



# Swan Cottage Much Marcle HERFORDSHIRE

*Archaeological Watching Brief*



Hereford Archaeology Series 658

EXCAVATION•RESEARCH•GEOFYSICS•ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY

**This report is produced by**

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**Cover picture** *The line of the water main facing north towards Swan Cottage*

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# Swan Cottage, Much Marcle, Herefordshire

## Archaeological Watching Brief

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# Swan Cottage, Much Marcle, HEREFORDSHIRE

## *Archaeological Watching Brief*

NGR SO 650320

SMR 39332

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### **1. Summary**

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*Archaeological Investigations Ltd was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Johnson of Swan Cottage in Much Marcle to undertake archaeological monitoring during the insertion of a mains water supply to the premises.*

*The cottage lies in the inner bailey of Mortimer's Castle, a Scheduled Ancient Monument and Scheduled Monument Consent was conditional upon provision for the attendance of an archaeologist during ground works.*

*No finds or features of archaeological significance were present on the site. The water main followed the line of the drive, which appeared to have been built up from the surrounding land using a mixture of redeposited natural clay marl and, to the south, building debris. The only dating evidence was a small fragment of pantile recovered from this deposit.*

*Archaeological Investigations would like to thank Mr and Mrs Johnson for their hospitality during the work.*

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## **2. Introduction**

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Archaeological Investigations Ltd was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Johnson of Swan Cottage, Much Marcle, Herefordshire, to undertake archaeological monitoring during the insertion of a mains water supply to the property.

The site (Fig. 1) lies within the bailey of Mortimer's Castle, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Hereford and Worcester 65) and Scheduled Monument Consent was conditional upon the attendance of an archaeologist on the site during the period of the ground works. The site is at present a garden, with the route of the water supply following the line of the driveway to the cottage.

A benchmark on the church, about 100m from the cottage gives a height of 68.4mOD.

The site work took place on 3 December 2004.

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## **3. Historical and Archaeological Background**

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The name Mortimer's Castle relates to Edmund Mortimer, to whom part of Much Marcle was granted by Edward 1. The castle was a stone shell keep, apparently of some strength, and the earliest surviving mention of it dates to 1153. No stones are now visible above the ground although the motte survives to a height of about 6.5m. It has a diameter of about 46m and is at present overgrown with trees.

The present church of St Bartholomew largely dates to the thirteenth century with the arcades dating from c.1230-40 though the majority of the building apparently dates to the later thirteenth century. The central tower, however, is clearly Perpendicular (Pevsner 1963 p260) and was traditionally built with stones taken from the castle. The church contains notable funerary monuments, including the tomb of Blanche Mortimer, Lady Grandison, who died in 1347.

Traces remain of a deserted medieval village in the field to the north of the castle. The boundaries were clearly marked and a sunken way and earthworks to the east of the outer bailey may have indicated the former extent of the village. The village was mentioned in the Domesday Survey. At the time of the Poll Tax in 1377 there were 206 people paying tax and at the time of the hearth tax in 1665 there were 31 dwellings (Hickling 1970). This could suggest that the population had declined, possibly as a result of the Black Death, though by the seventeenth century population in many areas was recovering. The 1801 census gives 113 inhabited buildings for the parish.

The 1931 OS map (Fig. 3) shows that the cottage and the barn are essentially unchanged. An outbuilding to the north of the cottage added since the 1931 map was produced did not affect the site.

No previous archaeological work has been carried out on the site.

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#### **4. Aims and objectives**

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The aim of the project was to enable archaeological features to be adequately recorded in the areas affected by the proposal.

The objectives were to identify the date and nature of any features being investigated, to assess their survival, quality, condition and relative significance. A further objective, in the event that the route of the ground works affected significant archaeological deposits, was to attempt to produce a mitigation scheme in order to prevent damage to preserved remains.

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#### **5. Method**

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The trench for the water main was excavated using a minidigger throughout and was dug to a depth of 0.75m. An archaeologist observed all ground disturbance. Drawings, at a scale of 1:10, and notes were made in a site notebook and photographs were taken on 35mm film. A contingency was available for further recording and excavation should this have proved necessary.

