

# Ambrey Archaeology Ltd

## Archaeological building recording and monitoring at 123 Pensax, Abberley, Worcester

WSM81850 (Event no BR)

WSM81849 (Event No WB)

Planning ref. 24/01082/HP

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## Summary

Ambrey Archaeology carried out an archaeological building survey and monitoring of groundworks at 123 Pensax, Abberley, Worcestershire, in September 2025.

The project was commissioned by Tracy Forouhandeh who has been granted planning permission for a two-storey rear extension and side extension at the site by Malvern Hills District Council.

Condition 6 of the planning permission called for a level 3 historic building recording commensurate with the requirements of Historic England guidance and in accordance with current Worcestershire Archaeological Standards and Guidance.

Condition 7 called for archaeological monitoring and recording (watching brief) of all groundworks likely to expose, damage or destroy any archaeological remains that may be present, principally the reduction of ground levels/ topsoil stripping/ drainage and service channels.

The building is located within a cluster of properties located to the south-west of the B4202 near Snead Common at 165m AOD. Bedrock at the site is mudstone, siltstone and sandstone of the Halesowen Formation with no superficial deposits mapped.

No. 123 Pensax is a brick-built cottage of one storey with an attic. The cottage is attached to No 124 and both appear to have been built as part of a hamlet of cottages and other buildings including a blacksmith's shop to service the Pensax Court estate. The occupants of No. 123 during the earlier part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century appeared to be agricultural labourers. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, following the sale of the estate, a programme of renovations and additions took place, including a substantial chimney and range in the centre of the two cottages. At the same time a small walled enclosure may have been built to create a cottage garden to the front of the building. From then until the later 19<sup>th</sup> century the occupants of both cottages appeared to be a master blacksmith and his son and both of their families.

Archaeological monitoring of the excavations of foundation trenches found that the area had been disturbed during concrete underpinning of the cottage. The remains of a ground surface comprising impacted earth survived in most places excavated but was best defined to the south-east of the cottage. Sherds of modern ceramic were recovered from this surface.

## 1. Introduction

This document describes the results of an archaeological building survey carried out by Ambrey Archaeology at 123 Pensax, Abberley, Worcestershire, (NGR 373019 269494).

It was commissioned by Tracy Foroundandeh who has been granted planning permission by Malvern Hills District Council (MHDC) for a two-storey rear extension and single-storey side extension at the site, planning reference 24/01082/HP.

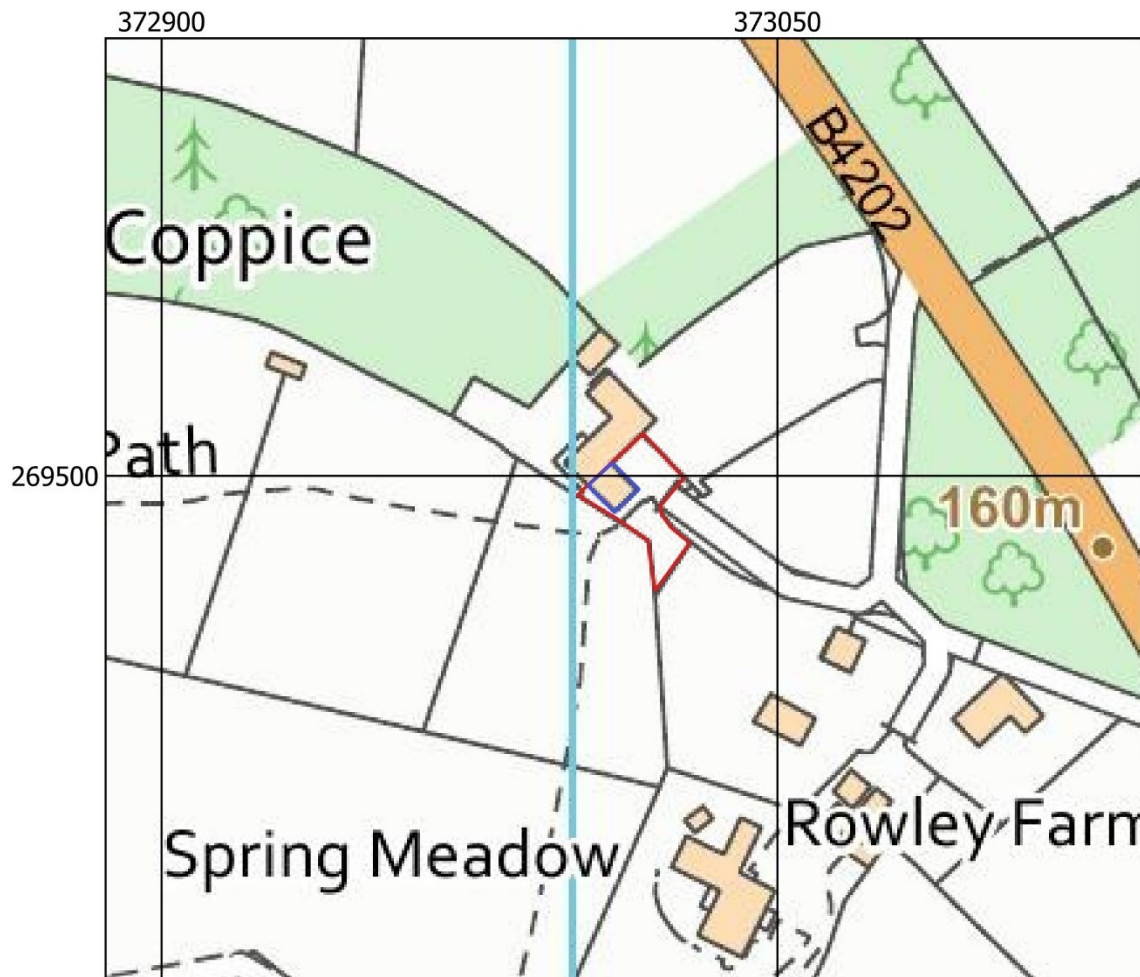


Figure 1. Site location

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A Heritage Consultation Response prepared by Aidan Smyth, Archaeology and Planning Advisor to MHDC (the Curator) stated that the proposed development site is within 20m of a possible Bronze Age Barrow with another possible barrow to the west. A building associated with 124 Pensax is recorded on the HER as a Smithy and both 123 and 124 appear on the first edition OS map, making the building a non-designated heritage asset of archaeological significance.

The archaeological requirements stipulated by the Curator were as follows:

*Prior to the commencement of works, an historic building recording is required which is commensurate with the requirements of level 3, as set out within Historic England guidance Understanding Historic Buildings; A Guide to Good Recording Practice (2016) and in accordance with current Worcestershire Archaeological Standards and Guidance (2019).*

*The archaeological monitoring and recording (watching brief) of all groundworks likely to expose, damage or destroy any archaeological remains that may be present, principally the reduction of ground levels/ topsoil stripping/ drainage and service channels. Should features considered to be significant be identified the WB shall cease and an excavation shall commence covering the area of impact as defined by the LPA archaeological advisor.*

Prior to works a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) setting out a methodology and framework for the proposed works was produced by Ambrey Archaeology (Ambrey Archaeology 2025) and approved by MHDC.

## 2. Objectives

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists defines the aims of building recording as 'a programme of work intended to establish the character, history, dating, form and archaeological development of a specified building' (Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures, CIfA 2014).

