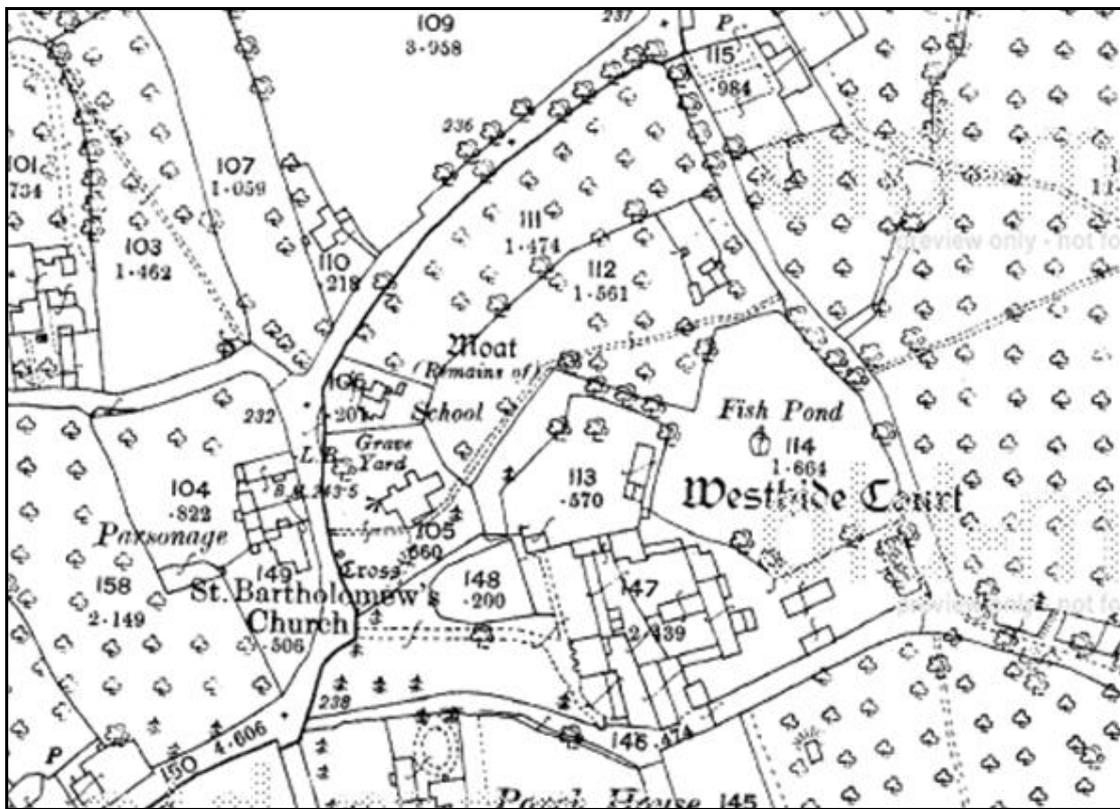


ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION

Westhite Court
Westhite
Herefordshire

NGR: SO 58704 44267
Job No: BA1208WCWH



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Cover: Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Map of 1887 showing Westhide Court and Moat

REPORT SPECIFICATION

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Editing: Stephen Priestley MA

Approved: Neil Shurety Dip. M. GM. Inst.M



1. Non-Technical Summary

An archaeological field evaluation was undertaken on April 1st 2012 of land immediately adjacent to a newly laid farm access road at Westhide Court Westhide Herefordshire. The aim was to assess any impact that road construction works may have had on potential archaeological deposits associated with the known course of a medieval moat, the line of which crosses the road.

The evaluation revealed no significant archaeological deposits, features or finds; although evidence of considerable disturbance associated with earlier landscaping activity was identified in Trench 2.

It is clear in view of the proximity of the trenching to the access road that road construction activity has resulted in no discernible archaeological impact.



side of the roadway, was excavated to 0.7m with a 1m sondage at one end to fully investigate the depth of any potential archaeological deposits disturbed by its construction. Fieldwork was carried out on April 1st 2012.

Copies of this report will be remitted to Mr Thompson-Coon, Julian Cotton and the Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record.

