

The Barn, East Street, Pembridge Herefordshire



Archaeological watching brief
December 2008



ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS LTD

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The Barn, Pembridge, Herefordshire:

An archaeological watching brief, 2008

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Cover picture: Cottages fronting East Street, Pembridge

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1 Summary

Project name: The Barn

Location: East Street, Pembridge, Herefordshire

Grid reference: NGR SO 3918 5824

Type: Watching brief

Date: December 2008

Client: Border Oak Design and Construction Ltd

Planning application No: DCNW2003/2267/F

Pembridge lies in the north-west corner of Herefordshire and is dominated by 'black and white' timber-framed buildings. The settlement is predominantly linear running east and west from the focus of the village; the church and a former building surrounded by a moat. The main road running through the village is made up of East Street and the West Street, now part of the A44 that runs from Leominster to Kington.

The Barn was a former farm building to the rear of 17th century timber-framed tenements that front East Street. The building had recently been demolished and an archaeological watching brief was required during the excavation of foundation trenches for a new build. The only archaeological features recorded during the course of the work were the floor and wall foundations of the Barn, which were exposed during the initial site clearance. Within the foundation trenches themselves, no archaeological deposits were encountered.

Although the site lies within possible remnants of medieval burgrave plots there was no evidence of medieval occupation. If any medieval archaeology survives at the site it is likely to be closer to the street frontage.

2 Introduction

In December, 2008, Archaeological Investigations Ltd (AIL) was commissioned by the client to carry out an archaeological watching brief. The watching brief was carried out in consultation with Julian Cotton, the Archaeological Advisor to Hereford City Council. It followed a Written Scheme of Investigation produced by AIL and approved by Julian Cotton. The fieldwork adhered to the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IFA, 2008) and the Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE, 2007).

3 Geology and topography

Pembridge lies at a height of between 100 – 115m OD. It is a linear settlement which runs parallel to the River Arrow to the south. The soils are of the Rowton association; typically argillic brown earths overlying glacial fluvial or river terrace gravel and till.¹

The site is a small parcel of land to the rear of timber-framed tenements that front East Street.

At the time of the fieldwork the site was overgrown scrub. This was cleared prior to the excavation of the foundations.

