

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING (UPON REQUEST OF ENGLISH HERITAGE)

**THE OLD VICARAGE  
WATLING STREET  
LEINTWARDINE  
HEREFORDSHIRE**

**NGR SO 4051 7396  
JOB N<sup>o</sup>: BA1326OVL**



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**Border Archaeology Limited**

Registered in England and Wales

Company Registration Number 07857388

**Registered Office:** 45 Etnam Street Leominster Herefordshire HR6 8AE

**Midlands and North (Head Office):** Chapel Walk Burgess Street Leominster Herefordshire HR6 8DE Tel: 01568 610 101

**West & South West** Bristol Tel: 0117 907 4735 **East** Milton Keynes Tel: 01908 933 765

**South & South East** Winchester Tel: 01962 832 777

Email: [info@borderarchaeology.com](mailto:info@borderarchaeology.com) Web: [www.borderarchaeology.com](http://www.borderarchaeology.com)

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*Frontispiece: View of modern retaining wall and natural deposits, looking NW*

**REPORT SPECIFICATION**

*Archaeological Recording & draft report:* Kath Crooks BA

*Artwork:* Will Logan BA Dip

*Editing:* George Children MA Mlfa

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



# 1. Executive Summary

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*This report details the results of a programme of Archaeological Recording undertaken by Border Archaeology at The Old Vicarage Watling Street Leintwardine in Herefordshire.*

*Following ground works taking place on the site, the work was requested by English Heritage to provide information concerning potential damage to any archaeological features or deposits that may have been present.*

*The Old Vicarage lies within the Scheduled Area (SAM HE28) of the Roman fortified settlement of Leintwardine (Bravonium). Features dating from the Roman period have been identified on the site (Brown, 1991; Topping, 1993; Woodiwiss, 1992) and, at nearby Swan House, a pit containing pottery thought to date to the Bronze Age was found (BA 2010).*

*No deposits, finds or features of archaeological interest were seen during recording. Features recorded were of modern (probably 20<sup>th</sup> century) or of post-medieval date, overlying the natural silts.*

*No finds were retained and no samples were taken during the course of the work.*



## 2. Introduction

Border Archaeology was instructed English Heritage to carry out a programme of Archaeological Recording following excavation of a new access way at the Old Vicarage Watling Street Leintwardine Herefordshire (NGR SO 4051 7396). The site lies in the Scheduled Area of the Roman small town of *Bravonium*.

The aim of the archaeological work was to record an area of disturbance.

Copies of this report will be supplied to Mr & Mrs Foran and to Bill Klemperer Esq of English Heritage. A courtesy copy will be remitted to Julian Cotton Esq Archaeological Advisor Herefordshire Council.

Site work took place on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> September 2013.



Fig. 1: Site location plan



## 2.1 Soils & Geology

In the immediate vicinity of the site, the soils are predominantly typical argillic brown earths of the ROWTON series (571A), comprising well-drained fine silty and fine loamy soils, locally over gravel, and some fine silty over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and seasonal waterlogging. The underlying geology consists of glaciofluvial or river terrace gravel and till, while the solid geology is of undivided Old Red Sandstone (SSEW, 1983).

## 3. Historical & archaeological background

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The earliest occupation at Leintwardine dates from c.65-70ADm consisting of a *vicus* settlement containing a *mansio* (posting station) and bath-house (built c.140AD). This occupation was associated with the nearby cavalry forts of Jay Lane and Buckton, which were successively occupied from c.50AD to 160AD (Stanford, 1968).

The fort at Jay Lane (SMR Record No. 578) was initially identified from aerial photography and then partially excavated by Stanford in 1958-9 (Stanford, 1968, 230-7). The fort consisted of a large rectangular enclosure, defended by a circuit of double ditches; evidence was identified for gatehouses, corner towers and interval towers, represented by postholes in the natural clay and shale. However, no trace of a rampart bank was found and little evidence of occupation surfaces within the interior of the fort was identified, presumably due to the shallow depth of the topsoil. The extent and layout of the fort suggested that it was probably established to house a Roman auxiliary cavalry unit. It appeared that the fort was probably established around 47-50AD and that it was dismantled in about 70-80 AD, replaced by another fort at Buckton, about 1km SW of Leintwardine.

