

# Ambrey Archaeology Ltd

## Archaeological evaluation of land at The Croft, Welland Court Lane, Upton Upon Severn, Worcestershire

Version 1

Planning ref. M/C

WSM82563 (Event No.)

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Contact: Tom Rogers, [ambreyarchtom@outlook.com](mailto:ambreyarchtom@outlook.com), 01568 780918

## Summary

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by Ambrey Archaeology of land at The Croft, Welland Court Lane, Upton Upon Severn, Worcestershire (NGR 381455 239401). It was carried out at the request of Lucy Righton of LA Righton Rural Planning, whose client has been granted permission by Malvern Hills District Council for the erection of two agricultural buildings at the site.

A Heritage Consultation Response prepared by Aidan Smyth, Archaeology and Planning Advisor to Malvern Hills District Council, noted that the site is to the northeast of the demolished Medieval church of St James which was replaced in 1875. LiDAR data shows ridge and furrow and other anomalies within the site.

Permission for the works was therefore granted subject to conditions, including a programme of archaeological works comprising an archaeological evaluation of the site through trial trenching. A Written Scheme of Investigation was produced by Ambrey Archaeology and approved prior to works.

The field survey was undertaken on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2025 in mild, showery weather. Two trenches, each 20m long and 1.8m wide were excavated in the locations of the proposed agricultural buildings. The trenches revealed undisturbed sands and gravels of Devensian age. No features were present within the trenches. Two sherds of post Medieval buff ware were recovered from the subsoil. These are thought likely to have been deposited by manuring of the field.

The site is shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1884 as one part of a large orchard. Map and aerial photograph evidence shows that the larger part of the orchard had been removed by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Some pear trees, however, still grow within the site and will not be affected by the development.

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## 1. Background

This report describes the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by Ambrey Archaeology of land at The Croft, Welland Court Lane, Upton Upon Severn, Worcestershire. It was carried out at the request of Lucy Righton of LA Righton Rural Planning, whose client has been granted permission by Malvern Hills District Council (MHDC) for the erection of two agricultural buildings at the site (planning reference M/24/01293/FUL).

A Heritage Consultation Response prepared by Aidan Smyth, Archaeology and Planning Advisor to MHDC; the Curator), dated 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024, noted that the site is to the northeast of a now demolished Medieval church (WSM03737) and that LiDAR data shows ridge and furrow and other anomalies within the site.

Therefore, in line with national and local planning guidance, permission for the works was granted, subject to conditions, including a programme of archaeological works. Correspondence with the Curator confirmed that an archaeological evaluation of the site through trial trenching was an appropriate initial stage of works to discharge the condition.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the evaluation was prepared by Ambrey Archaeology Ltd., submitted and approved by the Curator prior to works.

## 2. Aims

The Chartered Institute for Archaeology (CIfA 2023a) notes that an archaeological field evaluation will seek to determine, record and report on the nature, extent, preservation and significance of archaeological remains within a defined area. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts.

### 3. Site location and topography

The site is located approximately 1.8km ESE of the village of Welland (NGR 381455 239401) in a rolling, largely pastoral landscape. The proposed location of the two agricultural buildings is in the north-west corner of a large field to the east of Welland Court Farm at approximately 25m AOD.

Bedrock at the site is the Triassic Branscombe Mudstone Foundation with superficial deposits of the Worcester Sand and Gravel member also mapped (BGS, 2025).

At the time of the evaluation the site was under pasture with some fruit trees.