3. Site Description

3.1 Soils and Geology

The site lies at approximately 73m OD within an extensive area of typical argillic brown earths of the BROMYARD series (571b). These comprise well-drained fine reddish silty soils over shale and siltstone and some well-drained coarse loamy soils over sandstone (SSEW 1983).

4. Historical & Archaeological Background

Whilst the present property is of no great age, the site itself is of considerable antiquity and status.

Westhide Court was the principal seat within the manor of Westhide. It was a royal manor before the Conquest, held by Queen Edith wife of Edward the Confessor and it is possible that the earliest occupation on the site dates from the Saxon period.

After 1066 the manor of Westhide was granted by William I to Ralph de Tosny and continued to be held by the de Tosny family until the 13th century. By about 1300, the estate was held by the Helyon family of Much Marcle and continued to be held by them until about 1500.

It is likely that either the de Tosny family or the Helyons were responsible for digging the moat, the remains of which survive to the north of the present house comprising a mutilated ditch of some 40m length and 0.6m depth. The substantial nature of the moat (HSM 6519) possibly suggests a castle site, but there appears to be no documentary record of a castle at Westhide.

Documentary records mention the existence of a 'capital messuage' at Westhide which could refer to a fortified manor house. This manor house may have been situated within an earlier defensive enclosure (as for example at Court House Pembridge).

The 'capital messuage' of Westhide (presumably to be identified with Westhide Court) was held by the Jauncey family in the late 16th-18th century; it is possible that the Jaunceys were responsible for enlarging the northeast end of the moat to create the fishponds that exist today.

The site lies adjacent to St Bartholomew's Church, which has an un-buttressed late 12th century west tower and south aisle and chancel arch of early 14th century date. The chancel



and nave on the north side were rebuilt in 1866-7. A series of earthworks near to the church have recently been noted.

Located to the southwest of the church is a Scheduled, Grade II listed stepped churchyard cross of 14th-15th century date (HSM 6520; SAM No110522) comprising a base of three steps, surmounted by a socket stone and the lower part of the shaft atop which is a 12th scalloped capital carrying a sundial of 1739 commemorating churchwardens John Sandford and Lancelot James. The church contains an alabaster slab incised with the figures of Richard Monyngton and his wife dated 1524

5. Methodology

Two trenches each measuring approximately 6m × 2m were opened adjacent to the new rubble road laid out along the course of the moat. Trench 1 was located at NGR SO58597 44743 and Trench 2 at NGR SO58589 44729. Both trenches were excavated to a depth of 0.7m with a sondage at one end of each trench sunk to a depth of 1m.