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists defines archaeological monitoring and recording (previously known as 'watching brief') as a formal programme of observation, investigation and recording conducted during works carried out for non-archaeological reasons, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. This will be within a specified area or site on land, in an inter-tidal zone or under water (CIfA 2023, *Standard for archaeological monitoring and recording*).

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Building recording

The project takes the form of a Level 3 building survey as defined by Historic England's *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice* (HE 2016) which describes this as an **analytical** record which will contain a systematic account of the building's origins, heritage and use and will include drawn and photographic records to support an historical analysis.

The building recording was undertaken by Elizabeth Connolly of Ambrey Archaeology on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

Prior to fieldwork, a search of historic assets within 1km of the site was provided by Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (HER; search ref. #1748275). Primary sources were consulted at Worcestershire Archives at The Hive in Worcester and online sources including TheGenealogist.com and the British Newspaper Archive were also accessed.

Recording was undertaken using pro-forma recording sheets and photographs were taken with a Nikon D3200 SLR camera and a DJI Osmo mobile 6 camera. Additional aerial images were taken with a Mavic Mini 2 UAV.

*External photo directions are shown on Figure 7 and internal photo directions and phasing are shown on Figure 8 at the end of the report. Elevations are shown on Figure 9.*

### 3.2. Archaeological monitoring

Archaeological monitoring of groundworks was undertaken on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025 by Elizabeth Connolly MA, ACIfA. The project was carried out to the standards set out in *Guidelines for archaeological work in Worcestershire*.

The locations of the proposed extensions are to the south-west and the south-east of the house (Figure 10 at the end of the report).

Excavation of the foundation trenches was undertaken using a mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision. The trench plan is shown on Figure 11 at the end of the report.

Context recording was undertaken using context sheets and other pro-forma recording sheets and photographs were taken with a Nikon D3200 SLR camera.

Following excavation, all context sheets were checked and cross referenced. Provision will be made to upload the digital archive of the project via OASIS (project id.: ambreyar2-537911).

## 4. Location, topography and geology

No. 123 Pensax stands in a cluster of buildings in Snead Common in a mostly pastoral agricultural landscape to the south-west of the B4202 Clows Top Road. The settlement of Clows Top is located about 2km to the north-west and the village of Abberley is located about 2.8km to the south-east.

No. 124 Pensax is joined to No. 123 and has had several large extensions added, including one projecting north-east wards from the north-east elevation.

Bedrock at the site is described as mudstone, siltstone and sandstone of the Halesowen Formation with no superficial deposits mapped (BGS, 2025).

## 5. Archaeological background and historic context

### 5.1. Pensax

Unless otherwise indicated, much of the following history of Pensax is taken from *A History of the County of Worcester, Volume 3*. The placename Pensax has Primitive Welsh roots and it means Saxon hill (KEPN 2025). Despite the ancient origins of the name, there is no mention of Pensax in the Domesday Survey. However a mill at Pensax is mentioned in 1240, of which the rights were held by the Prior and convent of Worcester. The manor of Pensax was given to the Prior and convent of Worcester by a charter of 1195-1205. In 1240 the manor was a member of the liberty of Lindridge and was recorded to have had in demesne a grange and 1 caracute of land.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the Clutton Family held an estate in Pensax and resided at Pensax Court. The estate was sold in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to John Higginbottom who was called lord of the manor in 1872 and 1876. A notice of sale in the Worcester Herald on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1862,

describes the estate as containing 'very valuable and well-timbered properties' including working mines. He sold all his interest in the property to a purchaser who also bought the Abberley Estate.

### 5.2. Designated assets in the vicinity

There are several Grade II listed buildings in the vicinity of No. 123 Pensax.

Pensax Court (NHLE ref 1081410) is located about 600m to the south-west. The house, mostly 19<sup>th</sup> century, has 18<sup>th</sup> century origins. A former coach house to Pensax Court (NHLE ref 1172884) is located just to the north-west of the house. The coach house was built in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

To the west of Pensax Court, the Church of St James (NHLE ref 1081409) was built in 1832 in the Perpendicular style on an earlier site. The remains of a sandstone ashlar cross probably dating to the 15<sup>th</sup> century (NHLE ref 1350055) stands in the churchyard and an early 19<sup>th</sup> century memorial to the Craddock family (NHLE ref 1172873) stands almost immediately to the south of the church.

The Snead (NHLE ref 1329945) located about 220m to the north-east is a late 17<sup>th</sup> century house, extended in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century with some late 19<sup>th</sup> and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century alterations. The house is brick with a tile roof and external gable end stacks. The house was the farmhouse to Upper Snead Farm.

Lower Snead Farmhouse (NHLE ref 1139028) and a cow house and barn about 25m to the south (NHLE ref 1100729) are located 700m to the east of the site. The farmhouse is timber framed with brick infill and dated to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century with mid-18<sup>th</sup> and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century alterations. The cow house and barn dated from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century.

Fartown Farmhouse and attached granary (NHLE ref 1350056) a brick built building dating to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century with mid-19<sup>th</sup> and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century alterations, are located about 700m to the SSE

The Angel House (NHLE ref 1172892), located about 900m to the SSW, dates to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century with mid-19<sup>th</sup> century additions.

### 5.3. Non designated assets

Two circular cropmarks, possible Bronze Age barrows, have been identified from LiDAR imagery in fields to the west and south of the site, the closest feature being located within 20m of the site in the field to the immediate south-west (WSM42294) and the second about 80m to the west (WSM78581).

The focus of the Medieval Grange and hamlet of Pensax (WSM23370) is about 600m to the south-west, around the present Church of St James.

Pensax is located within the area of the Wyre Forest Coal field; there are indications on 19<sup>th</sup> century maps of former shafts and collieries around Pensax and Snead Common as well as farther afield in Rock, Mable and Bayton.

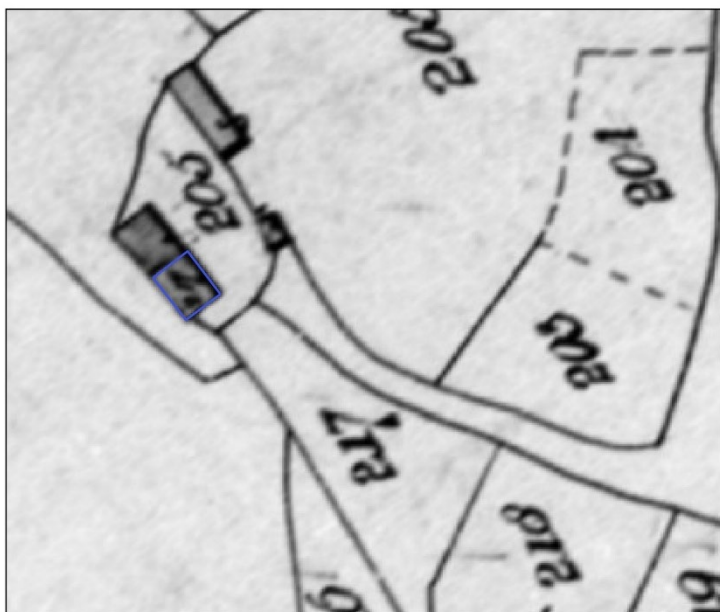
The site of the proposed development fell within the boundaries of an estate held in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries by the Clutton Family who resided at Pensax Court (mentioned above in section 5.2, about 700m to the south-west). The estate was sold in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to John Higginbottom who also purchased manorial rights, meaning that he was known as lord of the manor in the 1870s. Pensax Court was eventually sold to James Arthur Jones, who bought it together with Abberley Hall. The farmstead around Pensax Court is called Pensax Court/Pensax Grange

(WSM62101) on the HER and it is described as a partially extant 18<sup>th</sup> century listed farmstead with unconverted buildings.

