

# Archaeological Evaluation

**Castle Close  
Eardisley  
Herefordshire**

**NGR: SO 31258 49193  
SMR No: 4926**

## **BORDER ARCHAEOLOGY**

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## 1. Non Technical Summary

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*Border Archaeology was instructed by Border Oak Design & Construction Ltd to undertake a programme of archaeological evaluation on the site of a proposed development at Castle Close, within the historic core of Eardisley, Herefordshire, the principal aim of which was to ascertain the nature and extent of any archaeological remains relating to the former medieval urban settlement. The site is located in close proximity to the substantial earthwork remains of the medieval castle, first mentioned in 1183, and immediately north of the 12<sup>th</sup> century parish church of St Mary Magdalene.*

*The evaluation was carried out between May 14<sup>th</sup> and May 18<sup>th</sup> 2009 and comprised a single trench extending roughly northeast/southwest across the proposed development area. Revealed within this trench was part of a substantial ditch of probable medieval date running northwest/southeast and thought to relate either to the northern outworks of the castle itself or to an area of early settlement activity located immediately to the E.*

*The small pottery assemblage recovered from the ditch fills consisted of Herefordshire green glazed fabrics of 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century date, with a marked absence of post-medieval sherds, suggesting that there was a gradual accumulation of domestic debris within the ditch throughout the medieval period, followed by a final backfilling event which probably occurred not later than the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.*

## 2. Introduction

Border Archaeology was instructed by Dan Cotterell Esq. of Border Oak Design & Construction Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation in respect of a proposed development at Castle Close Eardisley Herefordshire (NGR: SO 31258 49193) (**Fig. 1**) in pursuance of a Brief issued by Julian Cotton Esq., Archaeological Advisor, Herefordshire Council.

Copies of this report will be submitted to Mr Cotterell, Julian Cotton and the Herefordshire Sites & Monuments Record.