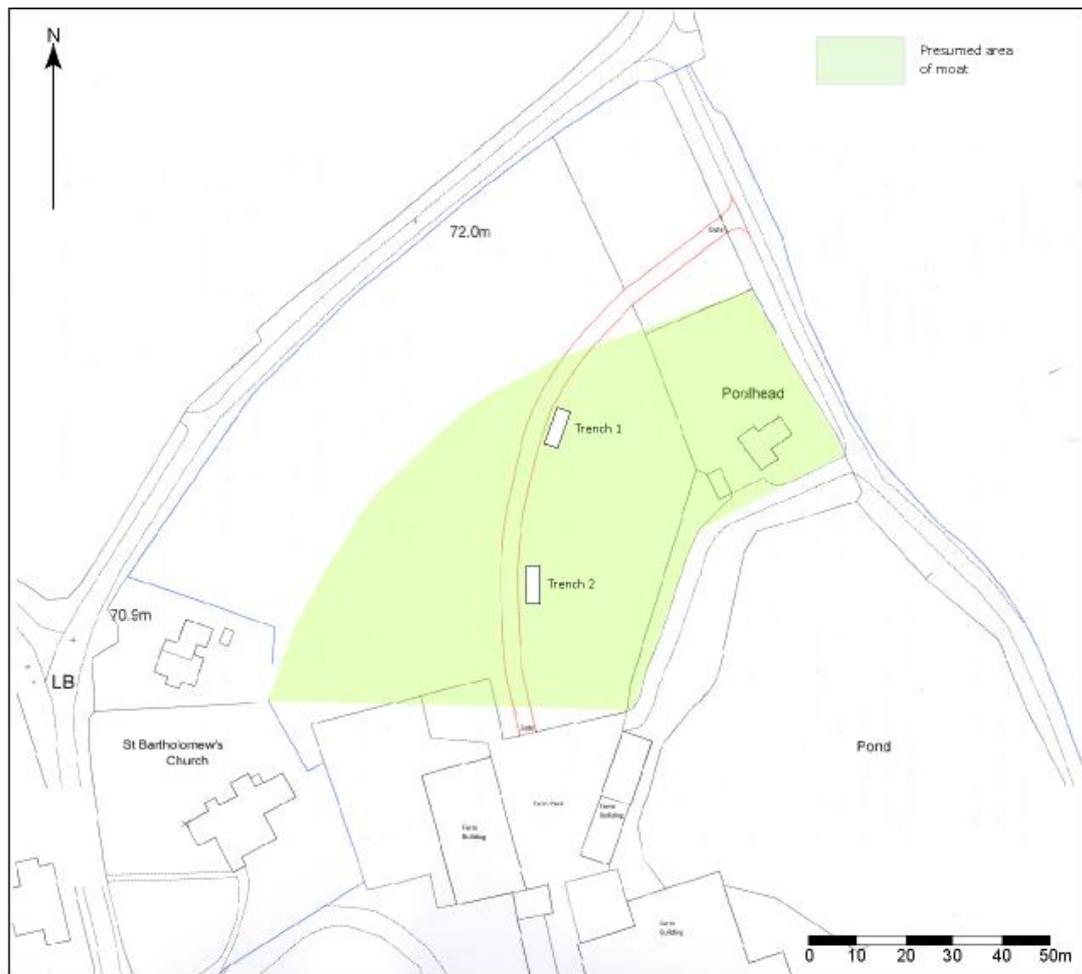


Fig. 2: Plan showing location of trenching in relation to the presumed line of the medieval moat

5.1 Recording

Full written, graphic and photographic records were made using *pro-forma* record forms and sheets, these being in accordance with Border Archaeology's *Field Recording Manual*.

Plans, sections and elevations were produced at a scale of 1:20 on *pro-forma* gridded archivally stable polyester film. Plans, elevations and sections contain grid and level information relative to OS data. All drawings are numbered and listed in a drawing register; these drawing numbers are cross-referenced to written site records.

A colour photographic record of all stratigraphic units comprising record views of contexts, samples or artefacts was made using a high-resolution digital camera, together with a representative photographic record of the progress of the excavation.

5.2 Recovery, processing and curation of artefactual data

No artefactual evidence was recovered during the course of the investigation.

6. Results

6.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 revealed three deposits, the uppermost of which was a topsoil/turf deposit composed of loose mid brown silt with occasional rounded and sub-rounded stones (101). This deposit extended to some 0.18m in thickness and overlay a firm/friable mid reddish-brown silty clay containing occasional small to medium angular sandstone fragments (102).



Plate 1: View west showing east-facing section of Trench 1

Beneath this material was a friable mid red deposit composed of degraded grey sandstone within a silty clay matrix, with frequent small sandstone fragments evident throughout (103). The maximum revealed thickness of this material was 0.3m and it occurred throughout the base of the trench.

No finds or features of archaeological significance were revealed during the course of the trench excavation.



