

Archaeological Observation

**Land adjacent to Wall End Farm
Stoke Prior
Herefordshire**

**NGR: SO 5230 5650
SMR No. 51341**

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Report specification

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1. Non Technical Summary

Archaeological observation of groundworks was carried out prior to construction works relating to the building of a new dwelling on land adjacent to Wall End Farm Stoke Prior near Leominster. The archaeological works were carried out on the 18th-19th January 2010.

The initial groundworks consisted of a topsoil strip over the area of the proposed development, measuring approximately 17.5m x 8.5m (NW-SE), to a uniform depth of 0.3m. A small quantity of residual pottery of Roman and medieval date was found within the topsoil, as well as large quantities of 19th century pottery sherds.

Following the topsoil strip, a series of interconnecting foundation trenches were excavated to a maximum depth of 1.1m. The upper subsoil deposit displayed significant evidence of root disturbance, probably associated with the use of the field as an orchard during the post-medieval period, underlying which was a deep cultivation soil containing stratified green glazed pottery sherds of 13th-15th century date. This overlaid a sterile subsoil deposit extending to the base of the foundation trench, which was interpreted as natural deposition.

No archaeological features were observed during the course of the groundworks phase of the development.

2. Introduction

Border Archaeology was instructed by Mr. M. Bounds, Border Oak Design & Construction Ltd, on behalf of Mr & Mrs Jackson to undertake a programme of archaeological observation (commonly known as a watching brief) in respect of a new dwelling on land adjacent to Wall End Farm Stoke Prior Leominster Herefordshire (NGR: SO 523 565) (Planning Ref. DCN090815/F). The archaeological programme of work was commissioned in response to a brief issued by Julian Cotton Esq., Archaeological Advisor Herefordshire Council.

Copies of this report will be submitted to the client, Julian Cotton and the Herefordshire SMR.

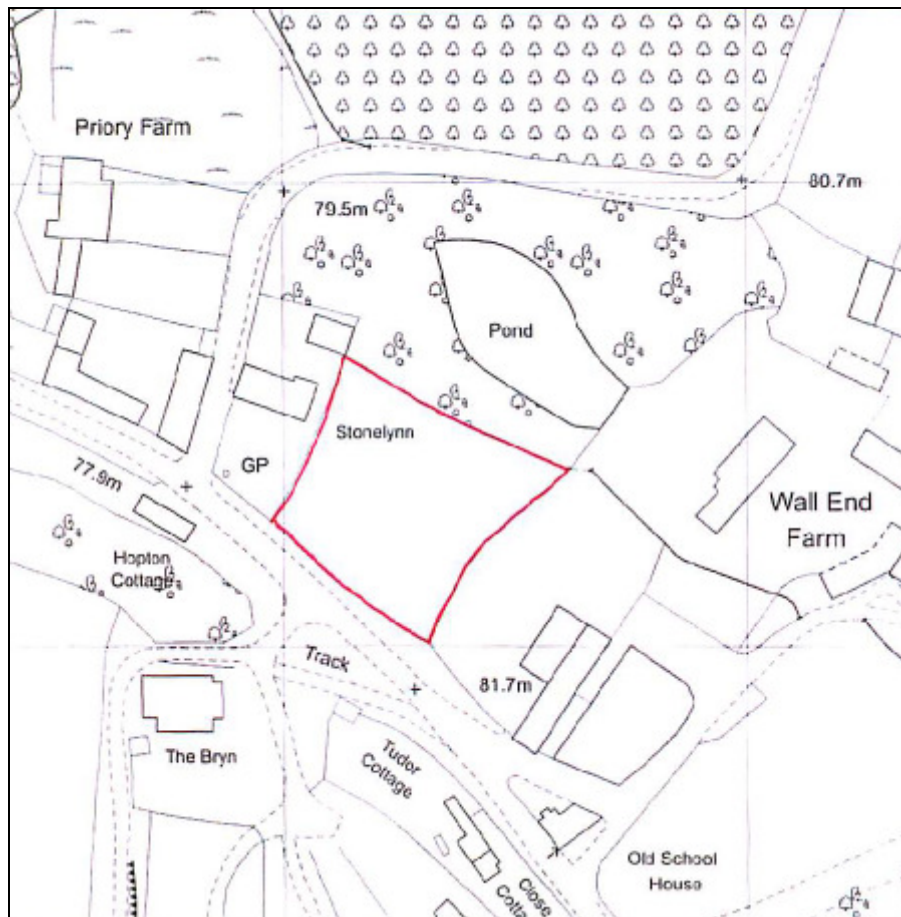


Fig 1: Plan (Scale 1:1250) showing location of site (marked in red)

2.1 Soils & Geology

The area is characterised by typical argillic brown earths of the BROMYARD series (571b), consisting of well-drained reddish fine silty soils over shale and limestone. There are some similar soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging and some well-drained coarse loamy soils over sandstone. The underlying geology is Devonian reddish silty shale, siltstone and sandstone.