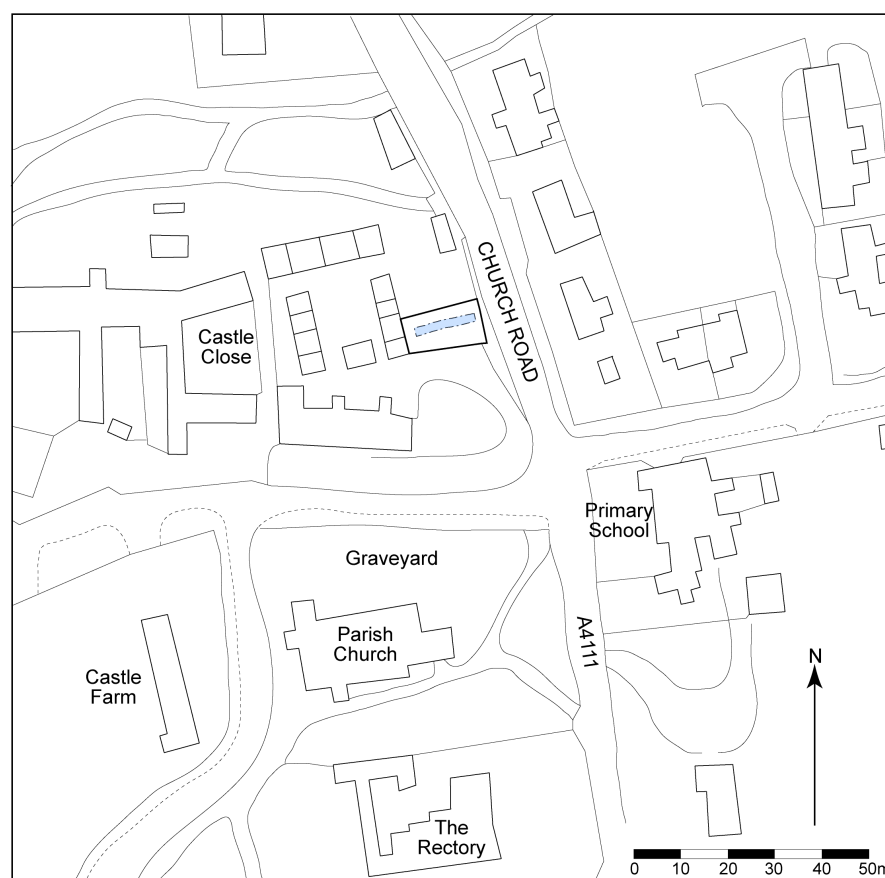


Fig. 1: Plan showing the location of the evaluation trench at Castle Close

### 2.1 Soils & Geology

The area lies close to the boundary of two soil associations, namely, the typical stagnogleys of the VERNOLDS series (711k), to the W and N, and the typical alluvial gley soils of the HOLLINGTON series (811c) to the S and E. The former comprises slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged reddish silty soils overlying reddish till. There are coarse loamy soils in places with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging and some deep stoneless silty soils in alluvium, affected by groundwater. The latter soil association comprises deep stoneless reddish fine silty and clayey soils, variably affected by groundwater, overlying reddish river alluvium.

### 3. Brief Historical & Archaeological Background

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The site at Castle Close lies within the historic core of Eardisley, a former urban settlement first mentioned in Saxon charters of c.1030, where it is recorded as *Cyrdeslea*. The Domesday survey of 1086 refers to *Herdeslege*, which was then held by Roger de Lacy, and to the presence of a *domus defensabilis* or 'fortified dwelling'; the precise meaning of this term is unclear - it may refer to a manor house within a defended enclosure rather than to a ringwork or motte and bailey castle (Robinson, 1869, 52).

The substantial earthwork remains of the later castle (Herefordshire SMR No 1073), which is first mentioned in 1183 and which occupied a central position during the frequent disturbances that took place in the area throughout the 13<sup>th</sup> century, are situated roughly 150m to the SW of Castle Close. The remains comprise an oval enclosure with a motte on the SW standing approximately 5m above the level of the bailey. Spearheads, a helmet, masonry and timbers (the latter presumed to be from the castle drawbridge) have been recovered during investigations carried out in the area of the moat since the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Buteux, 1995, 2).

Eardisley appears to have come into the possession of the Baskerville family by no later than 1225 and, apart from a brief period of de Bohun ownership from 1240-51, continued to be held by the Baskervilles until the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Robinson, 1869, 54-5). Documentary evidence indicates that the castle was attacked by the Welsh in 1263 but it appears to have been repaired and was subsequently garrisoned during the Glyndwr revolt in 1403. It remained in occupation until the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, although it suffered severe damage during the Civil War when most of the castle was burnt down by Parliamentary forces (Robinson, 1869, 55). Evidence for the destruction of buildings and possible cleaning of the moat during the medieval period was revealed during salvage recording at the castle in the early 1990s (Topping, 1994).

A planned urban settlement was established at Eardisley in the early to mid 13<sup>th</sup> century that appears to have enjoyed borough status; documentary records continue to refer to 'Eardisley borough' until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Noble, 1964, 68), and the high quality of construction of the surviving medieval houses in the village indicates a more prosperous settlement in the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, it appears that there had been a marked decline in the fortunes of the settlement by the early post-medieval period. Excavations along the east side of Church Road demonstrated the presence of dwellings with plots of land to the rear which were occupied during the 12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries; these were subsequently abandoned and the plots converted to agricultural use by no later than the 17<sup>th</sup> century, possibly as early as the late 15<sup>th</sup> century (Stone, 2001, 178-9).

The 12<sup>th</sup> century parish church of St Mary Magdalene (Herefordshire SMR No 7367) is situated immediately to the S of Castle Close. The church is noted for its mid 12<sup>th</sup> century font, representing an outstanding survival of the Herefordshire school of Norman sculpture (Pevsner, 2001, 121), while the churchyard, the extent of which appears to have been established during the post-medieval period, contains a 15<sup>th</sup> century cross. The development site is situated within an area presumed, based on its location close to the castle and church, to represent a component of early Norman settlement, predating the planned urban settlement established by the Baskervilles in the early-mid 13<sup>th</sup> century, although no structures earlier than the 17<sup>th</sup> century survive (Buteux, 1995, 4-5).