Plate 2: View south showing full extent of Trench 1

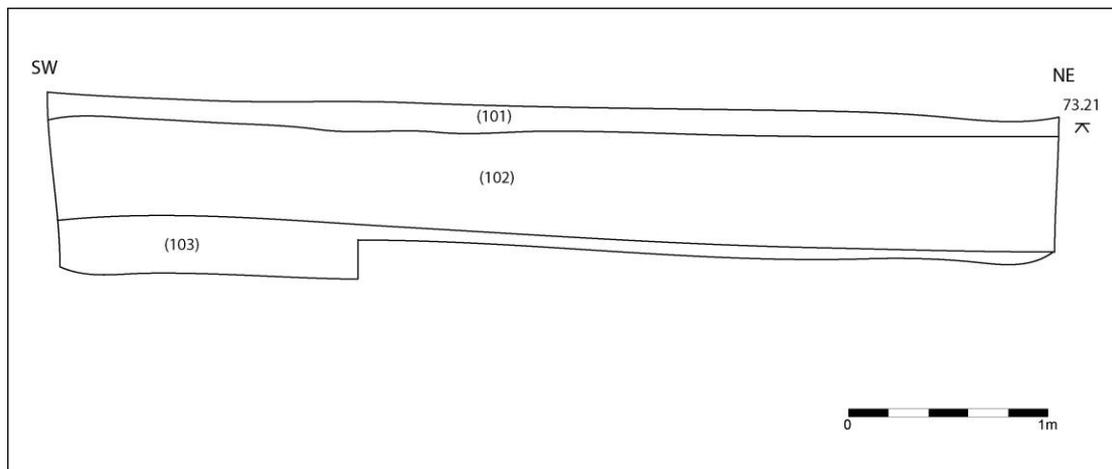


Fig. 3: SE-facing section of Trench 1

6.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 revealed a greater number of contexts. Removal of the upper turf layer (201) revealed a loose mid yellowish-brown sandy clay which was largely devoid of inclusions (202). Located in the southwest corner of the trench was a small patch of loose dark brown/black sandy clay chiefly composed of charcoal with occasional sandstone inclusions

and orange flecking (203). This measured some 0.4m (N-S) x 0.27m (E-W) and was around 0.35m thick. Towards the base of the trench at the southern end, an indurated deposit of grey sandstone (204) was encountered which prevented further excavation at this point.

Elsewhere in the trench, softer material composed of degraded sandstone and sandy clay was revealed. These deposits included a band of moderately compact dark brown silty sandy clay containing frequent degraded sandstone inclusions (207) and a soft yellowish-brown clayey sand (206) extending beyond the northern extent of the trenching. Revealed at the base of the trench underlying (206) was a friable mid red silty clay and degraded sandstone material (208), similar in composition to (103) revealed at the base of Trench 1.

Partially cutting into (204) was the base of a feature [209] that contained three fills. The uppermost of these (210) consisted of friable mid red clayey silt with occasional sandstone fragments, underlying which was a moderately compact mid brown silty clay containing moderate small sandstone fragments (211). At the base of the feature was a loose mid brown clayey silt containing frequent charcoal and occasional fragments of animal bone (212). No finds were recovered from any of these fills. The feature appeared to relate to post-medieval landscaping activity.



Plate 3: View south towards farmyard showing Trench 2



Plate 4: View east showing [209]