#### 5.4. Map regression and census

At the time of the 1839 tithe map (Figure 2), Pensax was a chapelry in the Parish of Lindridge and the recorded building was located in the Pensax Court Estate owned at this time by Thomas Clutton Brock. On the map, in the eastern part of the estate, close to Pensax Court, the hamlet in which the recorded building is located comprises several semi-detached cottages with gardens as well as a small blacksmith's forge. The building now known as No. 123 Pensax, occupied by Samuel Field, is the southern of two semi-detached cottages with a small area of garden to the east (204 also occupied by Samuel Field), south of a trackway or small road which led north-west from the Clows Top Road as far as the two cottages and the forge. Samuel Field also rents a small plot which is a part of a larger field (No. 201 on the map) to the north-east. The building abutting No. 123 to the north is occupied by William Gough who has the blacksmith's shop.

The area of woodland to the north-west of the two cottages is called Cold Oak Plantation on the tithe apportionment. In the census of 1841, the two cottages (now Nos. 123 and 124 Pensax) are recorded under the name Cold Oak, and Samuel Field aged 35, agricultural labourer, is the head of the household in what is now No. 123. Emma Field aged 45 and Sarah and young Samuel aged 8 and 6 are also recorded. In the other cottage, Hannah Gough, aged 42, is the head of the household, and Mary Gough aged 13 is also recorded. Thomas Nash, aged 20, is recorded as a blacksmith's apprentice.



*Figure 2. 1839 tithe map of the Parish of Lindridge*

By 1851 the census recorded the relationships between the members of a household. Only Samuel and his wife Amalia (Emma?) are recorded at the cottage.

William Gough (Blacksmith Master, employing one man) and his wife Hannah are recorded next door with Thomas Nash, William Gough's nephew, now recorded as aged 27 and described as a

journeyman blacksmith. Their addresses are given at this point as Sneads Common, within the Chapelry of Pensax.

The Field and Gough families are still in the cottages by the time of the 1861 census, with some further discrepancies regarding their ages (60 and 66).

A plan contained in particulars of the sale of the Pensax Court estate in 1862 (Figure 3) appears to be largely based on the tithe map and includes similar allotment numbers. This map shows the pair of cottages in Lot 1 (CRO: 3967, 899:268 (iii)) of the estate sale, coloured green.

The cottages are located to the south-east of a woodland allotment called 'Cold Oak Plantation' in the particulars. No. 124 Pensax, the blacksmith's shop and shed to the north and east are in allotment (205) - House, Garden and Blacksmith's Shop, while No. 123 is in allotment (217, although this is hard to read on the map as it has been partially obscured) - Cottage and Garden. This has been listed in the particulars in the same paragraph as (204) - Garden, which appears to be rented with No 217 as in the tithe apportionment of 1839.



*Figure 3. Detail of 1862 plan of the Pensax Court estate*

By 1871 Charles Fello, Blacksmith is recorded in 'Rowley Cottage'. His son, also Charles Fello, and also a blacksmith is recorded at the same address.

Samuel Field and his wife Amelia (the former occupants of No. 123) are recorded in Pensax in a cottage close to a grocer's shop. Samuel is still described as a farm labourer, but it seems likely that this is not the same cottage and it is possible that following the sale of the estate the names of some of the buildings changed.

In two cottages in Rowley on the 1881 census, the two families of blacksmiths are recorded in adjacent entries; master blacksmith Charles Fello (aged 60) lives with his wife and 28 year old son in one house, while 30 year old Charles Fello lives with his wife and four children including a 6 week old son who does not yet have a name.

On the 1884 OS (Figure 4), No. 123 is shown clearly as one of two in carmine (indicating a building of brick or stone) with small, enclosed areas to the front of the buildings. A trackway is shown immediately south-east of the cottage leading to the fields to the rear. The Smithy (also in carmine)

is shown opposite the cottage that is now No. 124, with an irregular building abutting it, of wood or metal. Opposite No. 123, across the small road that leads to the collection of buildings, a small building is depicted, with a squarish enclosure abutting. The curved area of plantation wood to the west of the Smithy is not labelled on this map. There are mixed deciduous and coniferous trees growing in this allotment.

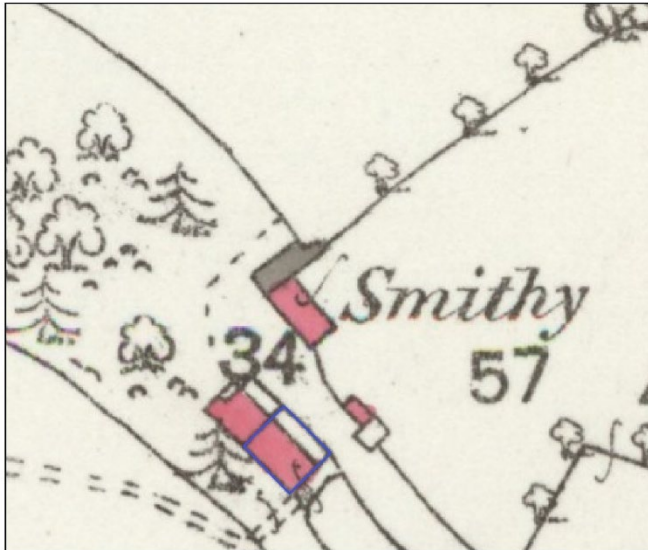


Figure 4. OS 1884 map

In 1891 two Fello families are still living at Nos. 1 and 2 Rowley – Charles and his wife and seven children live in one and the widow of Charles Fello senior, Betsy Fello lives next door on her own means.

By 1901 and 1911 the blacksmith in the census and directories is recorded as John Barker who is recorded with his wife and no children. In another Rowley cottage, agricultural labourer Walter Palmer lives with his wife, three children and a boarder in 1901 and by 1911 the family have eleven children.

By the 1903 map (Figure 5) both the Smithy and the building opposite No 123 have been extended and an extension has been built to the rear of the cottage abutting No 123. The plantation to the west of the Smithy is now indicated as Rowley Coppice.

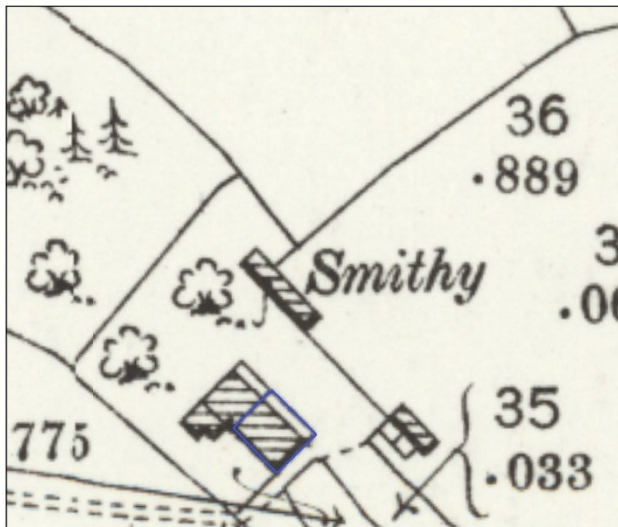


Figure 5. OS 1903 map

By 1927 (Figure 6) the Smithy is no longer identified, but its building has been extended. A small building has been added to the immediate rear of No. 123 and another small extension added to the rear of No. 124.