Evidence for the topographical development of the medieval settlement is provided by the Eardisley tithe map (1839) and later Ordnance Survey maps, which show the castle,

church and Castle Farm (representing the early settlement focus) separated by a stream and an area of low-lying meadow from the regularly distributed tenement plots further to the N, flanking both sides of Church Road, forming part of the planned borough established in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Castle Close thus occupies a key location in terms of potential for evidence of early settlement activity, especially in view of the low intensity of post-medieval development that has taken place in this area (Buteux, 1995, 8).

## 4. Methodology

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Full written, drawn and photographic records were made in accordance with archaeological practices set out in *Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008). Border Archaeology adheres to the *IfA Code of conduct* (IfA, 2008) and *Code of approved practice for the regulation of contractual arrangements in field archaeology* (IfA, 2008) and to Herefordshire Archaeology's *Standards for Archaeological Projects in Herefordshire (Issue 1)* (Herefordshire Council, 2004)

A single evaluation trench measuring 13m NE-SW × 1.70m NW-SE was opened by machine within the centre of the site. Natural deposits were revealed at an average depth of only 0.25m below present ground level. Recording was carried out using *pro forma* context sheets and pre-printed drawing film. A written stratigraphic record was compiled using a context numbering system and stratigraphic relationships were summarised using a Harris matrix.

The graphic record consisted of numbered plans, sections and elevations drawn at scales of 1:20 or 1:10, as appropriate, on *pro forma* gridded archivally stable polyester film. All plans, elevations and sections contained grid and level data and were cross-referenced to written site records. A photographic record of all stratigraphic units was compiled using a 10.3MPX digital camera. Photographs were indexed by frame number and cross-referenced to written site records. All spoil and removed material were visually scanned for artefacts, which were recorded and, where appropriate, retained. A temporary benchmark was established on the site with a value of 74.40m AOD.

## 5. Evaluation results

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The trenching revealed 20 contexts. Underlying the modern tarmac surface (101) were levelling deposits (102) and (107). The first of these (102) consisted of loose mid greyish-brown sandy silt extending to a maximum thickness of 0.2m and containing very frequent large CBM fragments, large and medium angular and subangular stones and moderate mortar fragments. Deposit (107) consisted of firm dark orange slightly silty sand containing occasional CBM fragments and measuring >1.8m × 5.4m × 0.06m (average thickness). Removal of this levelling material revealed firm dark pinkish-brown silty clay with frequent small and medium angular sandstone fragments (103) beneath which was natural sandstone bedrock (115).

Two modern service trenches ([116], [110]) were identified during the initial stage of the evaluation. The first of these [116], running WSW-ENE across the NW corner of the evaluation trench, measured >1.3m × 0.4m × 0.56m and contained a loose grey sandy fill (117). The second, partially excavated feature [110] extended NW-SE across the NE end of the trench and was filled by a dark pinkish-brown sand silt clay containing frequent degraded sandstone fragments and CBM (111).