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#### **6. Results**

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The northern part of the trench, nearest the cottage, contained only the stony surface of the existing driveway, above a brown loamy garden soil. This deposit lay immediately above a clean red clay, which continued for about 0.3m to the base of the trench. No archaeological features or deposits were visible in this part of the trench.

To the south, 11.2m from the corner of the cottage, for a distance of 1.8m it appeared that a previous surface had been present as a loose disturbed dirty, stony layer (101) about 0.2m deep lay beneath approximately 0.3m of topsoil (100). The 'surface' overlay a slightly more compact 0.09m deep layer of clean crushed Old Red Sandstone (102), which in turn sealed a layer of clay with frequent charcoal flecks (103) (Fig. 2, inset). The clean red clay natural deposit lay beneath this. No dating evidence was recovered from any of the layers.

Although there was no sign of the sandstone 'surface' further to the south the deposits continued to be fairly mixed redeposited natural clay with occasional large fragments of sandstone. Some 1.6m north of the barn a higher proportion of sandstone was present, together with some mortar. Investigation at this point proved that this was a dump of building material rather than being structural. None of the sandstone showed evidence of having been worked, and some appeared to have been naturally present in the redeposited red clay.

A cobbled surface of comparatively recent date was present at the southern end of the barn lying immediately beneath the lawn and apparently continuing for some distance to the east, though this was not confirmed. It was formed of cobbles about 0.2m in length and about 0.10m in diameter. A functional relationship with the barn seemed likely.

For the southern 10m, approaching the gateway the deposits became much dirtier. Although no pottery was present, fragments of pantile provided evidence that the levelling material was of fairly recent date. Outside the gate the trench turned to the left, onto an east/west alignment, to the connection with the existing water main.

The only deposit present in this part of the trench was a mid brown clay loam, very dry and with many tree roots. It became slightly pinker towards the base but did not otherwise vary for the full 0.75m depth of the trench.

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## **7. Discussion**

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The ground works directly followed the side of the driveway to the cottage and although the trench ran across the medieval bailey no dateable archaeology was present.

Documentation in the Sites and Monuments Record stated that the bailey 'has been considerably altered to form gardens.' This was borne out by deposits encountered during monitoring work, which generally related directly to the garden of Swan Cottage and to the barn at the side of the drive. Only the layer of clean crushed sandstone (102) may have been of earlier date but limited investigation did not confirm this and it seems more likely that it was a lower part of the more disturbed 101.

The impression gained was that the path and the area around the barn, where a higher proportion of stone was present, might have been built up above the surrounding area, possibly to avoid moist conditions that still prevail. The land is visibly lower lying to the east adjacent to the boundary with the field than on the drive and the area surrounding the barn.

It was clear that the path and barn area had been disturbed in post-medieval or modern times during many years of gardening. In the northern part of the trench, nearest to the cottage there was less disturbance with clean red clay visible beneath the driveway and garden soil. It is therefore possible that any archaeological deposits in the area had been damaged. The cobbles present at the southern end of the barn were not seen in the trench to the north and did not seem to continue in that direction.

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## **8. Conclusion**

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No archaeological finds or features were encountered during the watching brief at Swan Cottage. However, the line of the water main passed through a Scheduled

Ancient Monument with, therefore, a chance of the survival of preserved underground remains. Archaeological monitoring during excavation of the service trench, with a measures in place for mitigating the impact of the work on important buried remains if this proved necessary, was an appropriate means to fulfil the aims of the project.

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## **9. Site Archive**

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No finds were recovered from the site. The site archive therefore consists of the paper archive, including photographs taken on site. It is stored at Hereford Museum, Accession number 2004.111.

