

TNLH12



THE NOOK, ETNAM STREET, LEOMINSTER

Archaeological Watching Brief

for Chalbury Building Company

October 2012

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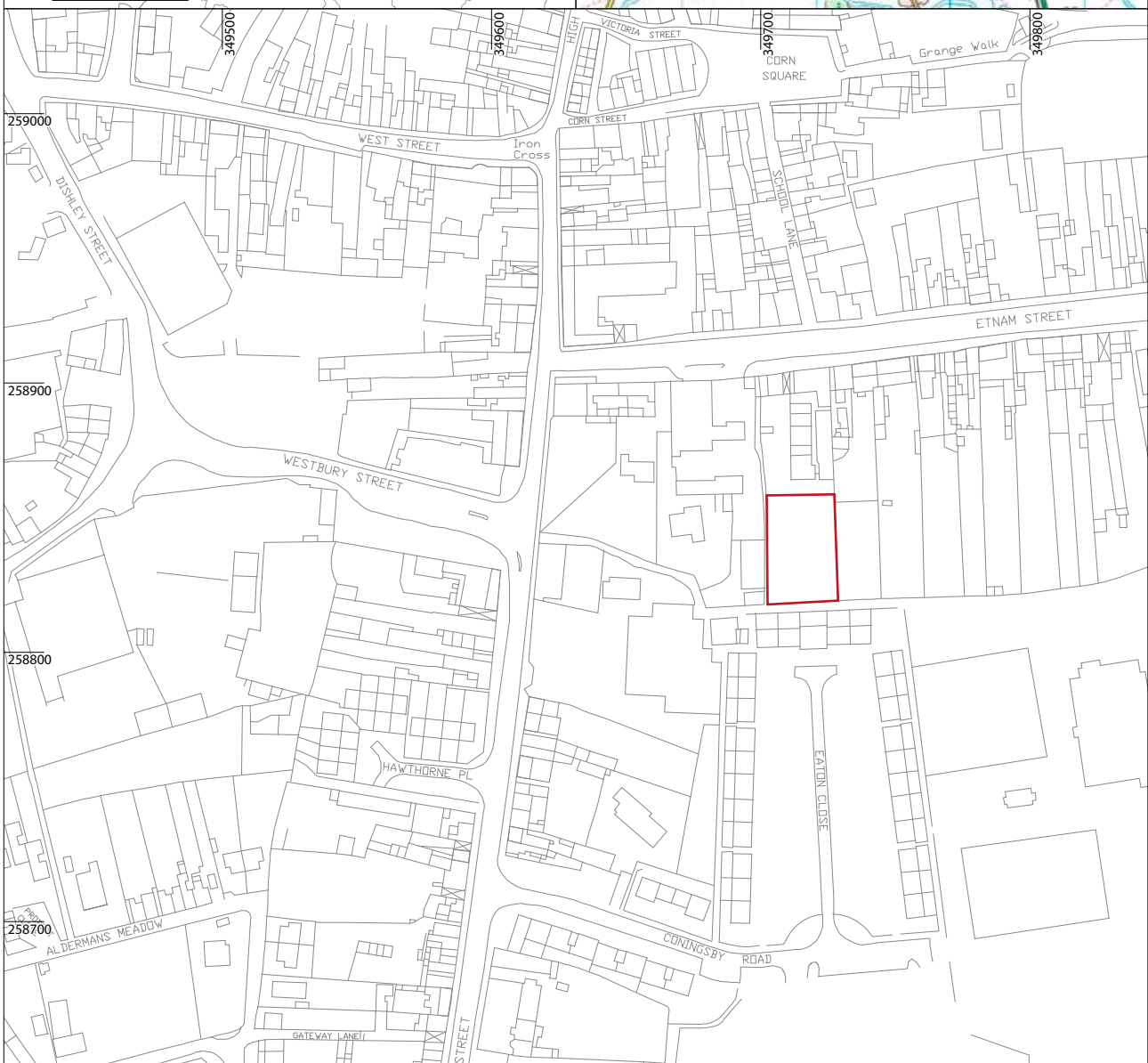
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The Nook
Leominster
Herefordshire

0 100km



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Scale 1:2,500 @ A4



0 125m

Illus 1

Site location

THE NOOK, ETNAM STREET, LEOMINSTER

Archaeological Watching Brief

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd undertook an archaeological watching brief on the site at the rear of The Nook, Etnam Street in Leominster, as part of planning permission for the construction of new dwellings on the site. During ground works two modern rubbish pits were observed. No archaeological finds or features were observed. The location of the site away from the main settlement of Leominster and the presence of modern disturbance may explain the lack of archaeology discovered.

1. INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd was commissioned by Nick la Barre Architects on behalf of the Charlbury Building Company to undertake an archaeological watching brief on the site at the rear of The Nook, Etnam Street in Leominster, as part of planning permission for the construction of new dwellings on the site.

An archaeological condition had been attached to the development stating that *'no development shall take place until the applicants or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the local planning authority. This programme shall be in accordance with a brief prepared by the County Archaeology Service'.*

The site lies south of Etnam Street in an enclosed garden area (NGR SO 49721 58832).

Underlying geology consists of Raglan mudstones of the Lower Old Red Sandstone of the Devonian period. The site is bordered to the west and east by existing property boundaries and to the north by a new boundary fence dividing the site from the existing properties. The southern end of the site adjoins a pathway. The site lies at about 76m OD, and the previous land use was as a garden.

Work began on the 27th June 2012 and involved six site visits in total, all of varying lengths time and ended 9th July 2012.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

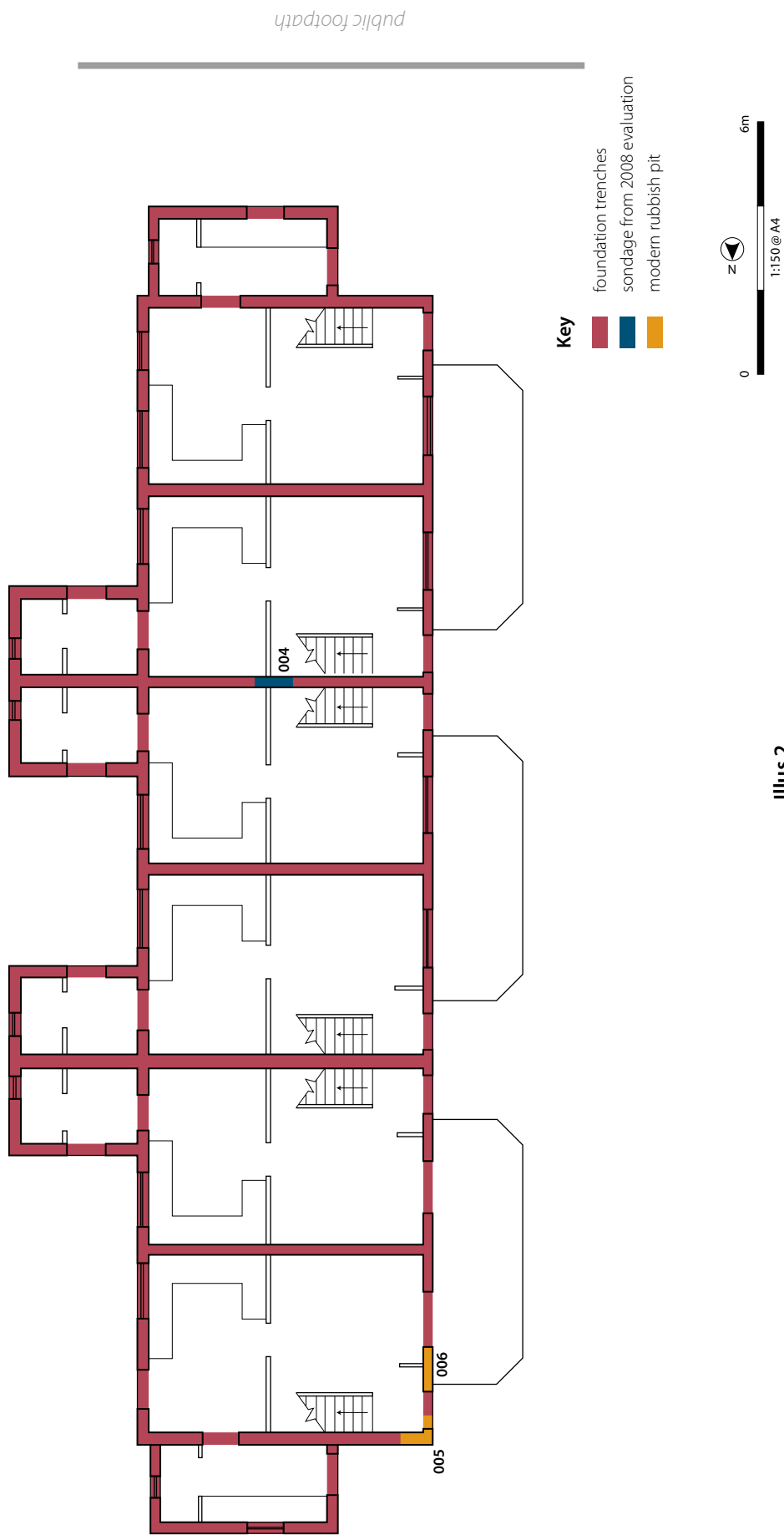
1

The earliest reference for the origin of Leominster is the purported foundation of a religious house there in c. AD 660. Whilst little archaeological evidence has been recovered to support this it seems likely that Leominster was starting to form as a settlement prior to the 11th century. The name Leomynstre was first used in AD 1046 when a nunnery, dissolved by 1066, is known to have existed. The nunnery was later replaced by the Benedictine Priory, which was dissolved in 1539.