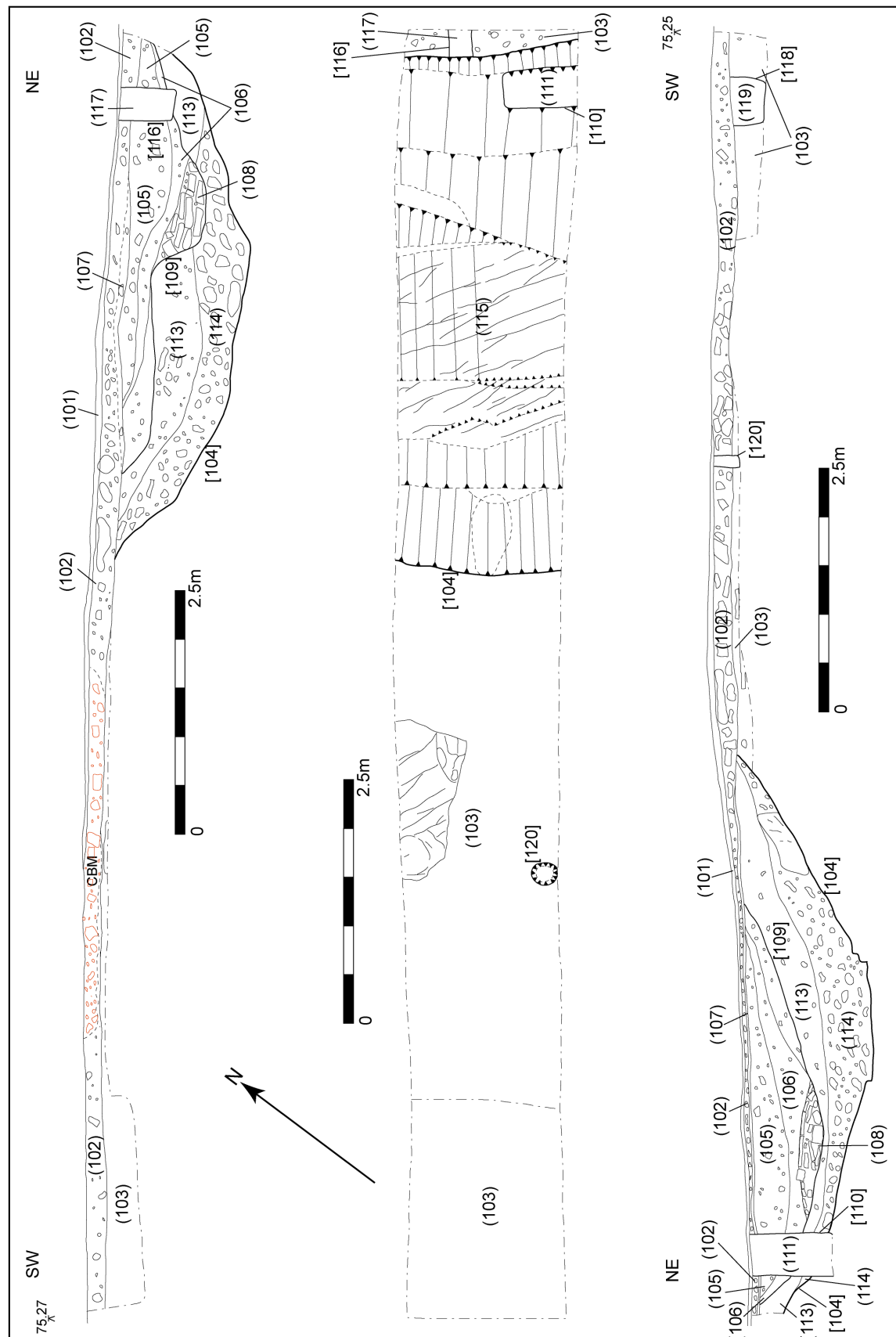


Fig. 2: NW- and SE-facing sections and post-ex plan



Two earlier cut features were subsequently revealed. Located in the SE corner of the trench was a sub-circular pit [118] of post-medieval date and unknown function containing firm mid reddish-brown silty clay with frequent small angular sandstone fragments and occasional CBM (119). The second feature comprised a N-S linear [109] running across the SE end of the trench, which appeared to represent a post-medieval drainage ditch. At its base, the feature was lined with material consisting of small, medium and large sandstone fragments within a dark brown silty clay matrix (108), overlying which was a firm yellowish-brown silty clay fill containing occasional very small subangular stones (112). Further overlying fills consisted of firm mid pinkish-brown silty clay, containing moderate small and medium subangular stones and occasional sherds of post-medieval pottery (106), and firm dark yellowish-brown silty clay, containing frequent small rounded stones and occasional medium sub-rounded stones and CBM fragments (105).