Following the abandonment of Buckton Fort in about 160AD, it appears that the *vicus* settlement at Leintwardine was reorganised as a defended settlement, comprising a rectangular enclosure, fortified with a timber-laced rampart, while an annexe rampart was constructed around the bath-house, which was partially rebuilt and enlarged. Although the construction of the ramparts strongly suggests a military function, there is a lack of the regularly laid-out structures which would normally be found with a late 2<sup>nd</sup> century Roman fort, which has led recent writers to suggest that it might have functioned as a supply base or defended small town (Brown, 1996, 513).

Although Stanford (1968, 317) suggested that *Bravonium* experienced several periods of abandonment and re-occupation in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, more recent analysis has indicated that the site probably remained in continuous occupation from the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century through to the mid to late 4<sup>th</sup> century AD (Brown, 1996, 565-6). It is unclear when Roman occupation at *Bravonium* finally ceased; Stanford's excavations suggested that the final occupation might have ended in about 350AD (Stanford, 1968, 316), although recent work has suggested that settlement activity may have continued into the post-Roman period, a



possibility further strengthened by the central location of the parish church of St Mary within the defended settlement.

The continuing importance of Leintwardine as a settlement is perhaps indicated by the fact that it appears to have been an important royal manor during the Anglo-Saxon period. The Domesday Survey of 1086 records the manor as being held by Ralph de Mortimer and clearly represented a moderately wealthy estate, which was valued at £4 (Brown 1996, 564).

Two watching briefs and a small evaluation excavation have previously been carried out on the site. The first of these, in 1991, followed granting of Scheduled Monument Consent to construct an access drive. Archaeological work involved the excavation of two small evaluation trenches, dug to a depth of up to 1m, and a watching brief during machining over the access ramp.

No evidence for the later, outer ditch (postulated by Stanford) was identified. Also there was no sign of the inner ditch, though it was thought that both ditches survive, probably located further to the W than the trenches in this evaluation (Brown 1991).

An evaluation was subsequently carried out to determine the presence of archaeological deposits and to assess their significance and location. The W edge of a substantial ditch was present. As a result of this evaluation it was thought that the rampart lay outside the W boundary of the property, with derived rampart material overlying a road (probably only used by construction traffic) on the berm (between rampart and inner defensive ditch). A buried soil separated the inner and outer defensive ditches. There was some evidence for small-scale industrial activity taking place outside the defences (Woodiwiss, 1992).

A further watching brief was carried out in 1993 during construction of a building extension, the lowering of the rear garden surface in the upper part of the garden together with cutting back of the W section, the removal of the N wall and exposure of the section behind during the excavation of a new access ramp into the garden.

Below a deep topsoil layer were a number of dumps used to level the ground surface of the garden plot. Levelling of individual plots in the form of E-W aligned lynchets probably resulted, at least in part, from post-medieval cultivation. A similar cultivation pattern has been observed elsewhere in Leintwardine and in this case their existence was beneficial to the survival of underlying archaeological deposits to the S end of the site, as the remains of a medieval stone built oven with, possibly, a superstructure of fired clay, were preserved under these layers. The lowest deposit seen in the W section was thought to be part of the infill of the very substantial Roman outer defensive ditch whose W edge was observed during 1992 evaluation. The E edge of ditch was seen in the N section and was also traced across part of the newly-exposed yard area (Topping, 1993).



## 4. Methodology

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The archaeological programme of work detailed herein was carried out in accordance with recognised sources of professional guidance including *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008), and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (EH 2006). Reference is also made to the relevant English Heritage Historic Environment Local Management (HELM) resources. Border Archaeology adheres to the *IfA Code of conduct* (2012) and *Code of approved practice for the regulation of contractual arrangements in field archaeology* (2008).