By 1221 Leominster had acquired borough status. The town continued to expand, during the 13th century, becoming a major market centre, known for leather, wool and cloth.

The town suffered a decline in the 14th century with the plague and worsening climatic conditions but it flourished again towards the end of the 15th century and was well known by the 18th century for its trade in wool, leather, fine wheat and flax.

Etnam Street follows an east/west alignment close to the historical centre of Leominster, about 200m to the south of the old market square and The Grange. The southern side of the street is fronted by a number of three-storey Georgian houses. The site itself lies at the rear of a plot fronting onto the western end of Etnam Street. Etnam Street lies close to the historic centre of Leominster. An evaluation at 43 Etnam Street revealed features, mainly pits, of medieval date. Finds included pottery and animal bone, suggesting that occupation was under way by the 13th century.



Illus 2
Site plan with location of modern pit features

Illus 3 ►

N facing section of northern foundation footings

An archaeological evaluation undertaken on the site in 2008 did not reveal any archaeologically significant deposits or features.

3. METHOD

The watching brief was undertaken during several site visits in order to monitor ground works associated with the construction of six, two-storey cottages on land which had been formerly used as a garden. The proposals required the excavation of foundation footings comprising an area of 300m². Foundation footings varied in length from 27m to 2.5m, and up to 1m in depth.

Excavations were undertaken by the main contractor using a mechanical excavator with the use of a toothless bucket.

All recording followed standard archaeological guidelines as set out by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA). All contexts were given unique numbers. All recording was undertaken on *pro forma* record cards that conform to accepted archaeological norms. Photographs of the excavations were taken using a 7.2mp digital camera for illustrative purposes only.

Site plans were provided, to the scale of 1:100, by the on site building contractors and were annotated accordingly.

4. RESULTS

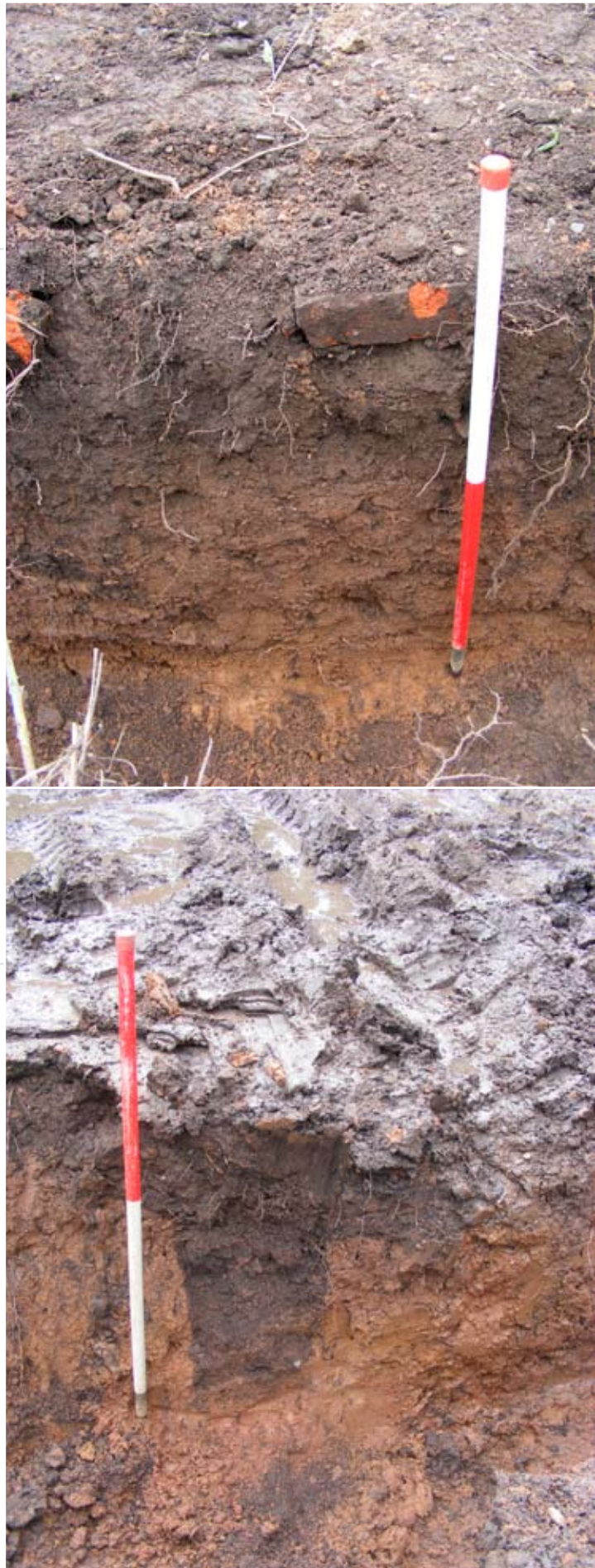
Topsoil [001] within the area was dark brownish grey silty clay. The deposit was rich in organic components and clearly indicated that the area was disturbed and in use as a garden for a number of years. This deposit was 0.4m in thickness and contained modern rubbish such as red brick and pottery.