Plate 1: View SW, with ditch feature [104] in the foreground running NW-SE across the trench



Underlying these features was what appeared to be a substantial ditch [104] of probable medieval date running NW-SE across the trench, which had been excavated through deposit (103) and into the underlying bedrock (115) (**Plates 1 & 2; Fig. 2**). As revealed, the ditch measured 1.8m × 5.8m × 1.3m and in profile exhibited moderately sloping sides breaking sharply to form a flat base.

The ditch contained a series of fills. The primary fill (114) consisted of firm dark reddish-brown sandy silt containing very frequent medium and large angular stones and occasional small subangular stones, wood fragments and medieval pottery (Herefordshire green glazed fabrics broadly dated to the mid 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century). Overlying this was firm dark reddish-brown silty clay (113) containing moderate small to medium subangular stones and occasional medieval pottery sherds (again consisting of Herefordshire green glazed fabrics of 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century date) and CBM fragments.



Plate 2: View SE of NW-facing section through ditch [104]

## 6. Summary & Conclusion

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The single evaluation trench opened at Castle Close, Eardisley, Herefordshire, revealed significant evidence of medieval activity in the form of a substantial ditch feature running NW-SE across the NE end of the trench (**Plates 1 & 2; Fig. 2**).

The function of this ditch is unclear; however, its location close to the castle suggests one of two possibilities. It may relate either to a series of outworks associated directly with the castle itself or to the establishment of an outer enclosure delineating an area of early settlement activity to the E of the castle, although no settlement evidence earlier than the 17<sup>th</sup> century has previously been recorded in this part of the present village (Buteux, 1995).

The pottery assemblage recovered from the ditch fills was relatively small in quantity and consisted of rim and body sherds and two jug handles of later medieval Herefordshire green glazed fabrics broadly ranging in date from the mid 13<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. A limited faunal assemblage was also recovered, which included a very small number of cattle horn cores and a number of bone fragments that appeared to have been heavily charred.

It is worth noting that the pottery assemblage recovered from the ditch fills was entirely of medieval date, with a marked absence of post-medieval sherds, which would appear to suggest that there was a gradual accumulation of domestic debris within the ditch throughout the medieval period, followed by a final backfilling episode which probably occurred not later than the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (based on the complete absence of any pottery of a later date). This may be compared with the results of the excavations on the E side of Church Road, which identified evidence for a cessation of settlement activity and a change in land use occurring at some point during the late 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century (Stone, 2001, 178-9).

## 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.

## 8. Bibliography

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Stone, R., 2001, 'Archaeological works on land on the east side of Church Road, Eardisley', *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club*, Vol. 50, pt. 2, 161-83

Topping, N., 1994, *Salvage recording at Castle Farm Eardisley*, HWCC Archaeological Service Report No. 234

## 9. Cartography

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(All maps were obtained from the Herefordshire Record Office unless otherwise stated)

Eardisley parish tithe map – 1839

OS 1<sup>st</sup> edition 25 inch map (Herefordshire 24.7, 24.8) - 1887

OS 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 25 inch map (Herefordshire 24.7, 24.8) - 1903