The section was irregular in form, wider at the E (street frontage) end. Before archaeological recording commenced, building and garden debris were removed and the section was hand-cleaned, with care being taken not to impinge upon the deposits revealed during ground works. The cleaned section was photographed and drawn.

Full written and photographic records were made in accordance with Border Archaeology's *Field Recording Manual* (BA 2013). The written record comprises a sequence of numbered individual context sheets forming a detailed stratigraphic record of the site. The photographic record was made using a high-resolution (12 MPX) digital camera, comprising photographs of all contexts and archaeological features and structures. Included in each photograph are appropriate scales and all photographic records have been indexed and cross-referenced to written site records. Details concerning subject and direction of view are maintained in a photographic register, indexed by frame number.

Plans & sections were produced on gridded, archivally stable polyester film scales of 1:100 or 1:20, as appropriate. All drawings were numbered and listed in a drawing register, these drawing numbers being cross-referenced to written site records.

## 5. Results

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### 5.1 Modern deposits

The latest deposit on the site was a recently-deposited red clay (112), which sealed a cut [109] containing the surviving part of the existing retaining wall (cover). The cut [109] was some 2m in length and 1.2m deep. The sides sloped fairly steeply, with an angular break to a flat base. It contained the upper part of the existing retaining wall (111). The lower courses of the wall were of angular, roughly-shaped sandstone and varied in depth between 0.40m and 1.0m. However, the wall had been patched and repaired. The wall measured more than 2m in length, extending NE to the road outside the area affected by the ground works. A fill of black silt, (110) possibly derived from the garden soil, was also present within cut [109].