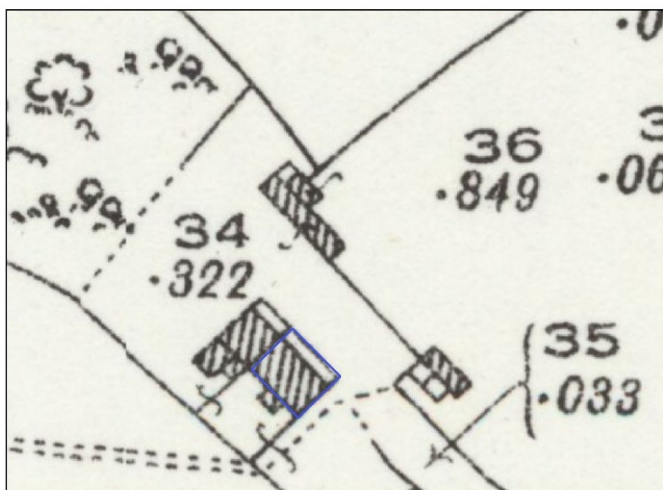


Figure 6. OS 1927 map

By a 1939 register Alfred Hamshire (Master Blacksmith) and his wife live in Blacksmith Cottage, Pensax. It is not known whether this refers to No. 124 Pensax or to another property. No further references to the inhabitants of No. 123 Pensax were found.

## 6. Building survey

Nos. 123 and 124 Pensax stand in a former enclosure within which other buildings including a former forge or blacksmith's shop are located (Plate 1, Figure 7). The buildings are semi-detached cottages (Plate 2), one of which, No. 124, has had several extensions added in recent years. The former forge is located opposite No. 124 and another building of uncertain purpose survives opposite No. 123 the subject of this report.

A set of buildings which had stood to the rear of No. 123, including a lean-to attached to the wall of the cottage, had been removed prior to the site visit. An image of the site taken before works took place was supplied by the client (Plate 3). The two buildings shown were monopitch sheds roofed with corrugated iron sheets and clad with a mixture of vertical corrugated iron sheets and vertical rustic timber planks. There was a door to the lean-to in its south-east corner, adjacent to the rear wall of the cottage. Its rear wall had been partially removed by the time the photo had been taken but it did not appear as though there were any other windows or doors to this building, and it was likely used for storage. The base for the wall appeared to be a line of brick stretchers and there did not appear to be a floor surface.

### 6.1. Exterior

No. 123 Pensax (Figure 9) is a brick built two storey house (one storey plus attic), built mostly in stretcher bond, rectangular in plan and oriented north-west by south-east. The gabled roof is of ceramic flat tiles (Plate 4).

#### Principal elevation

The main elevation (facing north-east) comprises two and a half bays (Plate 5). An internal chimney stack forms the line of division between the two properties.

A low brick wall, about 1m high, with saddleback capping of Staffordshire Blue brick, encloses a small courtyard to the front of the house (Plate 6). The wall is not keyed into the main building (Plate 7). The entrance is directly opposite the front door to the house and has a well-worn threshold stone (Plate 8). There is a step up to the interior of the courtyard which is paved with blue brick setts scored with diamond patterns. The ground in the courtyard is uneven and there are small flowerbeds immediately by the house on either side of the door (Plate 9).

There is a doorway central in the elevation but awkwardly located in relation to the fenestration, being closer to the window to its right than to that on its left. The door filling the doorway is boarded and ledged to the interior, beneath a segmental arch, some of the bricks in which may have been renewed (Plate 10).

There are three window openings to the ground floor, all of similar design (Plate 11). The opening to the farthest left in the elevation is a single light side-opening casement under a segmental arch of brick headers on their sides and with a sill of blue shouldered bricks. The opening is filled with a window with a wooden frame and 14 metal edged full diamond panes surrounded with 14 triangular panes to fit within a rectangular panel itself surrounded by a border of 22 square and rectangular panes.

To the right of the door is a two-light casement with one side opening and one fixed light. At the farthest right of the elevation of the cottage (but not of the building as a whole) is a fixed single light window.

While many of the rainwater goods are modern, there is a remnant of a cast-iron down pipe on the left-hand side of the building,

At eaves level, a dormer window cuts into the roofline. This window and another visible in the roof of No. 124 are gabled, with tiled roofs and mock timber framing above the windows themselves. The window in the dormer for No. 123 is a two-light casement of similar design to those described above.

Between the windows of Nos. 123 and 124, a brick chimney stack projects from the roof. The chimney has four ceramic pots and a central pilaster to the north-eastern elevation.

#### Side gable

This gable (Plate 12) is mostly blank apart from a side opening casement window slightly unsymmetrical in the gable to the first floor. The window is of similar style to those in the front elevation. The gable roof projects over machine cut projecting purlins. Decorative carvings at the ends of the purlins are much decayed.

#### Rear elevation

The rear elevation is mostly blank apart from the scar of a removed building, evidenced by some surviving timber holes in the surviving brickwork (Plate 13).

The brick bond to the rear is a stretcher bond resembling English Garden Wall Bond. The rear of the chimney has a pilaster similar to that to the front.

There is a probable brick joint on the left side of the elevation (Plate 14).

### 6.2. Interior

#### Ground Floor (Figure 8)

**Room A** is a living room, accessed directly via the front door from the exterior. The floor is mostly of brick with quarry tiles in the area of the range and fireplace in the north-western part of the room (Plate 15).

The walls are of brick with some remnant of plaster and wallpaper in places. A low squared stone plinth, painted, defines the floor level throughout.

A transverse beam carries the floor above. The ceiling has been plastered with 19<sup>th</sup> century or modern laths exposed in one part showing machine cut timber joists above. The beam is slightly chamfered with several empty mortices (Plates 16 and 17).

In the western side of the room, a cast iron range sits within a wide brick smoke blackened fireplace with unsymmetrical brick end walls and upon which a timber bressumer rests, carrying much of the chimney breast above (Plate 18). The range comprises an open fire grate and ovens on either side. The opening to the chimney itself is small and unadorned. Part of the wall of the chimney is slanted to the left of the open fire. The lower level of the chimney in which the ovens are located protrude slightly from the rear wall creating a narrow ledge on which there are several accessories for cooking on an open fire, including a hand held toasting basket and other fire irons (Plates 19 and 20).

The interior of the casement window to the living room has surviving hardware including a monkey tail stay (Plate 21) and a rusted fastener which may be a spoon-ended fastener (Plate 22).

A door between the range and the wall to the front of the cottage leads to a small storage room lit by the most northern fixed-light window (Plate 23). The door is boarded and is ledged to the interior of the storage room.

There are two doors at southern end of the Living Room (Plate 24); one of which leads to the kitchen (Room B) and one to a stairway to the first floor. Both doors are boarded and ledged to the with metal latches.

**Room B** is a former kitchen and has a similar floor to that in the Living Room (Plate 25).

A wall of vertical painted planks created to box in the stairs forms most of the rear wall of this room, with an alcove to the south-east (Plate 26).

The wall between Rooms A and B is curved close to the doorway and two deep wooden shelves line the wall (Plate 27). A shorter shelf at the level of the upper shelf runs to the north-west of the window in the front wall. A single shelf runs along the eastern wall at head height and into the alcove (Plate 28). There is an old metal fuse box on this wall although modern electrics have been installed.

The ceiling is of plain painted plaster board with some evidence that decorative/asbestos type tiles have been removed. A single substantial metal hook in the centre of the room (Plate 29).