OS provisional edition 6 inch map (Herefordshire 24 NE) - 1953

## Appendix 1: Context Register

CONTEXT NO	DESCRIPTION
<b>Trench 1</b>	
(101)	Indurated tarmacadam deposit extending approximately 8m × 1.70m and measuring up to 0.10m in thickness. Overlies (111), (117).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Modern surface associated with 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings recently demolished on site.</i>
(102)	Loose mid greyish-brown sandy silt, frequent large CBM fragments & medium to large angular and subangular stones, moderate mortar fragments. Extends trench-wide (13m × 1.7m) and up to 0.2m in thickness. Overlies (119), (107); cut by [110], [116].
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>C20 sub-base/levelling deposit.</i>
(103)	Firm pinkish-brown silty clay, frequent small to medium angular sandstone fragments. Extends trench-wide (13m × 1.70m) and up to 0.42m in thickness. Overlies (115); cut by [104].
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Natural deposit.</i>
[104]	NW-SE linear cut measuring >1.8m × (NW-SE) × >5.8m (NE-SW) × 1.3m; break of slope at top moderate (45°), sides moderately sloping, break of slope base sharp, base flat. Cuts (103), filled by (113), (114).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Probable ditch feature of medieval date, which may have formed part of the outworks of the castle on the NE side.</i>
(105)	Firm, dark yellow/greyish-brown silty clay with very frequent small rounded stones, occasional medium sub-rounded stones and CBM fragments. Deposit extends >1.80m N-S × 3.60m E-W measuring up to 0.40m in thickness. Underlies (107), overlies (106) and fills [109].
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Upper fill of post-medieval ditch [109].</i>
(106)	Firm pinkish-brown silty clay with moderate small to medium subangular stones, occasional post-medieval ceramic sherds and animal bone. Deposit extends >1.80m N-S × 4.10m E-W measuring up to 0.40m in thickness. Underlies (105) overlies (112) and fills [109].
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Tertiary fill within post-medieval ditch [109] comprising redeposited natural.</i>
(107)	Firm dark orange silty sand, occasional CBM fragments. Extends >1.80m NW-SE × 5.40m NE-SW measuring up to 0.06m in thickness. Underlies (102), overlies (105).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>20<sup>th</sup> century sub-base/levelling deposit.</i>
(108)	Moderately compact to firm dark brown silty clay, frequent small, medium and large sandstone fragments, occasional CBM fragments. Extends >1.80m N-S × 1.40m E-W measuring up to 0.25m in thickness. Underlies (112), fills [109].
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Primary fill of post-medieval ditch [109].</i>
[109]	N-S linear cut measuring >1.80m (N-S) × 3.90m (E-W) × 0.72m, break of slope top moderate, sides gently sloping, break of slope base gradual, base slightly concave. Cuts (113).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Cut of post-medieval ditch. Due to the limited excavation area the</i>

CONTEXT NO	DESCRIPTION
	<i>full extent and function of the ditch was not revealed.</i>
[110]	NW-SE linear cut, rounded corners, measuring >0.70m (NW-SE) × 0.33m (SW-NE) × >0.80m (as revealed), break of slope at top sharp, sides vertical, break of slope base undefined, base undefined. Cuts (102), filled by (111).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Linear service trench not fully excavated due to modern function.</i>
(111)	Moderately compact dark pinkish-brown sandy silt clay, frequent degraded sandstone and CBM fragments. Deposit measured >0.70m (NW-SE) × 0.33m (SW-NE) × >0.80m (as revealed). Underlies (101), fills [110].
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Fill of modern utility trench [110].</i>
(112)	Firm yellowish-brown silty clay, occasional very small subangular stones. Deposit measured >1.80m (N-S) × 3.90m (E-W) × 0.32m in thickness. Underlies (106), overlies (108) and fills [109].
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Secondary fill of post-medieval ditch [109].</i>
(113)	Firm dark reddish-brown silty clay with moderate small to medium subangular sandstone fragments, occasional medieval ceramic sherds and CBM fragments. Deposit measured >1.80m (NW-SE) × 3.90m (SE-NW) × 0.40m. Underlies (102), overlies (114), fills [104], cut by [109].
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Secondary fill of medieval ditch [104].</i>
(114)	Firm dark reddish-brown sandy silt with frequent medium to large angular sandstone fragments, occasional wood fragments, medieval ceramic sherds and animal bone. Deposit measured >1.8m (NW-SE) × 5.2m (SE-NW) × 0.54m in thickness. Underlies (113), overlies (103) and fills [104].
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Primary fill of ditch [104].</i>
(115)	Indurated greenish-brown sandstone visible at base of ditch [104].
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Sandstone bedrock.</i>
[116]	WSW-ENE linear cut measuring >1.3m (WSW-ENE) × 0.4m (WNW-ESE) × 0.56m, break of slope at top sharp, sides vertical, break of slope base sharp, base flat. Cuts (102), filled by (117).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Cut of modern utility trench (water).</i>
(117)	Loose grey sand deposit measuring >1.3m (WSW-ENE) × 0.4m (WNW-ESE) × 0.56m. Underlies (101) and fills [116].
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Fill of modern utility trench [116].</i>
[118]	Sub-circular cut measuring 0.54m × 0.52m × 0.32m, break of slope at top sharp, sides vertical, break of slope base sharp, base flat. Cuts (103) and filled by (119).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Cut of post-medieval pit.</i>
(119)	Firm mid reddish-brown silty clay with frequent small angular sandstone fragments and post-medieval CBM fragments. Deposit measured 0.54m × 0.52m × 0.32m. Underlies (102), fills [118].
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Fill of post-medieval pit [118].</i>
[120]	Circular cut measuring 0.24m × 0.22m × 0.17m, break of slope at top sharp, sides vertical, break of slope base sharp, base flat. Cuts (101).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Modern stake-hole with base of stake intact.</i>

