800). There are only a scatter of known medieval features in and around Hanley Castle, the most significant being the castle itself which survives in part as an earthwork and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The church is of 12th Century origins, though the majority of the present building is of 14th C and later dates (WSM 07831) date.. The area was sometimes known as "Potter's Hanley" in the medieval period, and within the wider parish there are a number of recorded pottery production sites (WSM 05771). An evaluation north west of the village has demonstrated the survival of below-ground medieval deposits and there are medieval settlement earthworks to the east. Ridge and furrow (WSM35389, WSM35390) survives in places around the village. Building recording was recently undertaken at White Cottage, Church End, Hanley Castle, Worcestershire, and identified the building as 17th Century (Cook, M, 2010; WSM 42436).

Niblett (WSM42271) the cottage adjacent to the present development is of timber framing and Listed as 17th C, in common with several other Listed village core buildings which are of broadly similar appearance, but none appear to have been accurately dated by detailed analysis or scientific means. The externally similar (and un-Listed) Shaw Lane Cottage just to the north of the village was found to date from 1584 when it was recently surveyed and dendro-dated in advance of planned demolition (Napthan, 2010;WSM 42127).

6 Results

- 6.1 The natural drift deposits on the site comprised of beds of sandy gravel interleaved with fairly thin beds of grey silty clay. These deposits were observed primarily in a pit excavated for a new man-hole as the uppermost gravel horizon was approximately 0.6 to 0.65m below current ground level. As the levels on the site are higher than the adjacent roadway, it would appear likely that gravel might be anticipated at circa 0.2m below road level.
- 6.2 The gravel deposit was sealed by a horizon of light greyish brown sandy subsoil averaging 0.3m deep, which had been widely affected by root action, and in places appeared to be disturbed by cultivation (Figs 2-5). This horizon although disturbed in places appeared to be a naturally formed subsoil. Small sondage pits were dug through the subsoil to confirm its nature and its depth – all encountered underlying gravel between 0.6m and 0.65m. The gravel appeared, however to rise slightly towards the east edge of the stripped area.
- 6.3 The subsoil was locally truncated by a small number of cut features, all of which appeared to be of 20th Century or later date. One linear feature approximately 0.28m wide and filled with mid to light grey slightly clayey sand loam aligned broadly east to west across the whole stripped area proved on investigation to contain a plastic water pipe at a depth of circa 0.4m (Figs 2 and 5) . A ceramic pipe drain was exposed immediately beneath the topsoil and aligned NE to SW in the SE corner of the stripped area. A further recent amorphous feature approximately 3x2m lay close by the drain line. This feature contained recent modern material and was apparently infilling of the root-ball hole of one of the trees recently cleared from the site.
- 6.4 The artefactual assemblage is quantified in Appendix 1. All of the recovered material was unstratified and of post-medieval to modern date.

7 Discussion and conclusions

- 7.1 Whilst in an area of fairly high archaeological potential the present site has proved to be devoid of any archaeologically significant features or deposits. The site lies the eastern edge of the historic village (or more accurately hamlet) of Church End and therefore is outside the zone of likely earlier medieval activity. If as seems probable it has always been part of the curtailage of Niblett Cottage it is likely to have remained as a garden since the later 16th Century, prior to which it may have been part of the area absorbed in the Hanley Castle Park (WSM07272) which expanded to include former edges of the settlement at Church End in the 15th century.
- 6.2 There would appear to have been no significant historic activity on the site prior to the construction of Niblett, and given the size of the former Niblett garden plot it is likely to have been used long term for domestic horticulture, possibly for orchards and for the grazing of domestic stock. The site until recently included brick built former pig stys in its northern corner. Whilst the area excavated had been extensively disturbed by cultivation, the absence of any significant residual finds in the topsoil or subsoil suggest that there have not been any artefactually rich features removed by cultivation. It would appear that Roman activity did not extend into this area.
- 6.4 The present development has had no negative impact on the archaeological resource.

