

**FORMER WELLS CADET CENTRE,
OFF WEBBS CLOSE
WELLS,
SOMERSET.**

NGR: ST 5454 4536

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

November 2011

Report No. 765

Quality Assurance

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SUMMARY

Foundations Archaeology undertook two phases of archaeological monitoring during groundworks (Planning Reference: Mendip District Council 2010/2286) associated with the construction of a mixed use development at the former Wells Cadet Centre, off Webbs Close, Wells (NGR: ST 5454 4536). The work was commissioned by Brookvale Homes.

The results of the watching brief demonstrated a very uniform stratigraphy was present across the site, comprising alluvial silt clay layers over gravels and clayey gravels. The silt clay layers became deeper towards the western side of the site, where the deposits were closer to the watercourse.

A total of five possible features were identified during the course of the watching brief, of which four are likely to have been root boles associated with the former orchard. Red glazed earthenwares of the 17th-19th century were associated with all of the features and may indicate that the trees were removed during this period. The fifth feature, a possible surface was also of similar date. No similar features were identified during the second phase of monitoring, which may suggest that the orchard was restricted to the northeastern part of the site.

No other archaeological significant features, deposits or artefacts were present within the monitored groundworks.

GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Archaeology

For the purpose of this project archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains from prehistoric times to the modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set, but AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

CBM

Ceramic Building Material.

Medieval

The period between the Norman Conquest (AD 1066) and *c.* AD 1500.

Natural

In archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site, in this case *Upper Corallian Limestone (Coral Rag)*.

NGR

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

OD

Ordnance datum; used to express a given height above sea-level.

OS

Ordnance Survey.

Saxon

The period between AD 410 and AD 1066.

Medieval

The period between the Norman Conquest (AD 1066) and *circa* AD 1500.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological monitoring during groundworks (Planning Reference: Mendip District Council 2010/2286) associated with the construction of a mixed use development at the former Wells Cadet Centre, off Webbs Close, Wells (NGR: ST 5454 4536). The work was commissioned by Brookvale Homes.
- 1.2 The project was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Tweedie Evans Consulting Ltd (2011). The WSI conformed to the general principles of PPS5 (*Planning Policy Statement 5*) and the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* issued by the Institute for Archaeologists (rev. 2008).
- 1.3 This document presents the findings of the archaeological monitoring.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site has an area of approximately 0.20ha and was predominantly laid to hardstanding with a number of temporary structures, formerly used as an army cadet centre. The proposed development involved the demolition of the existing site buildings and the construction of two, two to three storey structures, one for residential units and a second as a new cadet centre. The proposals also included landscaping, as well as new hardstanding, parking and an access road.
- 2.2 The archaeological background to the site had been previously assessed in *Wells Cadet Centre, Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment* (TEC 2010). This document noted that ‘the City of Wells is designated as an area of high archaeological potential and an outstanding heritage settlement under local and regional policy (Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review, 1991 – 2011, Mendip Local Plan)’. However, it reported that the site previously lay within the orchard/paddock land of the Priory precinct and that subsequent landuse was as a cricket field with a pavilion. Taking into account that previous archaeological evaluations in areas in close proximity to the site largely reported no significant archaeological finds or deposits, the TEC assessment concluded that the site was of low archaeological potential.

3 AIMS

- 3.1 The aims of the archaeological monitoring were to gather high quality data from the direct observation of archaeological deposits in order to provide sufficient information to establish the nature, extent, preservation and potential of any surviving archaeological remains; as well as to make recommendations for management of the resource, including further archaeological works if necessary.

3.2 These aims were to be achieved by the pursuit of the following specific objectives:

i) to identify, define and record any archaeological deposits, and date these where possible;

ii) to attempt to characterise the nature of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning of features present on the site;

iii) where possible to recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence and recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples.

iv) to determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence and the forms in which such evidence may be present.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 All appropriate groundworks were monitored by a suitably experienced archaeologist.

4.2 All mechanical excavation was undertaken by use of a 360° tracked machine, equipped with a toothless bucket, working under constant archaeological observation.