A winder staircase leads to the first floor (Plate 30).

### 6.3. First Floor (Figure 8)

The stairs lead directly to the smaller of two first floor rooms; Room C (Bedroom 2 on the architects' plan). At first floor level, the stairs have plain timber balustrades a chamfered rail and a chamfered newel post at one end (Plate 31).

The floor is boarded and the room is lit by a two-light casement in the gable (Plate 32). The room is an attic room with boarding over the trusses but nonetheless some of the roof shape survives in the layout of the room. The walls are plaster over brick with a suspended plaster ceiling.

Room D (Bedroom 1 on the architect's plan) is larger than Room C and is accessed through it via a doorway filled with a boarded and ledged door (Plate 33).

The room is lit by a dormer casement to the front (Plate 34). There is a small cast iron bedroom fireplace set into the chimney at the north-western end at an angle (Plate 35). The fireplace appears to be Victorian in style with an integral mantelpiece and decorative details in the metalwork including a simple motif beneath the mantel, an ornate arched opening to the firebasket and a pair of decorative birds which may be pheasants on the fender (Plate 36)

There are two cupboards in this room, one on each side of the chimney breast, each accessed by doorways filled with narrow boarded and ledged doors (Plate 37). The cupboard to the south-west was built around the chimney structure (Plate 38) and the wall to the front is of lath and plaster.

There is evidence of a missing member in part of a transverse beam visible in the cupboard to the north-east (Plate 39), suggesting either that the beam was reused or that the chimney itself was a later addition to the buildings.

## 7. Archaeological monitoring, stratigraphic results

The footings of the foundations of the proposed extensions were excavated under archaeological supervision. The proposed extensions comprise a kitchen to the south-west of the house and a living area to the south-east. The foundation trenches for both extensions were excavated to a depth of 1m. Trench 1 was in the area of the proposed kitchen and Trench 2 in the area of the proposed living room.

Works carried out prior to the beginning of the groundwork described below included the removal of the outbuildings to the rear of the house and reduction of ground levels to the rear and to the side of the house to subsoil (Plate 40). Topsoil remained in the areas to the north-west and west of the kitchen extension (Trench 1) but in the internal parts of the trench and across the area of the Living Room Extension (Trench 2) a shallow depth of subsoil remained.

The surviving topsoil around the edges of the proposed foundation of the kitchen extension (101) was a moderately loose dark brown sandy silt present to a depth of 0.40m, containing ceramic building material (CBM) and 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century pottery sherds – stoneware, delft and sherds of glass. The area had been disturbed previously by modern works and fragments of a ceramic drain pipe (102) survived below topsoil in the north-western corner of the trench, as well as a large sub linear pit or ditch filled with modern ceramic material including whole bricks (107), interpreted as a drain or a dump of demolition material (Plate 41). Further disturbance was indicated by areas of concrete underpinning (106) and (109) in Trench 1 and (204) and (205) in Trench 2 (Plate 42). Remnants of a concrete fence inside the boundary with No. 124 were also removed during works (104).

A thin layer of subsoil (103) and (201) survived across the site, thicker in the areas below topsoil in Trench 1. It was a moderately compact mid orangey yellow sand with white mottling with a greyish tinge and was present for a depth of about 0.10m.

Beneath subsoil, a thin layer of CBM and charcoal fragments in a dark brown silty matrix (110) and (202) may represent the remnants of an earlier ground surface. This surface was present across most of both trenches but was more clearly defined in Trench 2 where there was also some gravel present (Plate 43 & Plate 44). Two areas of former rooting were present in Trench 2; (206) and (207); Plate 45). Both were present beneath the level of the former ground surface and contained dark brown loose gritty silt with CBM in (206). Neither were in well-defined cuts and appeared to be the result of natural processes.

## 8. Discussion and phasing

No. 123 Pensax is shown on the 1839 tithe map as one of a pair of cottages in the estate associated with Pensax Court. It may be that the cottages were constructed or refurbished as part of a general programme of works associated with the construction of Pensax Court in the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century. By the time of the tithe map the building was part of what may have been a planned hamlet of dwellings and functional buildings constructed to service the estate as a whole.

Entries from the tithe apportionment, census and local directories all show that a smithy or blacksmith's shop operated at the location throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the blacksmith and his family residing at No. 124 and, for some of the period, a farm labourer and his family living in No. 123. Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the cottages seem to have been occupied by two families with the

surname of Fello; a master blacksmith and his wife and a journeyman or apprentice blacksmith with the same surname in the adjacent cottage. It is not clear who lives in which cottage but it does appear that the occupancy of the cottage continued throughout this period to be tied to the work provided by the estate, whether in the smithy or elsewhere on the farm. This continued into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when the Fellos who had occupied both cottages until at least 1891 were replaced by 1901 by a blacksmith in one cottage and an agricultural labourer in the other. The proximity of No. 124 to the smithy as well as local knowledge suggests that this was the blacksmith's house and thus that No. 123 was either used for accommodating a secondary blacksmith and family or for agricultural labourers.

By 1927 it is not clear whether this arrangement has continued – the smithy is no longer marked on the Ordnance Survey and in a local directory the blacksmith's shop is indicated to be elsewhere. It is likely however that the cottages continued to be occupied by farm labourers until the estate was sold.

No clear phasing was identified during the building recording. The placement of the fenestration in No. 123 is awkward suggesting that it may have changed at some point over the occupancy of the house. It was not possible to compare it with that at No. 124 as a substantial extension obscures its principal elevation. However, the style of the casement windows suggest that they were unlikely to have been replaced during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and their placement may relate to the buildings' construction during the Georgian Picturesque period when estate architecture was consciously naive and rustic.

The brickwork in the low wall defining the small enclosure to the front of the house is not keyed into that of the cottage at the gable end. Although the courtyard is shown on the OS first edition, it is not shown on the 1839 tithe map or the 1862 map of sales particulars, which appears to have been largely based on the tithe. There is a potential for this wall to have been added to the property following the sale of the estate about this time.

The chimney between the two cottages marks the boundary between them rather than a single party wall. Evidence of removed timbers such as in the beam to the north-east of the chimney in the northern cupboard in Room D, suggests changes were made to the layout to accommodate the chimney's insertion. This may have replaced a smaller chimney stack at this location as no evidence was found of a removed chimney at the gable end of No. 123. The ironmongery in the range in No. 123 is Victorian in character suggesting that the chimney and range may have been inserted/embellished at this time, possibly in the same phase of reconstruction which may have followed the purchase of the estate in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

The fireplace in Room D is set at an angle to the axes of the room which might imply that the room was divided when it was constructed to create a corner fireplace. As there is no evidence of fenestration on this side of the room, this is likely to have been a cupboard.

As well as evidence of modern dumping of demolition material probably associated with the concrete underpinning of the house, archaeological monitoring revealed the remains of an old ground surface to the south-west and south-east. Pottery found in this context in Trench 2 conforms to Fabric 85 - Modern China (WCOD 2025) and it is considered that this surface built up and was compacted through habitation of the cottage throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Local knowledge suggests that the property did not change ownership until recently and had previously

been occupied by at least two generations of a family during which only minimal and essential changes were made, presumably including the underpinning works. These may have been carried out at some point in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century after which a lean-to building was constructed which has since been demolished.