## Appendix 2: Site Summary

<b>Report Name &amp; Title</b>	Archaeological Evaluation: Castle Close Eardisley Herefordshire
<b>Contractors Name and Address</b>	Border Archaeology PO Box 36 Leominster Herefordshire HR6 OYQ
<b>Site Name</b>	Castle Close Eardisley Herefordshire
<b>Grid Reference (8 fig)</b>	NGR: SO 31258 49193
<b>SMR number/s of site</b>	4926
<b>Date of Fieldwork</b>	May 14 <sup>th</sup> to May 18 <sup>th</sup> 2009
<b>Date of Report</b>	June 2009
	<b>NUMBER AND TYPE OF FINDS</b>
<b>Pottery</b>	Period: Medieval                      Number of sherds: 19
<b>Tile, brick, plaster, mortar, burnt clay</b>	Period: Med/Post Med                      Quantity: 2
	<b>NUMBER AND TYPE OF SAMPLES COLLECTED</b>
<b>Samples collected for plant macrofossil assessment</b>	None
<b>C14/scientific dates</b>	No and type: N/A Result: N/A
<b>Pollen</b>	No of columns/spot samples: N/A Name of pollen specialist: N/A
<b>Bone</b>	Number of buckets sieved for bone: N/A Quantity recovered: N/A                      Period: N/A
<b>Insect</b>	No of columns/spot samples: N/A Name of pollen specialist: N/A
<b>Other</b>	Type and specialist: N/A
<b>Summary of the report</b>	<p>The single evaluation trench opened at Castle Close revealed significant evidence of medieval activity in the form of a substantial ditch feature possibly relating either to a series of outworks associated directly with the castle itself or to the establishment of an outer enclosure delineating an area of early settlement activity to the E of the castle.</p> <p>The pottery assemblage recovered from the ditch fills consisted of sherds of Herefordshire green glazed fabric dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries with a marked absence of post-medieval pottery. Other finds included a very small number of cattle horn cores. Based on the nature of the deposits and the finds recovered within the ditch, it would appear that there was a gradual accumulation of domestic debris within the ditch throughout the medieval period, followed by a final backfilling episode which probably occurred not later than the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (based on the complete absence of any pottery of a later date).</p>





## Document Control

<b>Job title</b>	Archaeological Evaluation at Castle Close, Eardisley, Herefordshire	<b>Job No</b>	BA0906CCE
<b>Report written by</b>	<i>James Archer BSc, George Children MA MifA &amp; Stephen Priestley MA</i>		
<b>Report edited by</b>	<i>George Children MA MifA</i>		
<b>Issue No</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Approved for issue</b>
1	Final	June 2009	<i>Neil Shurety</i>