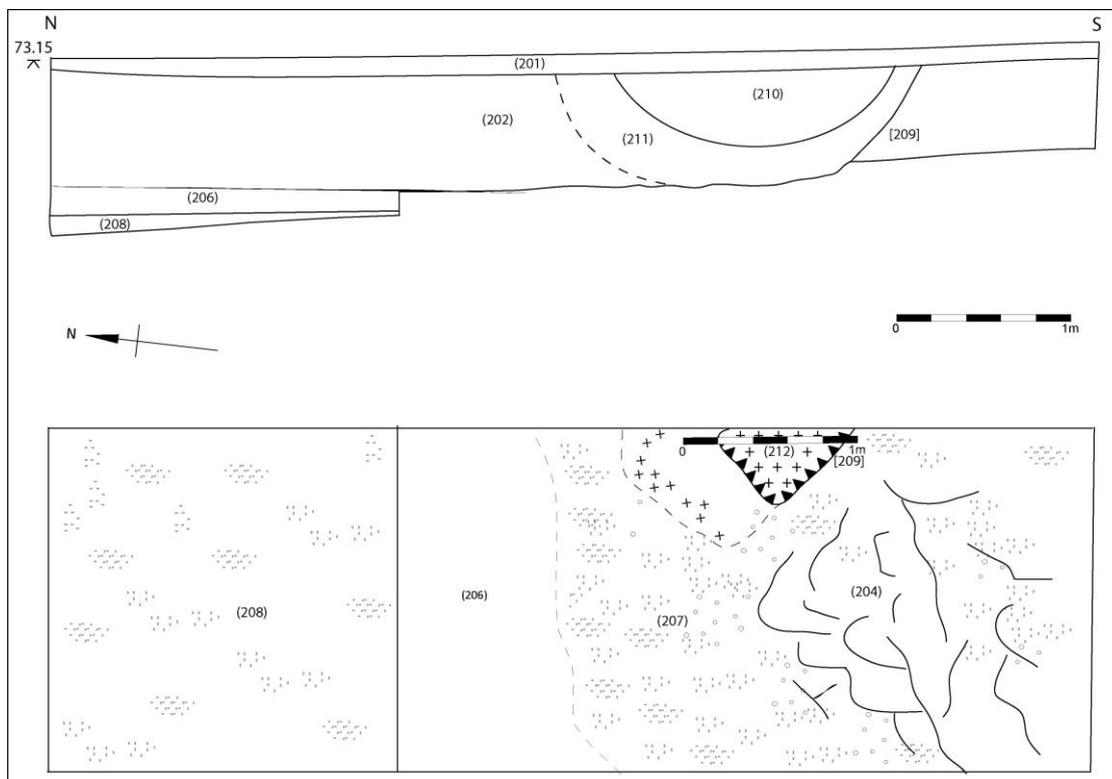


Fig. 4: Plan and W-facing section of Trench 2

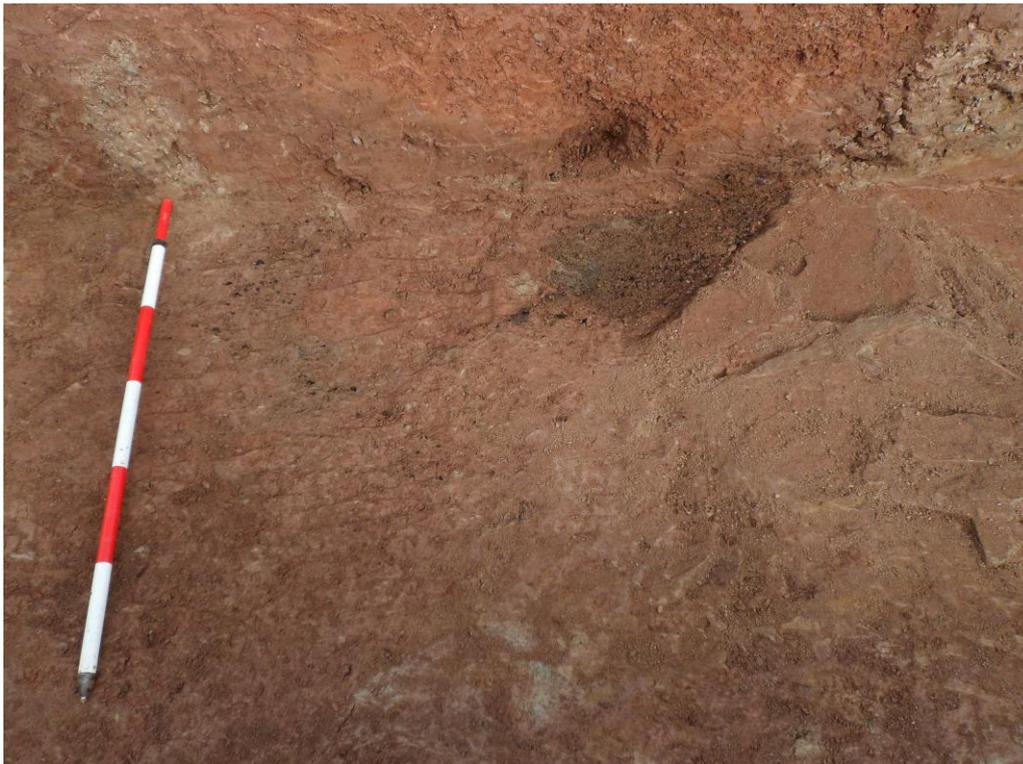


Plate 5: View southeast showing feature [209] and associated fills

7. Conclusion

The evaluation within the area of the medieval moat at Westhide Court revealed no evidence of significant archaeological deposits. Trench 1 revealed a sequence of deposits, possibly representing made ground and, although a feature was identified in Trench 2, this appeared to be of relatively recent origin and is presumably the result of extensive landscaping activity.