7 Bibliography

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8 Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1: Catalogue of artefacts

(Nb all unstratified/surface cleaning)

5 Sherds "Staffordshire" comb-trailed slipware 65g Fabric 78 (17th-18th C)
 1 Sherd Midlands Redware 35g Fabric 78 (18th-19th C)
 1 Sherd china (green transfer decorated) Fabric 85 (L19th/early 20th C)
 1 Sherd 19th C stoneware 15g

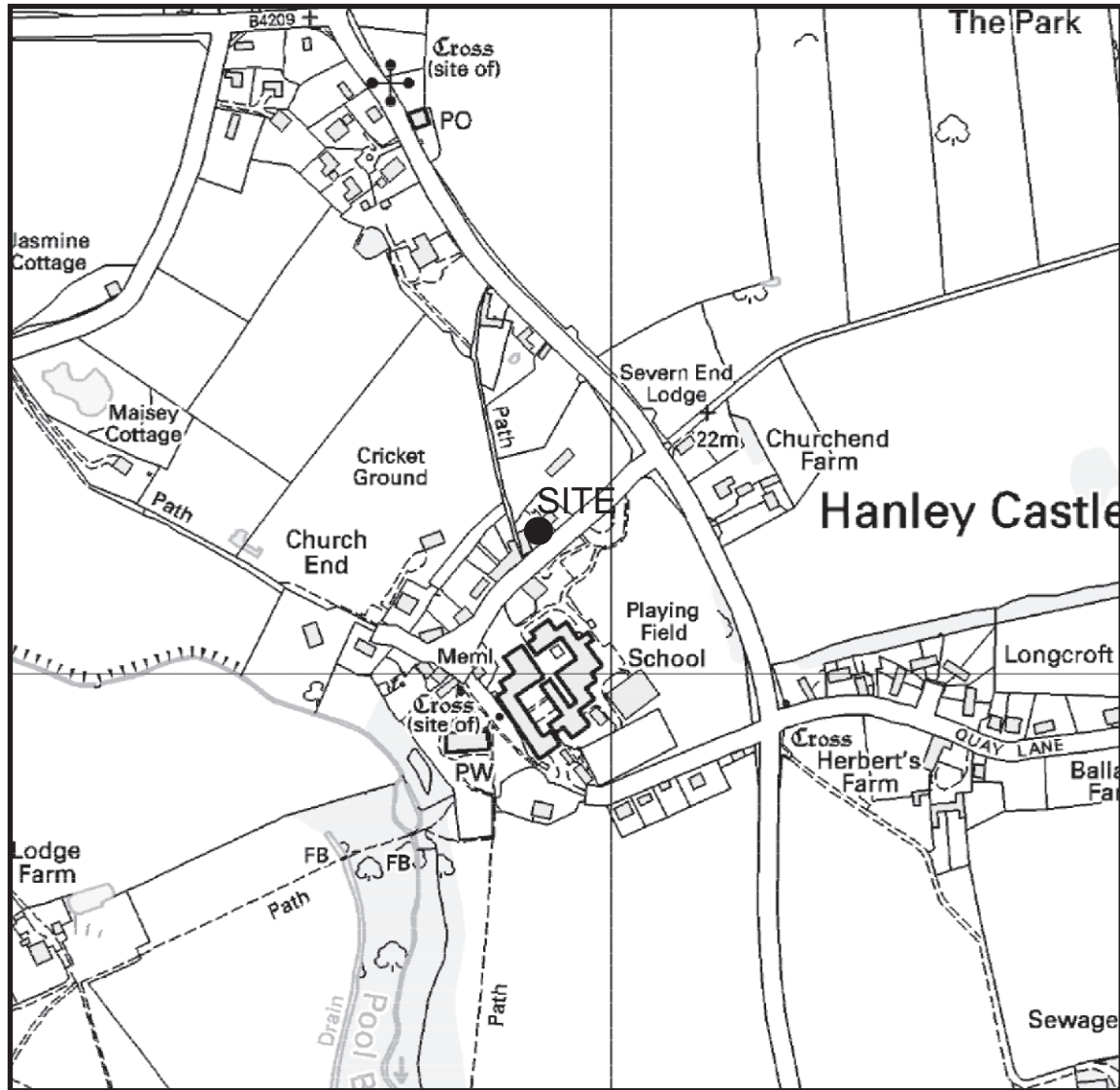


Figure 1: Site Location - adjacent to Niblets, Church End Hanley Castle

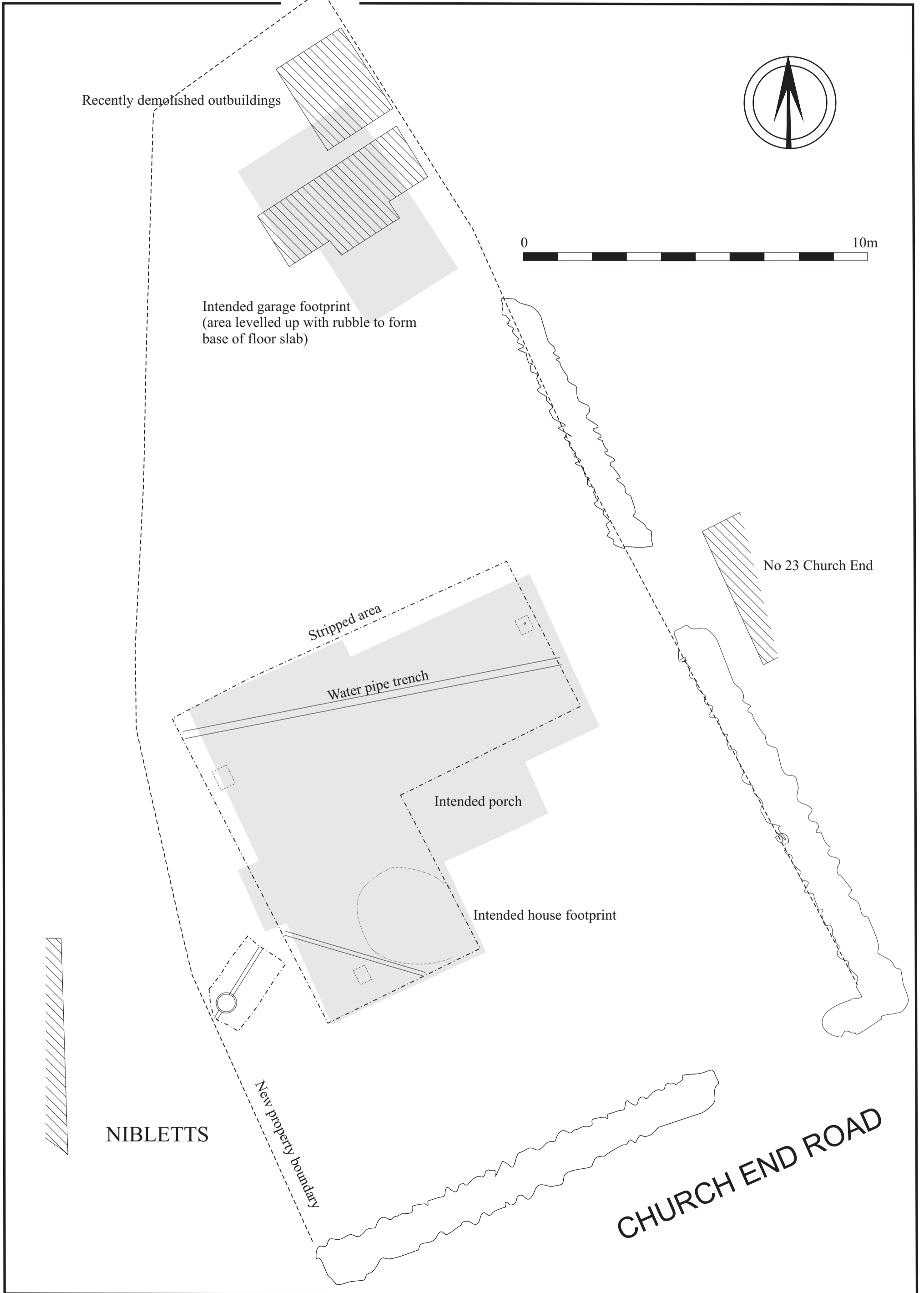


Figure 2: Site Plan



Figure 3: 1795 Inclosure Plan for Hanley Castle (WRO BA 4959/7 ref b705:587) - the present property lies between plots 478 and 479 (in fact in the position occupied by the digits 479)