## 9. Acknowledgements

Ambrey Archaeology would like to thank the following for their help with this project: Tracy Forouhandeh for commissioning the works and Aidan Smyth, Archaeology and Planning Advisor to Malvern Hills District Council, for monitoring the project

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[http://www.swdevelopmentplan.org/?page\\_id=12262](http://www.swdevelopmentplan.org/?page_id=12262)

WCOD 2025, Worcestershire ceramics online database, available at

<https://www.worcestershireceramics.org/> (accessed October 2025)

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service (WAAS) 2024 Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Projects in Worcestershire

### 10.1. Archive material

Pensax Court, Particulars of sale and plan, 1862, CRO: BA 3967, 899:268

Pensax Court, Particulars of sale and plan, 1943, CRO: BA 9306, 705:1010 (178)

Details of farms, plans and particulars, CRO: BA693, 705:72

### 10.2. Cartography

1839 tithe map of the parish of Lindridge, National Archive reference IR 29/39/82

1884 Ordnance Survey (First Edition) Worcestershire XIII.15, scale 1:2500

1903 Ordnance Survey (First Edition) Worcestershire XIII.15, scale 1:2500

1927 Ordnance Survey (First Edition) Worcestershire XIII.15, scale 1:2500

## Figures



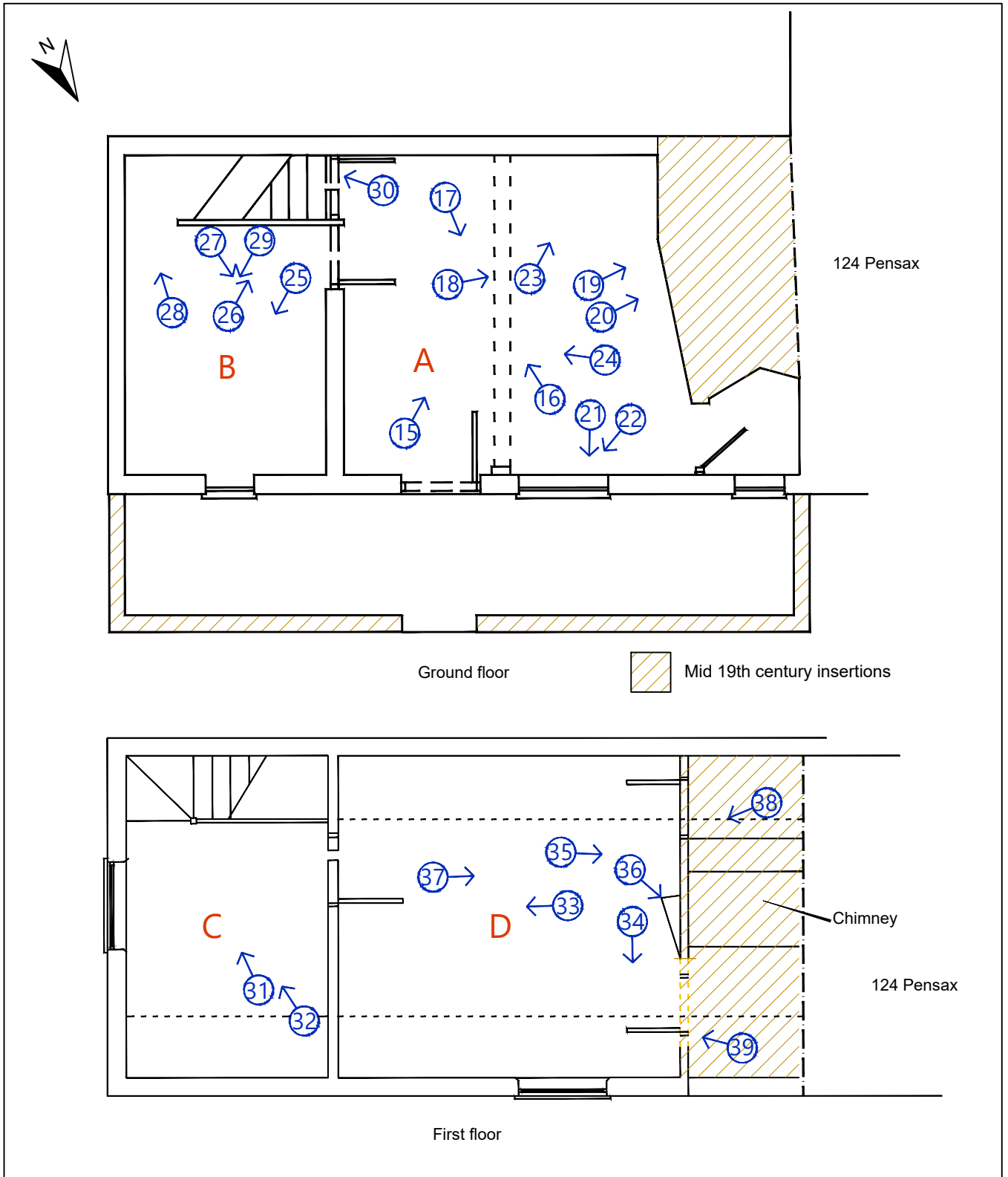
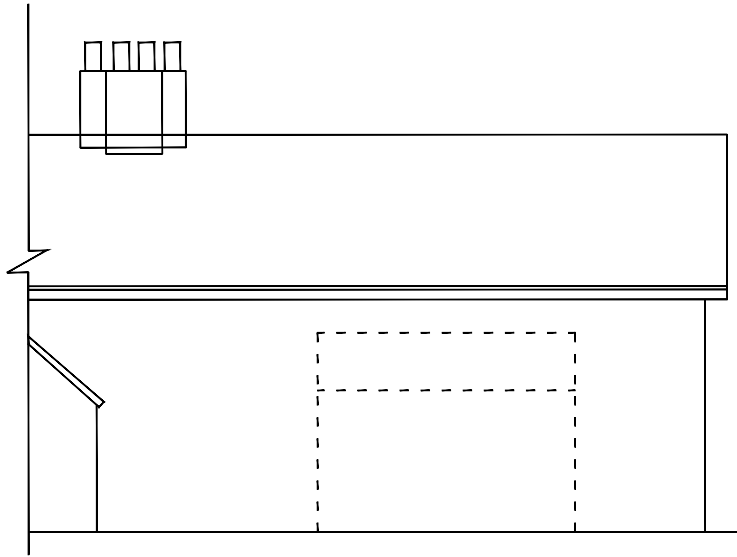
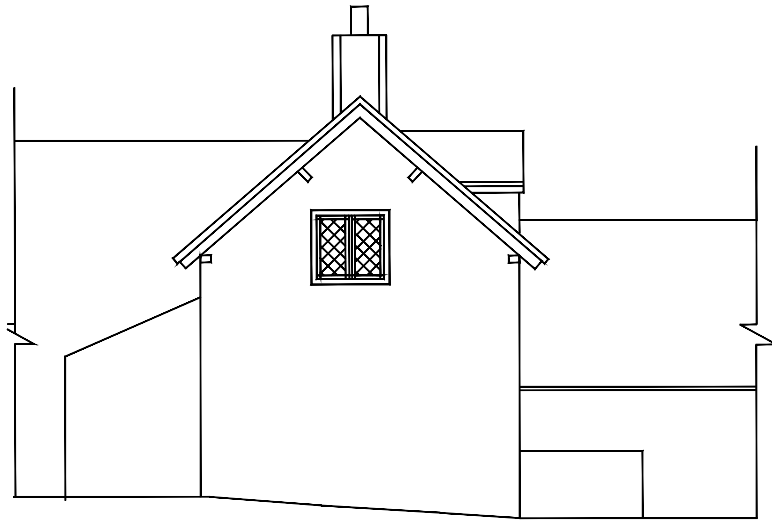