It is clear given the proximity of the trenching to the recently laid farm access road that road construction activity has resulted in no discernible archaeological impact.

8. Copyright

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9. References

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10. Context Register

10.1 Trench 1

Context	Description
(101)	Loose mid brown silt; occasional rounded and sub-rounded stones (101). Trench-wide & 0.18m in thickness. Overlies (102)
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Topsoil/turf deposit</i>
(102)	Firm/friable mid reddish-brown silty clay containing occasional small to medium angular sandstone fragments. Extends trench-wide to a thickness of 0.5-0.55m. Underlies (101), overlies (103).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Subsoil</i>
[003]	Friable mid red silty clay + degraded grey sandstone; frequent small sandstone fragments. Occurs trench-wide to a maximum revealed thickness of 0.3m. Underlies (102).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Possible made ground associated with landscaping activity</i>

10.2 Trench 2

Context	Description
(201)	Loose mid brown silt; occasional rounded and sub-rounded stones (101). Trench-wide & 0.12-0.15m in thickness. Overlies (202).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Topsoil/turf layer</i>
(202)	Loose mid yellowish-brown sandy clay; largely devoid of inclusions. Occurs trench-wide to a thickness of c.0.65m. Underlies (201), overlies (204), (206), (207)
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Subsoil</i>
(203)	Loose dark brown/black sandy clay; frequent charcoal, moderate sandstone fragments, occasional orange flecking. Measured some 0.4m (N-S) × 0.27m (E-W) × 0.35m. Underlies (201)
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Small patch of charcoal-rich material within deposit (202) located in SW corner of the trench.</i>
(204)	Indurated deposit of grey sandstone. Occurs trench-wide in southern part of trench. Depth unknown as unexcavated. Underlies (202)
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Natural sandstone outcropping</i>
(205)	VOID



<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>VOID</i>
(206)	Soft yellowish-brown clayey sand (206) extending beyond the northern extent of the trenching to a thickness of c.0.18-20m. Underlies (202), overlies (208)
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Natural deposition</i>
(207)	Moderately compact dark brown silty sandy clay; frequent degraded sandstone inclusions. Extends trench-wide, thickness unknown as unexcavated. Underlies (202)
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Natural deposition</i>
(208)	Friable mid red silty clay + degraded sandstone. Occurs trench-wide in base of trenching, depth unknown as unexcavated. Underlies (206) in N portion of trenching in base of sondage.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Natural deposition, although similar in composition to (103) revealed at the base of Trench 1, which was interpreted as made ground.</i>
[209]	Cut; form unknown as extended beyond trenching to the E. Break of slope top sharp, sides concave, break of slope base gradual, base concave. Measures approximately 1.8m in diameter & 0.65m in depth. Cuts (202), filled by (210), (211), (212).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Bowl-shaped feature of unknown origin, presumably associated with landscaping activity</i>
(210)	Friable mid red clayey silt; occasional sandstone fragments. Measures 1.6m length, 0.42m thickness. Overlies (211), fills [209].
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Upper fill of [209]</i>
(211)	Moderately compact mid brown silty clay; moderate small sandstone fragments. Measures 1.8m length, 0.15-0.22, thickness. Underlies (210), overlies (212), fills [209]
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Secondary fill of [209]</i>
(212)	Loose mid brown clayey silt; frequent charcoal, occasional fragments of animal bone. Measures c.0.8m length, 0.08m depth. Underlies (211), fills [209]
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Primary fill of [209]</i>



Document Control

Job title	Archaeological Field Evaluation: Westhide Court Westhide Herefordshire	Job No	BA1208WCWH
Report written by	<i>George Children MA MfA</i>		
Issue No	Status	Date	Approved for issue
1	Final	April 2012	
<i>Neil Shurety Dip M.GM Inst. M</i>			