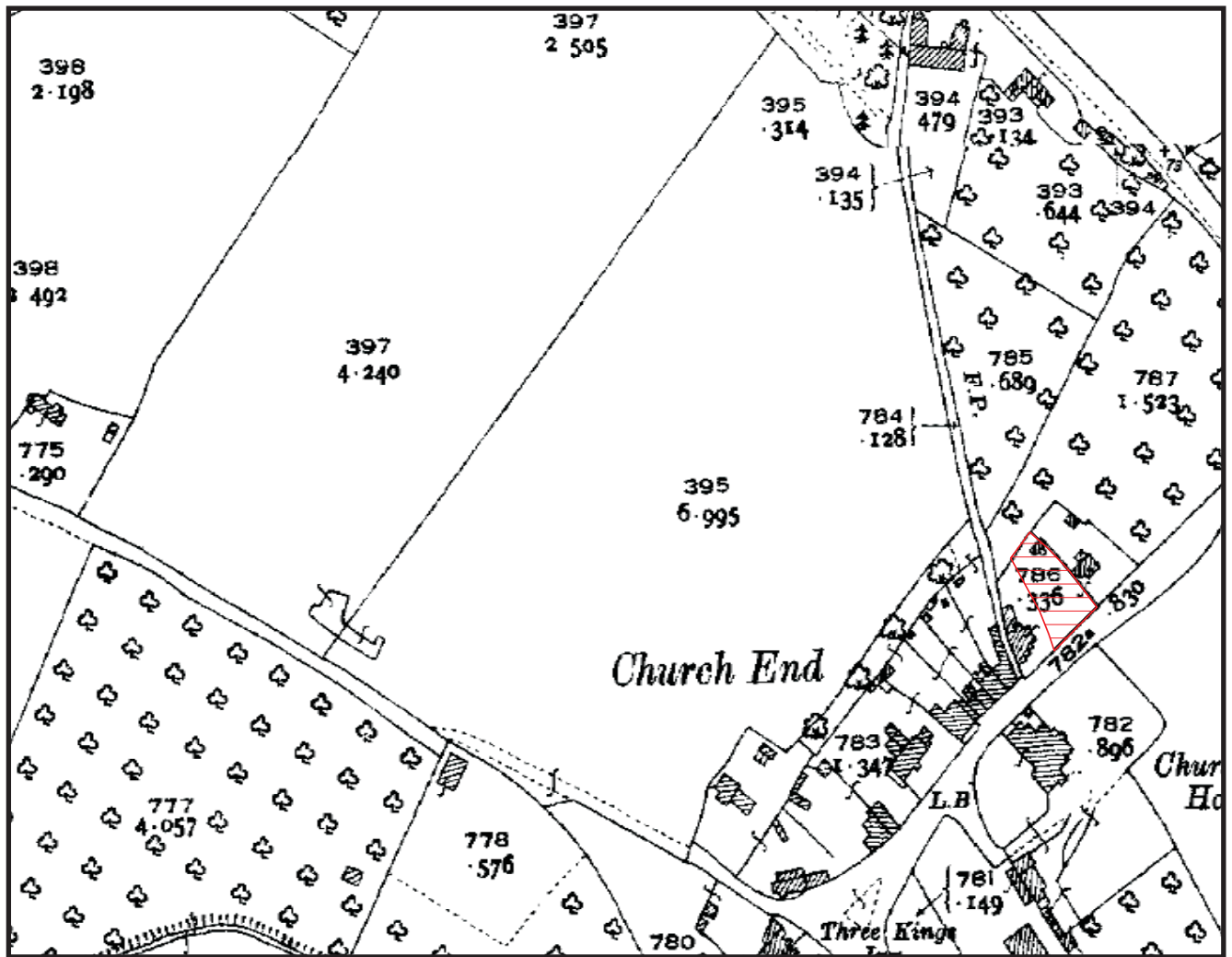


Figure 4: 1920s Ordnance Survey Mapping (the 1880s mapping was very similar with few local changes)



Figure 5: Site photographs