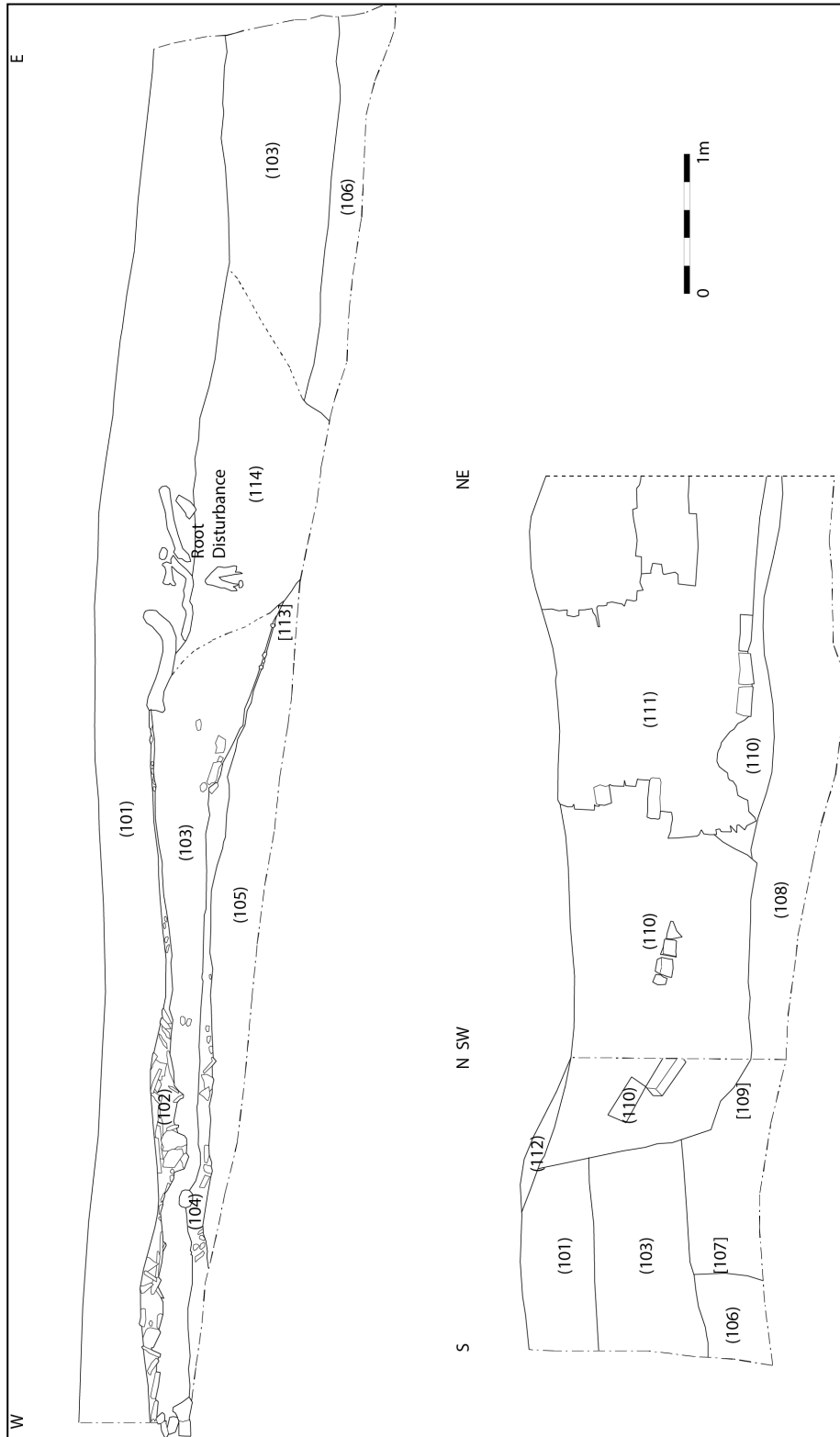


Fig 2: Section

Cut by [109] was the existing garden soil (101) consisting of mid-greyish-brown silt loam 0.30m-0.60m deep, containing frequent pebbles, brick rubble and mortar or plaster flecks. At the W end of the section it overlay (102) comprising a layer of building rubble, including slate, brick, mortar and angular sandstone. Pottery seen in this layer, but not recovered,





included glazed wares dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century or later. The layer became less substantial to the E, petering out at a point where it may also have been disturbed by rooting from a mature apple tree. It appears likely that (102) derived from material taken during previous construction or renovation of the house.

A further layer of re-deposited topsoil (103) underlay rubble (102). It contained occasional flecks of brick rubble and small stones. Beneath it, (104) was a less substantial layer of rubble than (102), being only 0.10m deep, and containing fragments of flowerpot as well as stones and mortar. The layer petered out to the E, becoming a tip line at a point some 5m E from the commencement of the section (*fig. 2*) where all deposits were disturbed by rooting associated with a mature apple tree. A cut [113], identifiable only in the lower part of the section as the fill was indistinguishable from (103), may have been associated with rooting for, or planting of the apple tree.

The lowest deposit seen in the W part of the section was (105), a 0.3m deep, loose silt loam, somewhat cleaner and yellower in colour than (103) (*Plate 1*). It seems likely that layers (101) to (105) were more or less contemporary; none of these was compact or firm and all gave the impression of having been deposited fairly recently, an impression confirmed by pottery and flowerpot observed in the section.



*Plate 1: showing modern rubble layers (102) and (104)*

To the E of cut [113], deposit (103) lay immediately beneath the topsoil (101), which was up to 0.70m deep at this point. Beneath (103) was a fairly loose mid greyish-/yellowish-brown clay (106). It filled cut [107] comprising a linear feature greater than 0.60m wide with a vertical edge and a flat base, cut into the natural silt (108). The S side of this feature had



been removed during the ground works. Deposit (106) extended 2.80m to the W, at which point it was cut by [113].

## 5.2 Natural deposits

The natural deposit on the site (108) consisted of yellowish-brown silt with green stone inclusions and was seen at the E (road) end of the site only.