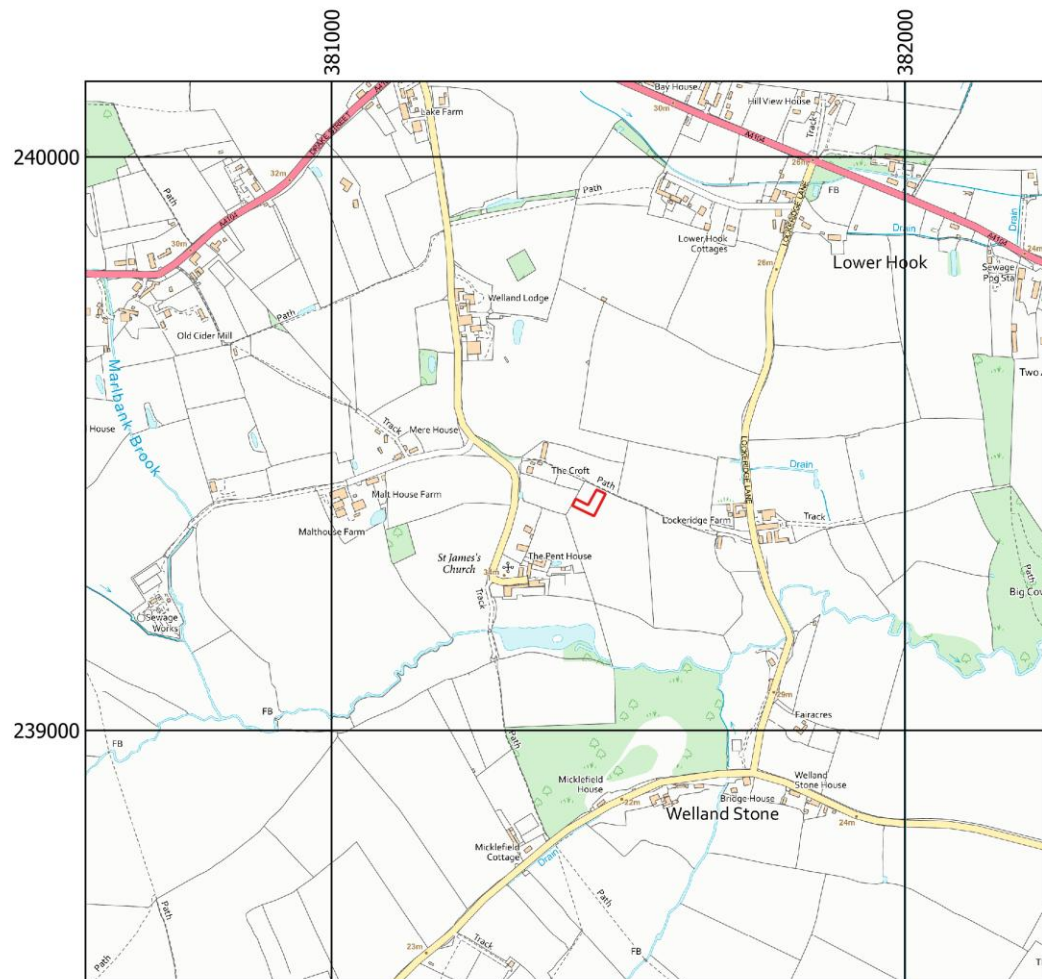


Figure 1. Site location

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## 4. Archaeological context

Prior to works a 1km search of the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (ref #1765497) centred on the site was obtained and the results are summarised below: -

The site lies immediately to the south of an area identified to be of Palaeolithic potential (WSM56950) relating to gravel deposits dating from Marine isotope Stage 02 (27050 to 12050 B.P). Similar deposits at Beckford and Clifton have yielded faunal remains of this period. The cropmark of a possible triangular enclosure has been identified from aerial photographs 730m to the south-east of the site (WSM17814).

The site of the Medieval St James' Church, rebuilt in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, lies 185m to the south-west of the site (WSM03737). The church was demolished and replaced in 1875. The HER notes that the former graveyard survives. The church is marked on the 1840 tithe map of the parish of Welland (Figure 2).



*Figure 2. Extract of 1840 tithe map of the parish of Welland, showing the location of the proposed development in red*

The site lies within an area of ridge and furrow (WSM69563) surveyed in 2000 as part of the ridge and furrow volunteer project. They were recognized from LiDAR and aerial photographs.