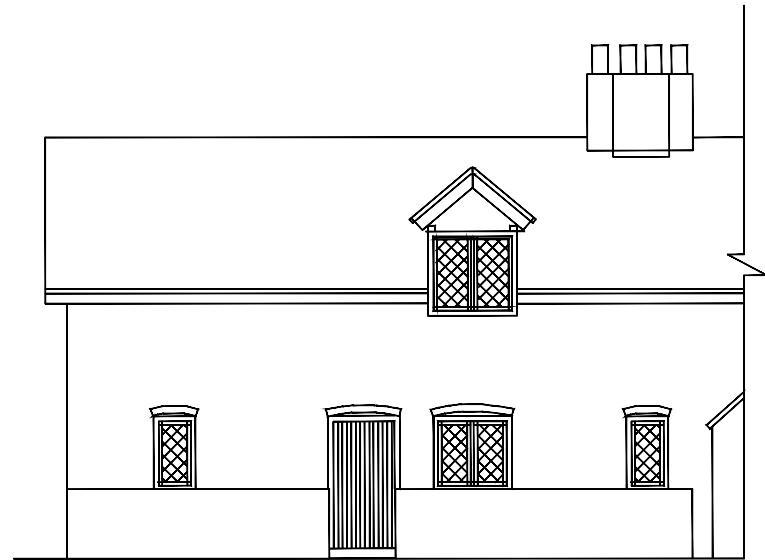
Figure 8. Internal photograph directions