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## **10. Bibliography**

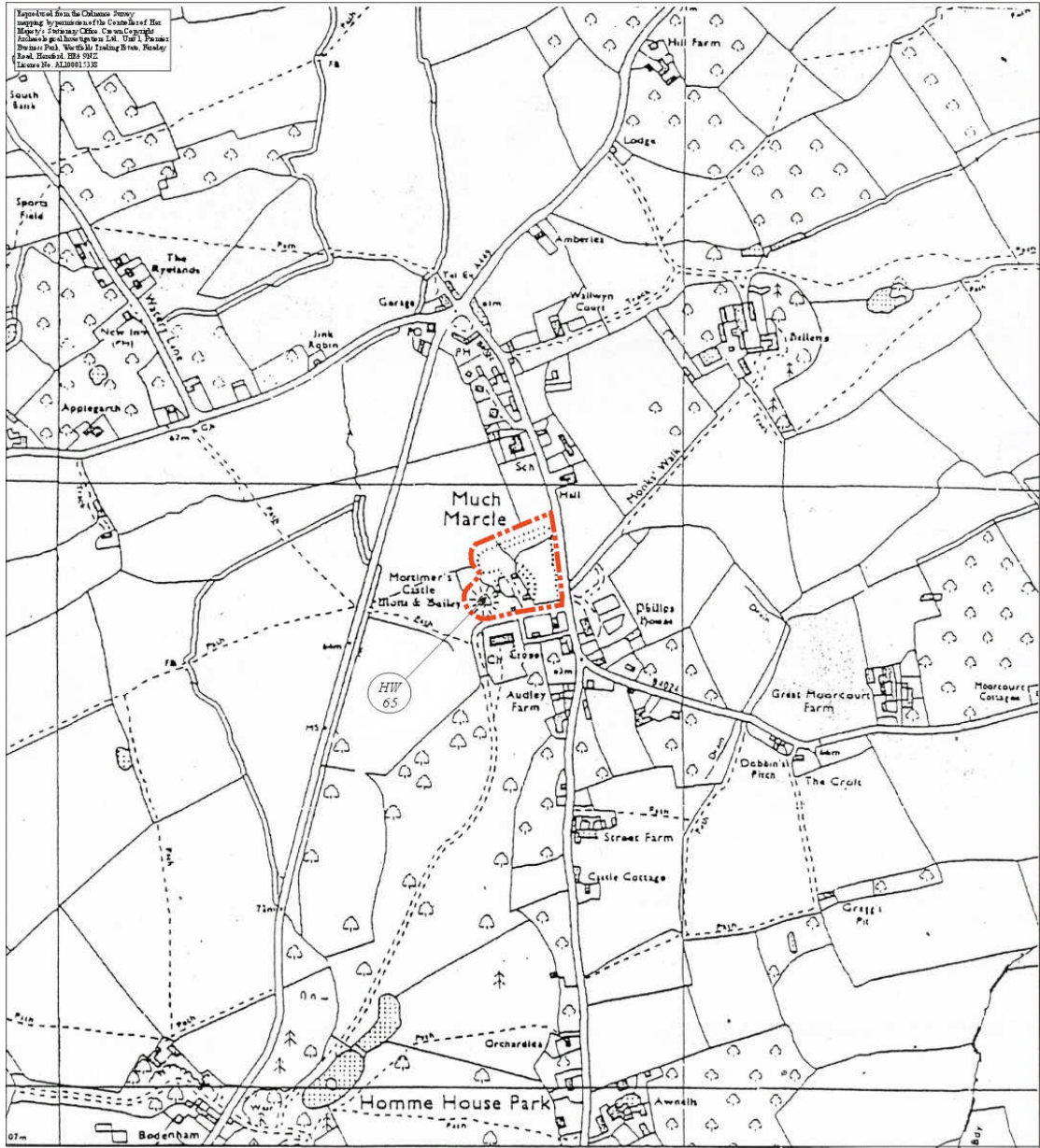