Welland Court (WSM59813 and WSM52163) 220m to the south-west of the site is a partially extant 18<sup>th</sup> century farmstead with converted buildings. The Court itself is Grade II listed (WSM09374, list entry 1349257) and described as a mid-18<sup>th</sup> century brick building with earlier origins. Some 70m to the north is another Grade II listed building, the Old Vicarage (list entry 1178506), an early 17<sup>th</sup> century timber framed house altered in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Lockeridge Farm (WSM598065) stands 285m east of the site and includes an early 19<sup>th</sup> century brick farmhouse (WSM12318).

Immediately west of the field in which the proposed development is intended, a traditional orchard is marked on the HER, recognised from the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map.

## 5. Methods

### 5.1 Fieldwork

The evaluation was carried out by Elizabeth Connolly MA ACIfA and Tom Rogers MSc MCIfA following *Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Projects in Worcestershire*. The field survey was undertaken on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2025 in mild, showery weather. Two trenches, each 20m long and 1.8m wide were excavated in the locations shown on Figure 3. The locations were altered slightly from the intended locations as set out in the WSI due to the presence of trees with fenced root protection zones (Plate 1), however the trenches were both opened within the footprints of the proposed buildings.

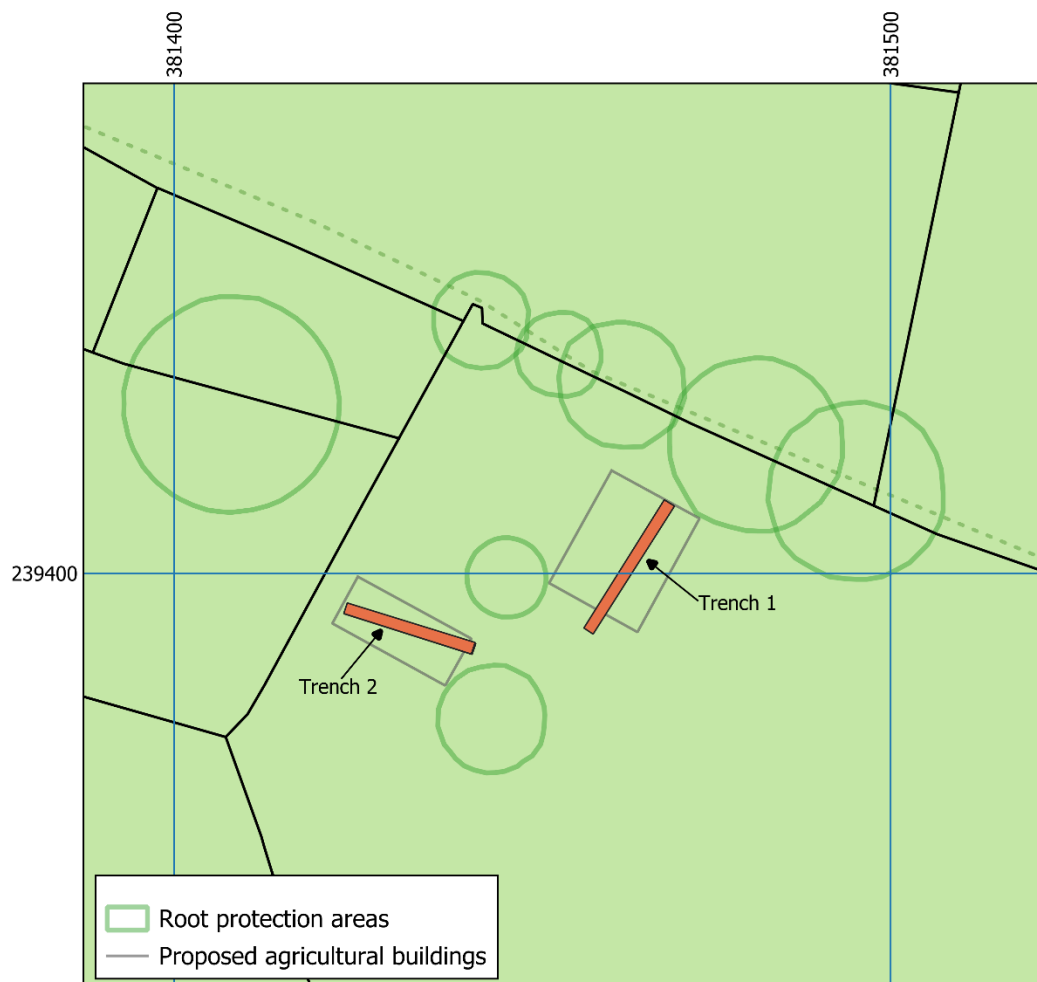


Figure 3. Locations of trenches

Prior to excavation, the locations of the trenches were scanned using a Cable Awareness Tool to ensure that no live services were present.