¹ Soil survey of England and Wales, Ragg *et al* 1984

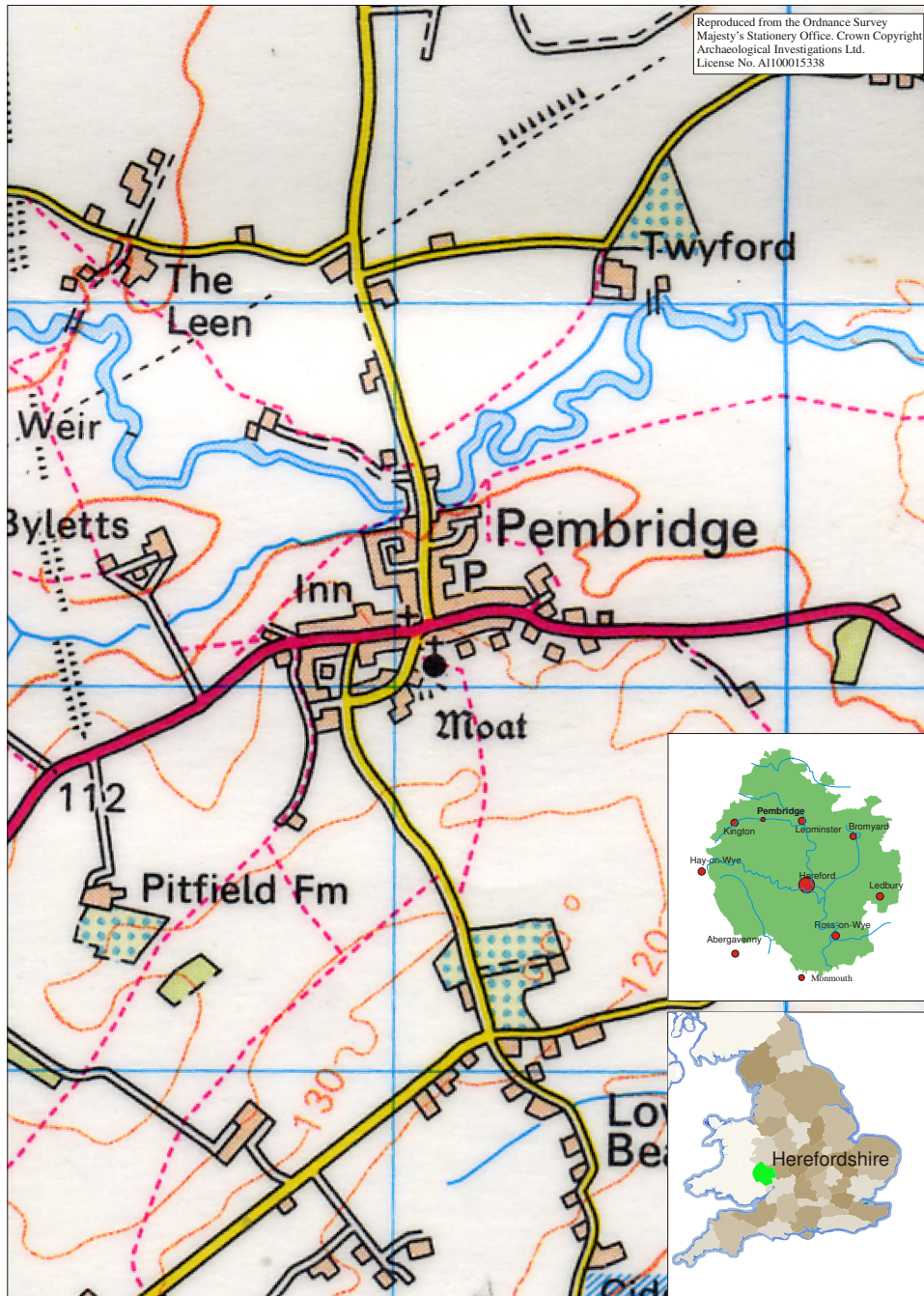


Figure 1: Pembridge in north-west Herefordshire



Figure 2: the site behind East Street, Pembridge

4 Historical and archaeological background

While there was a settlement at Pembridge in the pre-Conquest period, the first known written mention occurs in the Domesday Book as *Penebrug(g)e*, probably 'Pen's Bridge'. At that time the manor was part of the holding of Alfred of Marlborough, although the entry shows that before the Conquest it had belonged to the Canons of St. Guthlac's in Hereford. Harold Godwinson was Earl of Hereford, and alienated land from the Church of Hereford in eight manors, which was later restored by King William I. However, Pembridge was still lost to St. Guthlac's. It had clearly suffered, having been laid waste, and in 1086 was worth less than it had been before the Conquest.

One of the earliest features within the village is the moat at Court Farm.² The moat is to the east of Bearwood and Suckley Lanes, which are probably part of the 11th and 12th century village. The moat is large and oval shaped and in 2004, was investigated by the Pembridge Amenity Trust and Border Archaeology. Two trenches were excavated on the mound and one trench through the ditch. The trench within the moat revealed the original cut of the moat, and 2 subsequent re-cuts as well as rubble deposits. Those on the summit revealed walls dating from the late 11th century, and evidence of destruction and rebuilding. Occupation of the site had probably ceased by the early 17th century. Any surviving structural remains appear to have been completely removed by the 1840s.

The site at Court Farm was possibly the main residence of the Pembridge family, who held the manor between c1100 and 1265. The first mention of burgesses at Pembridge was in 1240 when Henry (de Pembridge) obtained a charter for a market and fair, soon after it became a free borough. It was probably at this time that the burgage plots fronting East Street and West Street were laid out. By the 13th century Pembridge had passed to Roger Mortimer and was one of the most westerly points into which English merchants and traders were protected by the laws of England. It was fairly prosperous and the survival of many 14th century timber-framed buildings suggests that it escaped the worst ravages of Glyndwr's early 15th century rebellion.³ Most of the houses in the area of the site date from the 15th century (see Figure 3).

By the early post-medieval period Pembridge was in decline and the by 1675 the market, which was on a Monday, is described as very small and inconsiderable. Although the economy of the town was shrinking new buildings were still being constructed, including Trafford's Almshouses at the east end of the town.

Pembridge was surveyed as part of the Central Marches Historic town Survey, who concluded that within the historic core of the town are buried archaeological deposits likely to be of high potential for recovery of artefact and ecofact assemblages (Buteux, 1996). Limited archaeological work has been carried out in the immediate area of the site. A watching brief⁴ at Fig Tree House⁵, which contains the remains of a cruck-framed open hall with timbers dated to the winter of 1424 (James, 2003) found no archaeological features but recorded post-medieval garden features (Wichbold 1997). Further Salvage recording along East Street was carried out by Marches Archaeology, where a medieval and post-medieval backland cultivation layer was recorded (Williams and Stone, 2001).

² Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record No 358

³ Noble, 1964, 68

⁴ Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record No 24590

⁵ Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record No 16369

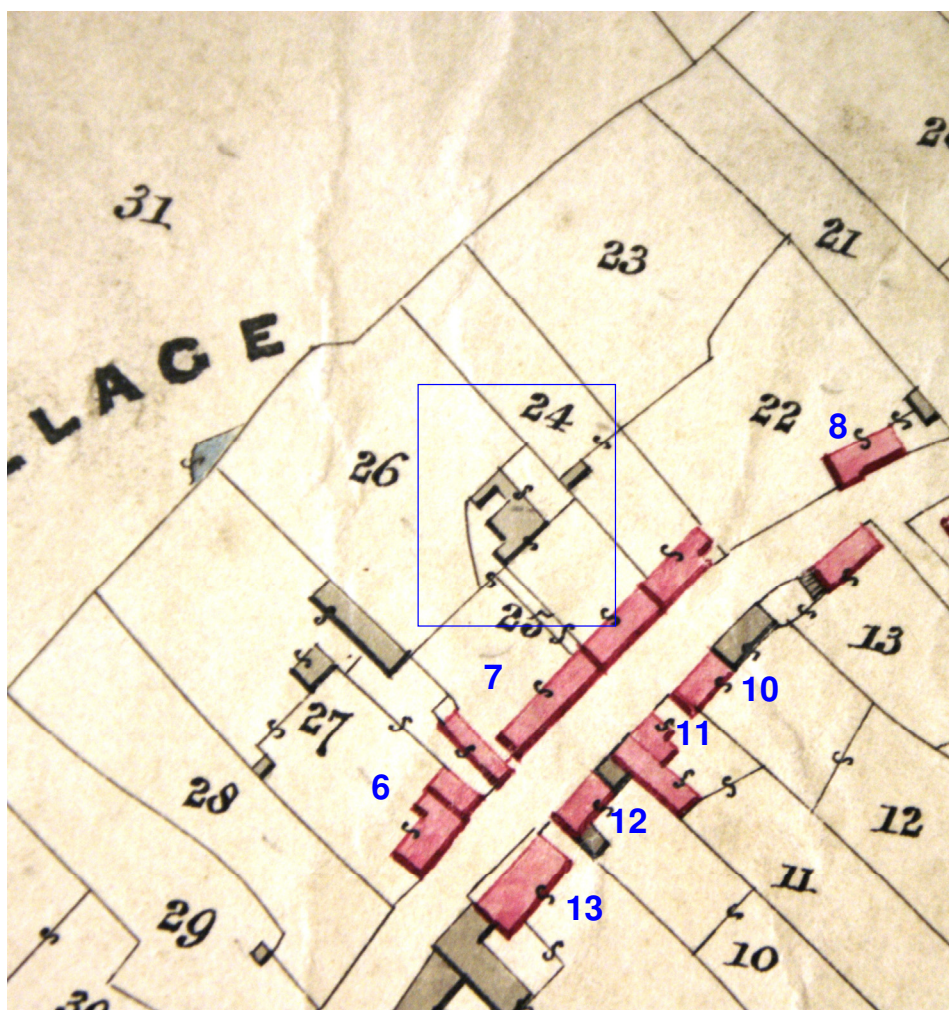


Figure 3: the site on the 1842 Tithe map. On the 1840 appointment numbers 25 and 26 are cottages and gardens/orchard. Both were owned by a Richard Griffiths. The buildings around the site (6 – 19) have been dated as follows;

- 6) Greyhound (SMR 16385) dated 1460/83
- 7) Old Post Office (SMR 16363) dated 1538
- 8) Fig Tree House (SMR16366) dated 1424
- 10) The Old Wheel Wrights (SMR 34286) dated 1445/81
- 11) The Old Forge (SMR 16371) 15th century
- 12) Star Cottage (SMR 16370) c1500
- 13) Victoria Place (SMR 16369) dated 1450 - 1500

5 Aims and objectives

The aim of the watching brief was to observe all groundwork undertaken on the site. The objective was to establish and make available the information gained about the archaeological resource existing at the site.

6 Method

An archaeologist was present during all intrusive groundwork associated with foundation trenches. Where archaeological deposits were encountered they were recorded in accordance with the AIL *Field Recording Manual* (2005).

7 Results

The only archaeological remains encountered during the fieldwork were the foundations and floor surfaces of the 'the Barn'. The east north to south stone rubble wall of the barn and a well laid cobbled surface survived below a layer of manure. As part of the ground preparation for the excavation of the foundation trenches, much of the cobbles were removed. They were laid on a clay deposit from which a single fragment of pottery was recovered. The pottery sherd was Staffordshire ware that probably dates from the late 18th century.

In the foundation trenches themselves, no archaeological features were present. The trenches cut through a well formed topsoil and clay subsoil. The natural deposit below was stiff clay that contained angular sandstone blocks of various sizes. The natural deposit was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.8m below the ground surface (106.511m OD).



Figure 4: the remains of the farm building and excavated foundation trenches. The floor and walls of the farm building were uncovered while clearing vegetation from the site.



Plate 1: the east wall and cobbled floor of the demolished farm building

8 Discussion

Although the site lies within a possible medieval burgage plot off East Street, there was no evidence of any medieval activity at the site. If the area was laid out as burgage plots within the medieval period you would expect to find features such as waste disposal pits, cess pits and boundary ditches. It is possible that such features lie closer the street frontage.

However it is also possible that this plot was not occupied until the post-medieval period. The extension to the east of the Old Post Office dates to the 17th century and the tenements in front of the site are possibly of the same period.

9 Conclusion

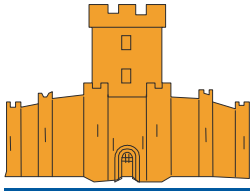
No significant archaeological deposits were encountered during the excavation of the foundation trenches.

10 Site archive

The site records and finds are currently held by AIL at their offices in Hereford. Following the completion of all work on the project and subject to agreement of the client the archive (including all artefacts) will be deposited with Hereford City Museum under Accession number HFD MG 2008-361.

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