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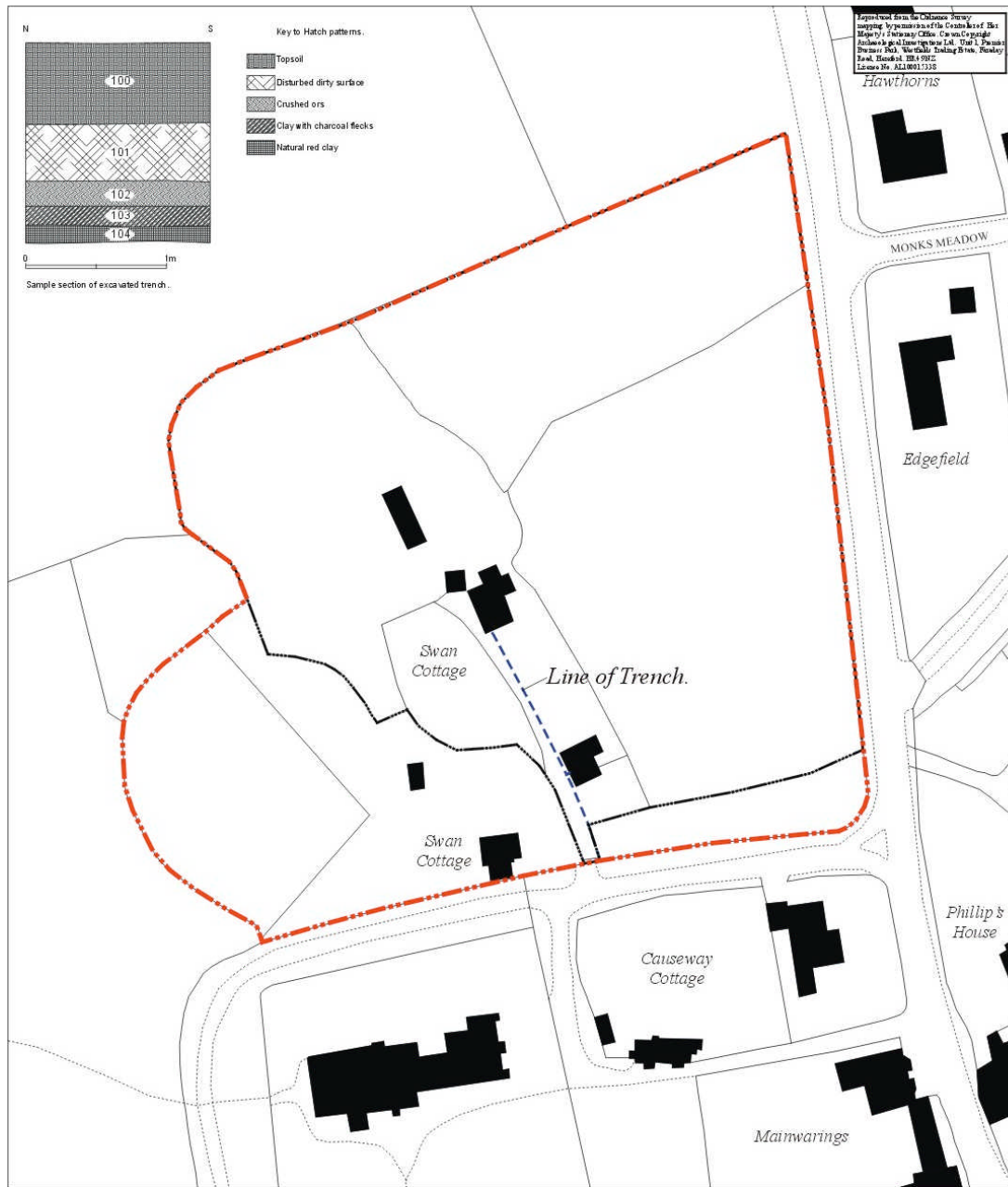