Initial excavation of the trenches (removal of topsoil and subsoil) was carried out using a tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket and under archaeological supervision. Subsequent cleaning of the trench was undertaken by hand.

Context recording was undertaken using context sheets and other pro-forma recording sheets and photographs were taken with a Nikon D3200 SLR camera. Plans and sections of trenches and features were drawn on permatrace at 1:10 and 1:50 scales and recorded by GPS.

On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

## 5.2 Post excavation works

Following excavation, all context sheets were checked and cross referenced. Survey material was downloaded and processed using QGIS 3.16 Hannover and AutoCAD LT 2023.

Provision has been made to upload the digital archive of the project via OASIS (OASIS Id: ambreyar2-538404).

# 6. Results

## 6.1 Stratigraphic analysis

The deposits within both Trench 1 (Plates 2-3) and Trench 2 (Plates 4-5) were nearly identical. Topsoil ((101) and (201)) comprised a firm mid brown silty clay with frequent rooting, present to a depth of 0.2m in Trench 1 and 0.25m in Trench 2. This overlay subsoil ((102) and (202)) comprising a compact, mid brown/grey silty clay with gravel which in turn overlay the natural substrate ((103) and (203)) comprising a hard, mid grey to brown sand and gravel at a depth of 0.5m in Trench 1 and 0.45m in Trench 2.

No features were recorded within either trench.

## 6.2 Assessment of Artefacts

Two sherds of pottery were retrieved from context (202). These are both wheel-thrown Post Medieval orange ware (Worcestershire fabric 90) produced in the Severn valley in the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Plate 6). They are not considered worthy of museum deposition.