Below this was a light greyish brown clay loam [002], c. 0.5m in thickness, and was present across the entire site. At the centre of the site a feature [004] was observed in the section of an E-W aligned footing. This feature had nearly vertical sides, was filled with a similar deposit as [002], and contained a sherd of modern pottery, indicating a modern origin for the feature (see *Illus 4*).

The earliest deposit [003], cut into by [004], was a light yellowish brown silty clay alluvial deposit.

Illus 4 ►

N facing section; evidence for sondage [004] from previous archaeological evaluation





◀ **Illus 5**

Modern rubbish pit [005] visible in section

Two modern rubbish pits ([005] and [006]) were discovered during excavations at the north and east of the site. These pits were filled with modern red brick rubble and pottery and were of no archaeological significance (see *Illus 5*).

No archaeological features or material was recovered within any of the foundation footing trenches.

The presence of modern rubbish pits ([005], [006]) indicates the extent of modern disturbance present on the site which would have a negative impact on any archaeology should it survive.

However, the real lack of archaeological evidence on the site is most probably explained by the fact that the site lies some distance from the street frontage where medieval occupation occurred and also that the site may have been located outside the main settlement of Leominster at the time.

4 **5. DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION**

No archaeological features or finds were uncovered within any of the footing trenches excavated during the watching brief at The Nook, Etnam Street. The earliest deposit uncovered [003] seems to indicate the boundary between material imported by man and natural sediments. The presence of the modern pottery sherd within [004] indicating a more recent origin for the disturbance. [004] may have been caused by a square sondage which was dug during an archaeological evaluation (Crooks 2008) in order to view the depths of geological deposits.

It would therefore appear that [001] is rich organic topsoil which was brought onto the site from another source for use within the garden.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Crooks, K 2008 *The Nook, Etnam Street, Leominster; Archaeological Evaluation* (HAS787), unpublished client report.
- Watkinson, D & Neal, V 1998 *First Aid for Finds* (3rd edn, London, 1972).

7. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Site registers

Appendix 1.1 Context register

Context	Description	Depth (below surface m)
001	Dark brownish grey silty clay garden topsoil with modern brick and pottery.	0–0.4
002	Light greyish brown clay loam subsoil	0.4–0.9
003	Light brownish yellow silty clay natural deposit	0.9–
004	Feature filled by [002]	–
005	Modern rubbish pit	0–0.78
006	Modern rubbish pit	0–0.29

Appendix 1.2 Photographic register

Photo	C/S	B/W	Digital	Direction	Description
1	–	–	01	S	General site shot
2	–	–	02	N	General site shot
3	–	–	03	S	North facing section
4	–	–	04	W	Modern rubbish pit with brick and pottery
5	–	–	05	E	Shot of trench at N of site
6	–	–	06	N	Foundation trench N-S at E edge of site
7	–	–	07	E	Shot of utility structure foundation trenches to E
8	–	–	08	N	General site shot
9	–	–	09	E	Shot of trench between kitchen and sitting room areas
10	–	–	10	W	Modern pit at NW corner of foundations. [005]
11	–	–	11	W	Modern pit at NW corner of foundations [005]
12	–	–	12	W	General shot of south utility trenches for house
13	–	–	13	W	General shot of south utility trenches for house
14	–	–	14	W	Shot of trench between houses 5 and 6
15	–	–	15	N	Shot of trench between houses 5 and 6
16	–	–	16	N	Shot of trench west of houses 5 and 6

Photo	C/S	B/W	Digital	Direction	Description
17	–	–	17	S	Shot of cut into natural-modern pot sherd found within/ N facing section.
18	–	–	18	S	Shot of cut into natural-modern pot sherd found within
19	–	–	19	NW	General working shot – west rench
20	–	–	20	N	General working shot – west rench



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