- - - - Boundary of Scheduled Monument.
-  Scheduled Monument.

Centred on NGR SO65733285  
Extract from OS sheet SO65SE

Site Location and SMR location

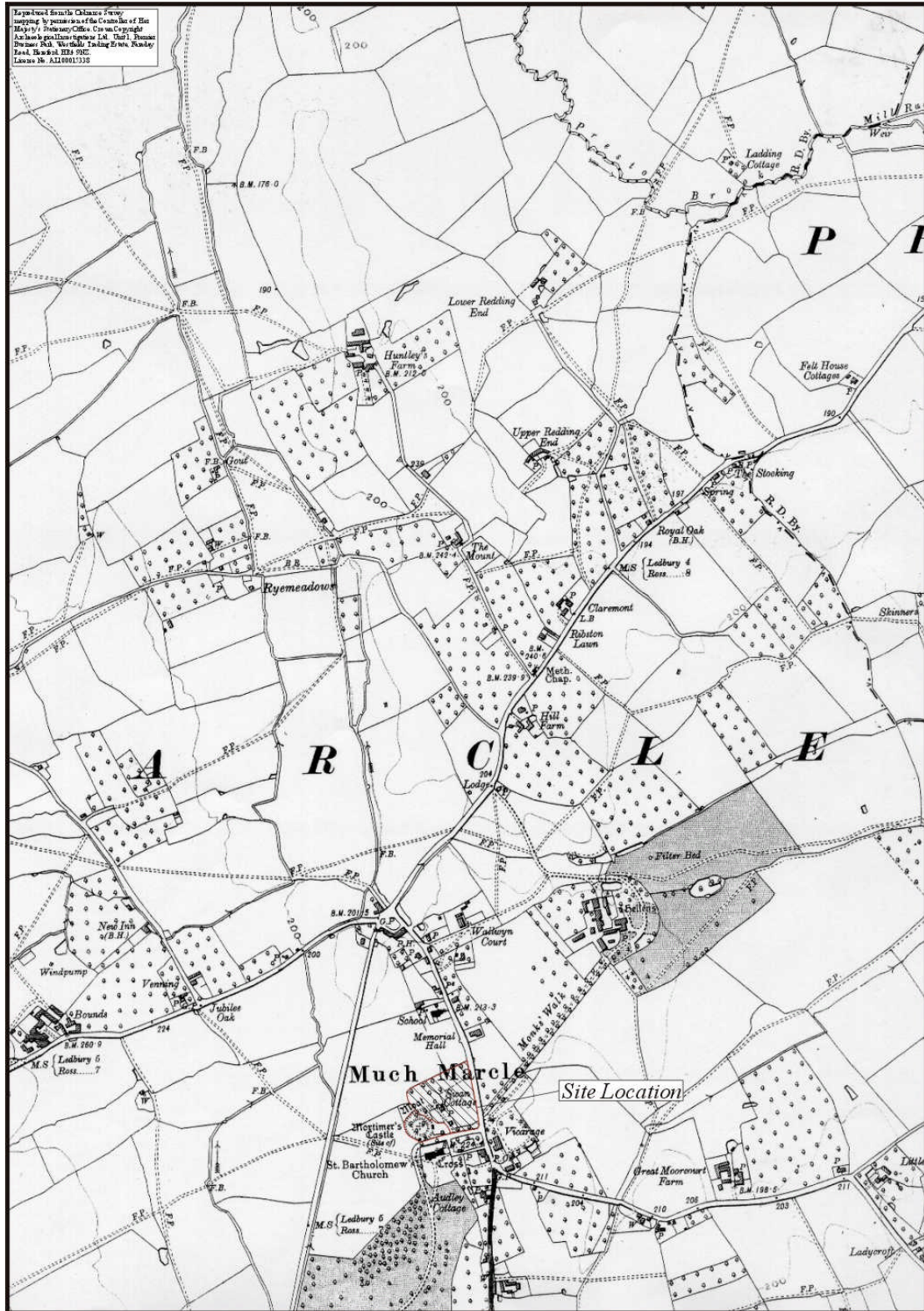
Figure 1



- Boundary of Scheduled Monument.
- Boundary of Property.
- - - Line of Trench.

Trench Location and Sample section

Figure 2



 Site Location

1931 Ordnance Survey map showing site location.

Figure 3