Rear elevation



Side elevation



Front elevation



Figure 9. Elevations

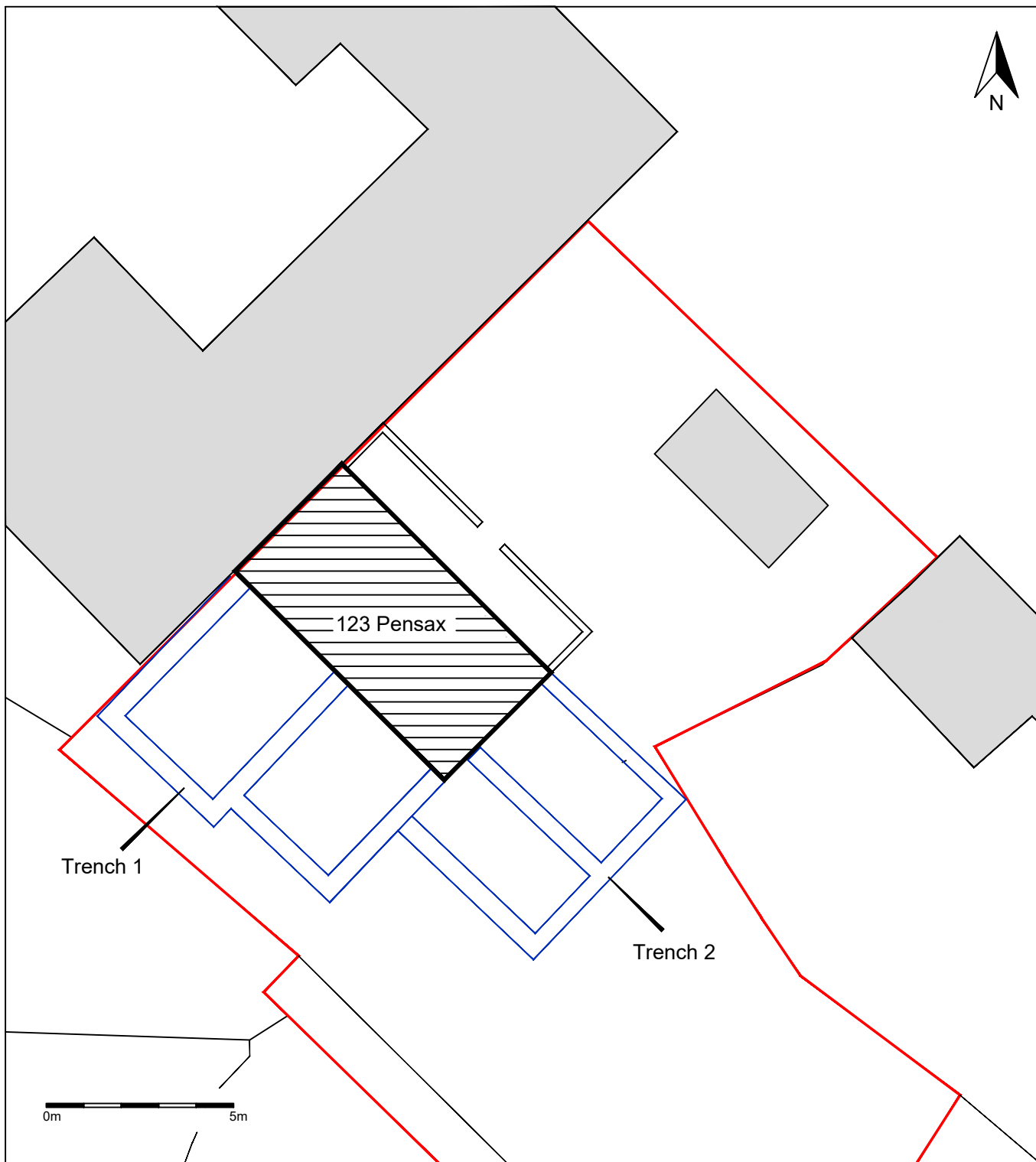


Figure 10. Locations of trenches

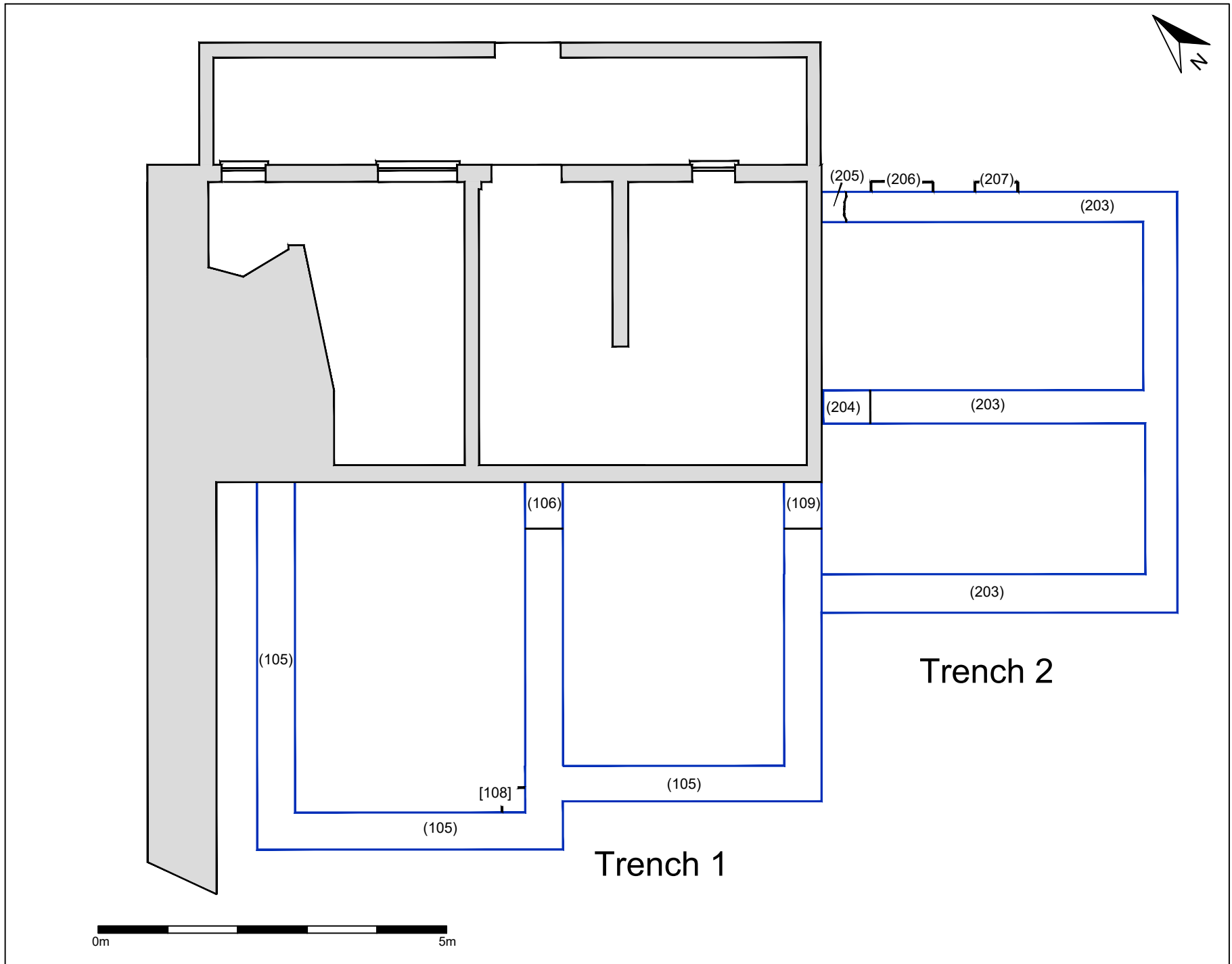


Figure 11. Trench plans

## Plates



*Plate 1. Low level aerial view northwards of Nos. 123 and 124. The former smithy can be seen behind No. 124 and a contemporary building, a brick build shed, can be seen in the right of the photograph*



*Plate 2. Low level aerial view north-north-west*



*Plate 3. Former outhouses to rear of No. 123 Pensax. Photograph provided by the client*



*Plate 4. Low level aerial view north-west*



*Plate 5. North-east elevation of No. 123 Pensax*



*Plate 6. Blue brick capping of the wall to the front of the house*



*Plate 7. View west of No. 123 with wall to front*



*Plate 8. Threshold stone in wall to front of house*

*Plate 9. View north-west in front of house*



*Plate 10. View north-west to front door of No. 123*



*Plate 11. Casement window in main elevation*



*Plate 12. Oblique view, north, of No. 123*



*Plate 13. Rear elevation of No. 123, showing scar of former lean-to outbuilding*



*Plate 14. Brick joint in left of rear elevation*



*Plate 15. View west in Room A*



*Plate 16. Transverse beam in Room A, view south-west*



*Plate 17. View north in Room A*



*Plate 18. Range in Room A, view north-west*



*Plate 19. Toasting basket associated with the range in Room A*



*Plate 20. Fire irons associated with the range in Room A*



*Plate 21. Detail of interior of casement window in Room A*



*Plate 22. Detail of interior of casement window in Room A*



*Plate 23. View north in Room A towards small store room between chimney and front wall*



*Plate 24. View south-east in Room A towards doors to Kitchen (Room B) and Stairwell*



*Plate 25. View east in Room B*



*Plate 26. View south-west in Room B*



*Plate 27. View north in Room B*



*Plate 28. View south in Room B*



*Plate 29. Hook in ceiling, Room B*



*Plate 30. Stairwell, view south-east*



*Plate 31. View south-west in Room C*



*Plate 32. View south in Room C*



*Plate 33. View south-west in Room D*



*Plate 34. View north-east in Room D*



*Plate 35. View north-west in Room D*



*Plate 36. Detail of fireplace in Room D*



*Plate 37. View of north-western wall in Room D*



*Plate 38. View west in storage cupboard in Room D*



*Plate 39. View south in cupboard in Room D*



*Plate 40. View north-west of area to rear of No. 123 prior to archaeological monitoring*



*Plate 41. View north of Trench 1; toward [108] visible in section at the corner of the trench*



*Plate 42. View east toward former concrete underpinning (106)*



*Plate 43. View north-east towards Trench 1, with layer (111), probable former ground surface, visible beneath subsoil (103)*



*Plate 44. View north-north west to south-western part of Trench 2, with former ground surface (202) visible beneath subsoil (201)*



*Plate 45. View eastwards along northernmost arm of trench 2, showing (206) and (207); areas of modern rooting, in section*



*Plate 46. View west of foundations fully excavated*

## Appendix 1 Context descriptions

**Trench 1:** Width: 0.80m; Maximum depth: 1m Location; to the south-west of the house

Context	Depth	Description	Interpretation
101	0.0 – 0.40m	Moderately loose dark brown sandy silt. Moderate to frequent CBM, 19 <sup>th</sup> century to 20 <sup>th</sup> century pottery sherds – stoneware, delft and sherds of glass	Topsoil Survived in area of foundations – had been removed elsewhere
102	0.40 – 0.50m	Fragments of ceramic drainage pipe, just below topsoil in the western part of the trench	Modern drainage
103	0.40 -0.50m 0.10m in areas with no topsoil	Moderately compact mid orangey yellow sand with white mottling. Sterile with a greyish tinge	Subsoil
104		Concrete remnants of fence along the western edge of the trench perpendicular to the property.	Late 20 <sup>th</sup> century fence to the rear of No. 124 Pensax
105	0.50m +	Compact greyish white sand with clay patches	Natural
106	0.40 -0.90m	Area of concrete underpinning of house foundation	Modern structural works
107	0.40 - 0.80m	Loose mid to dark brown silty sand with frequent CBM, modern pottery sherds (large) and charcoal flecks. Includes full bricks	Dumped material for drainage
108	0.40 - 0.80m	Steep-sided linear feature or elongated pit filled with modern dumped material (107)	Modern rubbish or drainage feature
109	0.20m +	Area of concrete underpinning of house foundation	Modern structural works
110	0.50m – 0.55m or 0.10 -0.15m bgl	Mid to dark brown silt containing charcoal flecks and fragments of CBM	Former ground surface

**Trench 2:** Width: 0.80m; Maximum depth: 1m; Location: to the south-east of the house

Context	Depth	Description	Interpretation
201	0.0-0.10m	Moderately compact mid orangey yellow sand with white mottling. Sterile with a greyish tinge	Subsoil
202	0.10 – 0.19m	Hard layer of gravel and brick fragments in a dark brown silty clay matrix with frequent charcoal fragments	Probable former surface. Located almost throughout the trench and in Trench 1,
203	0.19m+	Compact to hard orangey yellow sand with white mottling and patches of clay in places	Natural substrate
204	0.20m +	Area of concrete underpinning of house foundation	Modern structural works
205	0.10m +	Area of concrete underpinning of house foundation	Modern structural works
206	0.19 – 1m	Moderately loose dark brown silty sand. Contains charcoal and CBM	Area of rooting/former hedge
207	0.19 -0.80m	1m wide area of mixed sand and lenses of darker material. Similar to (206) and overlying (203). Visible roots protruding from layer	Area of former shrub/rooting