4.3 Potential archaeological deposits were investigated manually, where appropriate were hand excavated and recorded.

4.4 All trench sections produced by machine trenching were cleaned and visually investigated for potential features.

4.5 Spoil heaps were visually scanned for finds.

5 RESULTS

5.1 The excavation of strip foundation trenches for the proposed cadet centre was archaeologically monitored between 7th June and 15th September 2011.

5.2 The monitoring works revealed natural riverine gravel deposits across the site at a depth of 0.7m to 0.9m below the existing ground level (approximately 34.15m AOD). The natural deposits were overlain by alluvial deposits (1005) and a buried topsoil/cultivation layer (1004) up to 0.3m-0.45m thick at the east of the site becoming thicker, up to 0.7m, towards the watercourse at the west side of the site.

The buried soil layer (1004) was sealed by modern make-up layers (1002-1003) which were in turn overlain by Tarmac or modern topsoil (1001). The modern layers were 0.5m on average in depth.

- 5.3 A total of five possible features were present on the east side of the site. Feature [1010] (Fig 2; 1) comprised the possible remains of a fragmentary chalk rubble surface at 0.5m below the modern ground surface and sealed beneath layer (1004). The potential surface was revealed only in section, measured no more than 0.10m thick and was present for a length of no more than 1.5m. A sherd of undiagnostic red glazed earthenware was associated with [1010] and suggests a date range between the 17th-19th centuries.
- 5.4 Features [1012], [1014], [1016] and [1018] comprised poorly-defined possible pits, but in all likelihood represent root boles from the former orchard. Features [1012] and [1014] were located in two foundation trenches (Fig 2: 2, 3) and both comprised a deeper layer of material identical in composition to layer (1004) measuring 1.3m and 1.45m across respectively with amorphous edges. It is possible, but unlikely, that these represented parts of a single feature. A sherd of undiagnostic red glazed earthenwares was recovered from each feature and suggests a date range between the 17th-19th centuries.
- 5.5 Feature [1016] (Fig 2; 4) comprised a layer of material identical to layer (1004) with no clear edges and measured 0.95m across. A sherd of undiagnostic red glazed earthenware was recovered from this feature. Feature [1018] (Fig 2; 5) also comprised a deeper layer of material identical to layer (1004) with no clear edges and measured 1.25m across. Late post-medieval tile fragments and a sherd of undiagnostic red glazed earthenware were recovered from this feature.
- 5.6 The second phase of groundworks for the residential flats was undertaken between the 9th and 15th September 2011 and were archaeologically monitored throughout.
- 5.7 The monitoring works revealed an orange brown clay with abundant gravel inclusions at a depth of 1m-1.05m below the modern ground surface (approximately 33.60m AOD). The natural deposits were overlain by a mid red-brown alluvial silt clay (203) up to 0.5m thick, itself beneath a dark black-brown silt (202). Layer (202) was sealed beneath a modern hardcore layer (201), up to 0.35m thick.
- 5.8 No archaeological finds or features were identified during the second phase of works.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The TEC desk-based assessment highlighted the fact that previous evaluations in the immediate vicinity had suggested this was not an area given over to settlement activity during any historic period, and that the archaeological potential for the site was very low, although the site is included in a locally designated area of archaeological interest.
- 6.2 The results of the watching brief demonstrated a very uniform stratigraphy was present across the site, comprising modern deposits over a buried topsoil which in turn sealed alluvial silt clay layers over gravels and clayey gravels. The silt clay layers became deeper towards the western side of the site, where the deposits were closer to the watercourse.
- 6.3 A total of five possible features were identified during the course of the watching brief, of which four are likely to have been root boles associated with the former orchard. Red glazed earthenwares of the 17th-19th century were associated with all of the features and may indicate that the trees were removed during this period. The fifth feature, a possible surface was also of similar date. No similar features were identified during the second phase of monitoring, which may suggest that the orchard was restricted to the northeastern part of the site.
- 6.4 No other archaeological significant features, deposits or artefacts were present within the monitored groundworks.
- 6.5 No suitable contexts were identified for palaeoenvironmental sampling.