Plate 2: Cut [107] to the left, cutting natural (108)

## 6. Conclusions

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No archaeological finds or features were identified during recording works at the Old Vicarage. The only deposits present were thought to derive from landscaping and horticultural activity during the post-medieval and modern periods. These deposits overlay the natural silt.

It is understood that previous work to construct a driveway had taken place at the Old Vicarage and that this had subsequently been backfilled. With the exception of natural, all deposits observed were of comparatively loose compaction, suggesting that they may have been of fairly recent origin. It is possible, therefore, that deposits seen in the section face may derive from backfilling the previous work. If this is the case, cut [107] could indicate the N limit of this previous driveway.



A plan of previous archaeological work in Leintwardine indicates that the street frontage at Watling Street lies outside the defences of the town (Brown 1996, 514). Roman features therefore may not extend sufficiently far to the E to have been impacted during the ground works. While Brown's work indicated that small-scale industrial activity was taking place outside the defences, no evidence for this was present.

Further to the E, closer to the road, and where the ground works were considerably deeper there was evidence that construction of a retaining wall during the post-medieval or modern periods had damaged deposits well into the natural silts.

## 7. Copyright

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Border Archaeology shall retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents, under the Copyright, Designs & Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved; excepting that it hereby provides an exclusive licence to the client for the use of the report by the client in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the Project Specification.

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## 9. Context Register

CONTEXT	DESCRIPTION
(101)	Loose greyish-brown silty clay; occasional post medieval debris; measures 0.2m thick. Overlies rubble layer (102).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Topsoil/garden soil</i>
(102)	Loose rubble; frequent slate, brick, plaster, stone in matrix of dark greyish-brown silt; measures 0.20m (max thickness). Overlies (103)
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Rubble dump</i>
(103)	Loose greyish-brown silty clay; occasional post medieval debris; measures 5m (length in section) × 0.2m (thickness). Overlies (104).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Re-deposited garden soil</i>
(104)	Rubble; frequent plant pot, stone, mortar/plaster within loose greyish-brown silt loam; measures 6m (length in section) × 0.10m (max thickness). Overlies (105).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Dump of rubble petering out to E where it is represented as a tip line</i>
(105)	Loose, mid greyish-brown silt clay loam; occasional black flecks, moderate small stones and pebbles; measures 5m (length in section) × 0.30m (depth).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Re-deposited garden soil</i>
(106)	Friable yellowish-brown silt clay loam; red and black flecks (rare) and small stones; measures 3m × 0.60m × 0.50m. Fills [107]
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>May represent backfill for cut for earlier drive</i>
[107]	Cut; linear in form; sides near-vertical, base flat; measures 3m × 0.60m × 0.50m. Filled by (106), cuts natural (108).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Linear cut on N side of recent work - possible cut for previous driveway, backfilled</i>
(108)	Firm yellowish-grey silt; moderate green stone
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Natural deposit</i>
[109]	Cut; linear in form; sides steeply sloping, base flat; measures >5m (length) × 1.20m (depth) (in section). Cuts (101), filled by (111), (110)
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Cut for existing, partially removed, retaining wall, extending outside disturbed area to NE</i>
(110)	Moderately compact black silt loam. Fills [111].
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Fill of cut for existing garden wall</i>
(111)	Masonry; reused brick and local stone construction, no bonding material; measures >2m (length) × 1.20m (height). Fills [109], underlies (112)
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Masonry retaining wall for previous pathway</i>
(112)	Moderately compact reddish-brown silt clay; measures 1.0m (length) × 0.10m (depth) (in section). Overlies (111) and (101).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Modern dump of re-deposited natural, probably from recent work</i>
[113]	Cut; form unknown due to root disturbance. Filled by (114), (possibly) cuts (103)



<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Possible tree planting hole</i>
(114)	Loose greyish-brown silt clay; occasional post medieval debris. Similar to (103)
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Fill of tree planting hole</i>



## 10. DOCUMENT CONTROL

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<b>Report edited by</b>	George Children MA MifA		
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