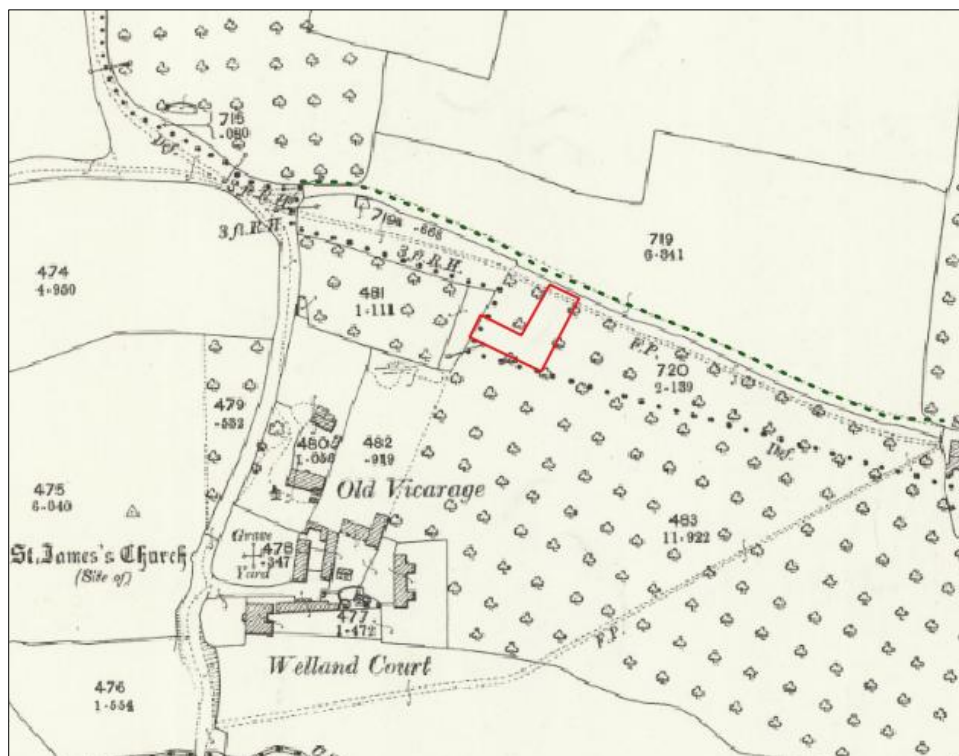


## 7. Discussion

The survival of a relatively isolated Medieval church in the countryside is often an indication that there was once a larger surrounding settlement and it is not unlikely that the remains of a Medieval village survive in the vicinity. However, in this location no features or artefacts of archaeological significance were uncovered. The two trenches revealed a layer of entirely undisturbed sand and gravel, superficial deposits of the Devensian Stage (115,000- C11,700 years B.P.).

No trace of ridge and furrow agriculture was revealed within the trench, although earthwork remains are visible further to the south-east within the field. Two sherds of post Medieval pottery are likely to have been deposited through manuring from domestic middens.

On the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1884 and subsequent editions (Figure 3) the site is shown as one corner of a large orchard to the north-east of Welland Court. This appears to have survived into the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, but few trees remained by the time an RAF aerial photograph of the area was taken in 1949.



*Figure 3. Extract of Ordnance Survey sheet Worcestershire XLV11.10 published in 1903 at 1 to 25 inch scale, site outlined in red*

A part of this orchard, however, survives to the immediate west of the site (WSM80810) and some pear trees remain in this part of the field. These were protected by fencing on the day of the survey (see Plate 1) and will be undisturbed by the development.

## 8. Acknowledgements

Ambrey Archaeology would like to thank the following for their assistance in completing this project; Lucy Righton of LA Righton Rural Planning, for commissioning the project on behalf of Rob Shail who also provided plant and excavated the trenches and to Aidan Smyth of Malvern District Council for monitoring the works.

## 9. Bibliography

AAF, 2011 *Archaeological archives: a guide to the best practice in the creation, compilation, transfer and curation*. Available at <http://www.archaeologyuk.org/archives/>

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

## Plates



*Plate 1. Low level aerial view of the trenches, view north*



*Plate 2. Trench 1, view SSW, scales 1m*





*Plate 3. ESE facing baulk of Trench 1, scale 0.5m*



*Plate 4. Trench 2, view ESE, scales 1m*



*Plate 5. SSW facing baulk of Trench 2, scale 0.4m*



*Plate 5. Sherds of pottery from context (202)*



## Appendix 1 Context descriptions

**Trench 1:** Length: 20m; Width: 1.6m; Maximum depth: 0.5m

| Context | Depth       | Description                                     | Interpretation    |
|---------|-------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 101     | 0.0 – 0.2m  | Firm mid brown silty clay with frequent rooting | Topsoil           |
| 102     | 0.2m – 0.5m | Compact, mid brown/grey silty clay with gravel  | Subsoil           |
| 103     | 0.5m+       | Hard, mid grey to brown sand and gravel         | Natural substrate |

**Trench 2:** Length: 19m; Width: 1.6m; Maximum depth: 0.45m

| Context | Depth         | Description                                                                                  | Interpretation    |
|---------|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 201     | 0.0 – 0.25m   | Firm mid brown silty clay with frequent rooting                                              | Topsoil           |
| 202     | 0.25m – 0.45m | Compact, mid brown/grey silty clay with gravel. Two sherd of post Medieval pottery recovered | Subsoil           |
| 203     | 0.45m+        | Hard, mid grey to brown sand and gravel                                                      | Natural substrate |