7 ARCHIVE

- 7.1 The archive is currently held at the offices of Foundations Archaeology. It comprises:
- Digital photographs
 - Colour and B&W photographs
 - Record sheets
 - Correspondence
 - Written Scheme of Investigation
 - Risk Assessment and Health and Safety Method statement
- 7.2 The archive has been prepared in accordance with *MoRPHE* (English Heritage 2006) and *Guidelines for the preparation of archaeological archives for long-term storage* (UKIC 1990). It will be deposited with Wells Museum using their specific deposition policies within 12 months under an accession code, which will be provided on deposition.

- 7.3 A note on the results of the watching brief will be provided to the local academic journal and an OASIS form will be completed and submitted to ADS.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

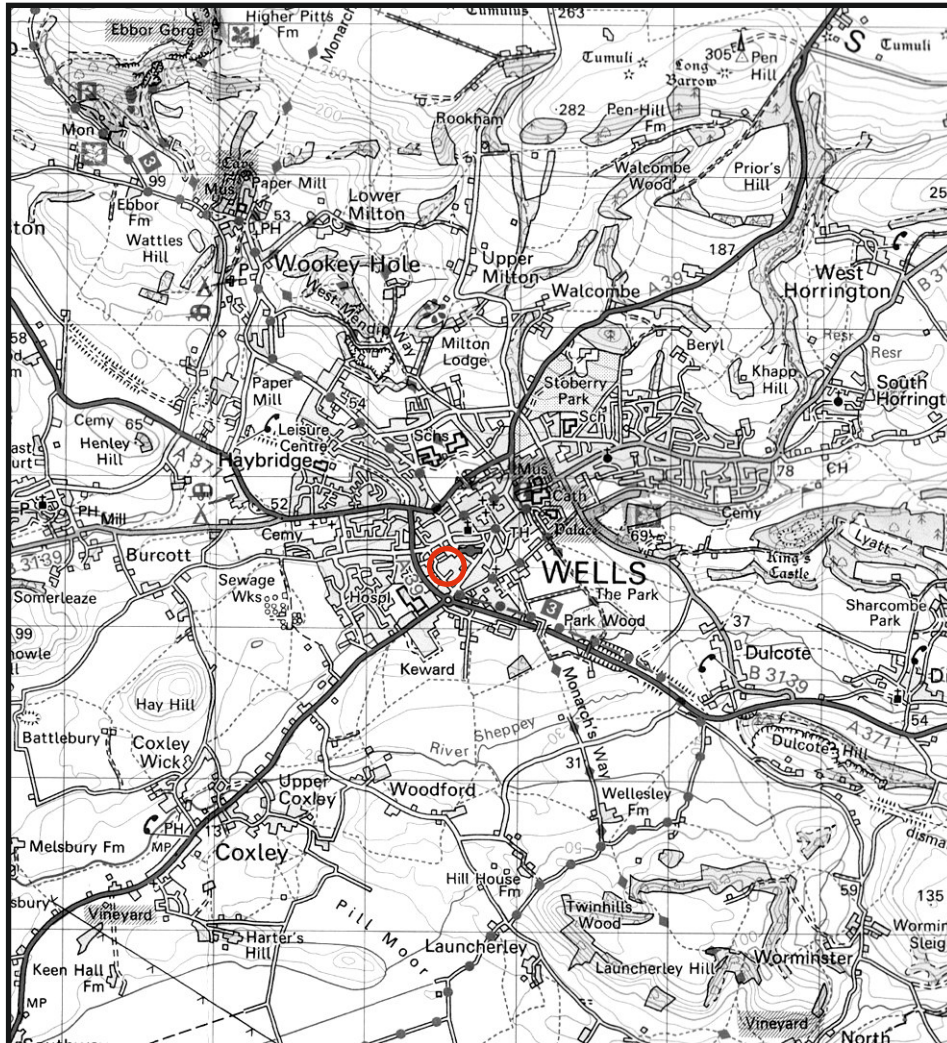
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9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Site Code: WCC11
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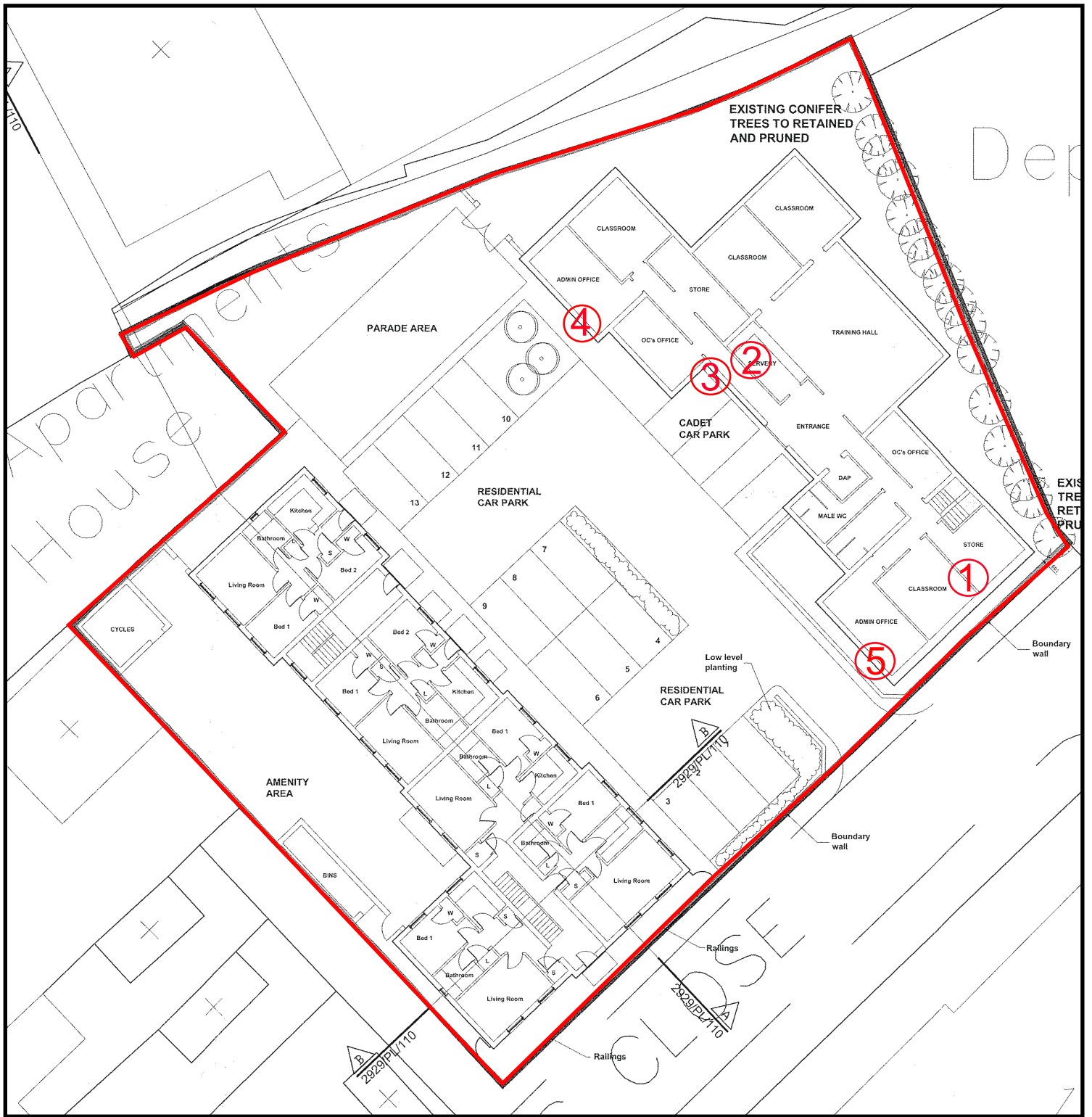




 0km 2km


FIGURE 1: Site Location



Site Code: WCC11
Accession Code:

 Site Area
 Observed Features

 N


 0m 15m

FIGURE 2: Monitored Areas and Features