3. Brief Historical and Archaeological Background

The development area is located within a field situated approximately 40m W of Wall End Farm (SO 5236 5649) (SMR Record No. 5260), a two-storey Grade II Listed farmhouse, mostly of c.1600 but probably incorporating earlier medieval fabric, with an 18th century extension to the S. Further alterations were carried out in the mid 19th century and the farmhouse has subsequently been subject to restoration (RCHM, 1934).

Wall End Farm is shown on the Stoke Prior tithe map of 1843 (the owner then listed as one John James esquire), which shows that the field to the W of the farm was then occupied by orchard. The OS 1st edition 25-inch map of 1886 also shows the field W of the farm as heavily planted with trees and subsequent OS mapping indicates that it remained as an orchard throughout the 20th century.

The site is located close to the centre of the village of Stoke Prior, a settlement of medieval origin first recorded as 'Stoca' in the Domesday Survey of 1086, forming part of the extensive estates of the pre-Conquest minster church of Leominster (which were then in the hands of the Crown). Stoke subsequently became part of the estates of Leominster Priory after the re-foundation of the pre-Conquest minster as a cell of Reading Abbey by Henry I in 1123 and is subsequently recorded as an important grange manor of the priory (Hillaby, 1987).

The site also lies approximately 200m W of the Romano-British settlement of Blackwardine (SMR Record No. 737), located close to the line of a Roman road running N-S, towards the fort/vicus of Leintwardine (Bravonium). The settlement at Blackwardine still awaits detailed study; it was heavily disturbed by railway excavations in the early 1880s, amateur archaeological investigations in the mid 1970s and landfill groundworks in the early 1980s (Brown, 1990, 390-406; Buteux, 1996).

Although the full extent of the settlement at Blackwardine has yet to be established, it would appear that the principal focus was located to the E of the Roman road, based on the existing archaeological record and aerial photographic evidence. Evidence for Romano-British settlement activity to the W of the Roman road is at present inconclusive; possible traces of settlement defences were identified in a quarry site at NGR SO 5200 5600 (SMR Record No. 3982); however, an evaluation carried out at Stoke Prior primary school revealed no deposits or features of archaeological significance (SMR Record No. 21040).

4. Methodology

Fieldwork was carried out in accordance with archaeological practices set out in *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 1994, revised 2001). Border Archaeology adheres to the IfA *Code of conduct* and *Code of approved practice for the regulation of contractual arrangements in field archaeology* and to Herefordshire Archaeology's *Standards for Archaeological Projects in Herefordshire (Issue 1)* (Herefordshire Council, 2004).

The fieldwork comprised the archaeological observation of all groundworks carried out on the site prior to development. All materials were removed by hand or by machine and toothless bucket.

Written and graphic records were made using *pro-forma* record forms and sheets, in accordance with archaeological practices set out by the IfA (1994, revised 2001). Any identified archaeological deposits, features and structures were recorded in plan and section/elevation at scales of 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50. A photographic record was made using a 10.3 MPX digital camera.

A temporary benchmark with a value of 78.33m AOD was established on the site.

5. Results

5.1 Topsoil Strip

The initial phase of groundworks, undertaken on 18th January 2010, consisted of the removal of topsoil across the area of the proposed new dwelling, measuring approximately 17.5m x 8.5m (NW-SE), to an approximate depth of 0.3m (**Plate 1**). The topsoil (001) consisted of a moderately compact dark reddish-brown silty clay with evidence of significant root disturbance, frequent charcoal flecking and moderate quantities of post-medieval pottery sherds, mostly consisting of blue and white transfer ware of 19th-early 20th century date.



Plate 1: View NW showing main excavation area following topsoil strip

A small quantity of heavily abraded medieval pottery was also found within the topsoil, consisting of a single body sherd of Herefordshire A2 ware of 12th-13th century date, a

green glazed body sherd of Herefordshire A5 fabric of probable 13th-15th century date (**Plate 2**) and a rim and body sherd of Herefordshire A7b ware of mid 13th-early 15th century date. A single, heavily abraded rim fragment of a storage jar of Severn Valley ware (of late 1st-4th century date) was also recovered from the topsoil, together with a single piece of chert, which appeared to be unworked.



Plate 2: Heavily abraded body sherd of Herefordshire A5 (jug) green glazed fabric of 13th-15th century date with distinctive wavy combed decoration

5.2 Foundation Trenching

The main phase of groundworks, undertaken on 18th-19th January 2010, consisted of the excavation of a series of interconnected foundation trenches (average width 0.6m) within the footprint of the proposed building, to a maximum depth of 1.1m (**Fig. 2**).

No significant evidence of disturbance was noted within the area of the foundation trenching, with a fairly uniform stratigraphy present throughout, consisting of three contexts. The uppermost subsoil deposit (101) comprised a friable mid greyish-brown silty loam subsoil with frequent small to medium subangular and rounded stones, very occasional post-medieval pottery (19th century china and transfer ware) and evidence of considerable root disturbance, extending to a maximum thickness of 0.3m. The root disturbance was almost certainly associated with the long established use of the field as an orchard, dating back to the middle of the 19th century.

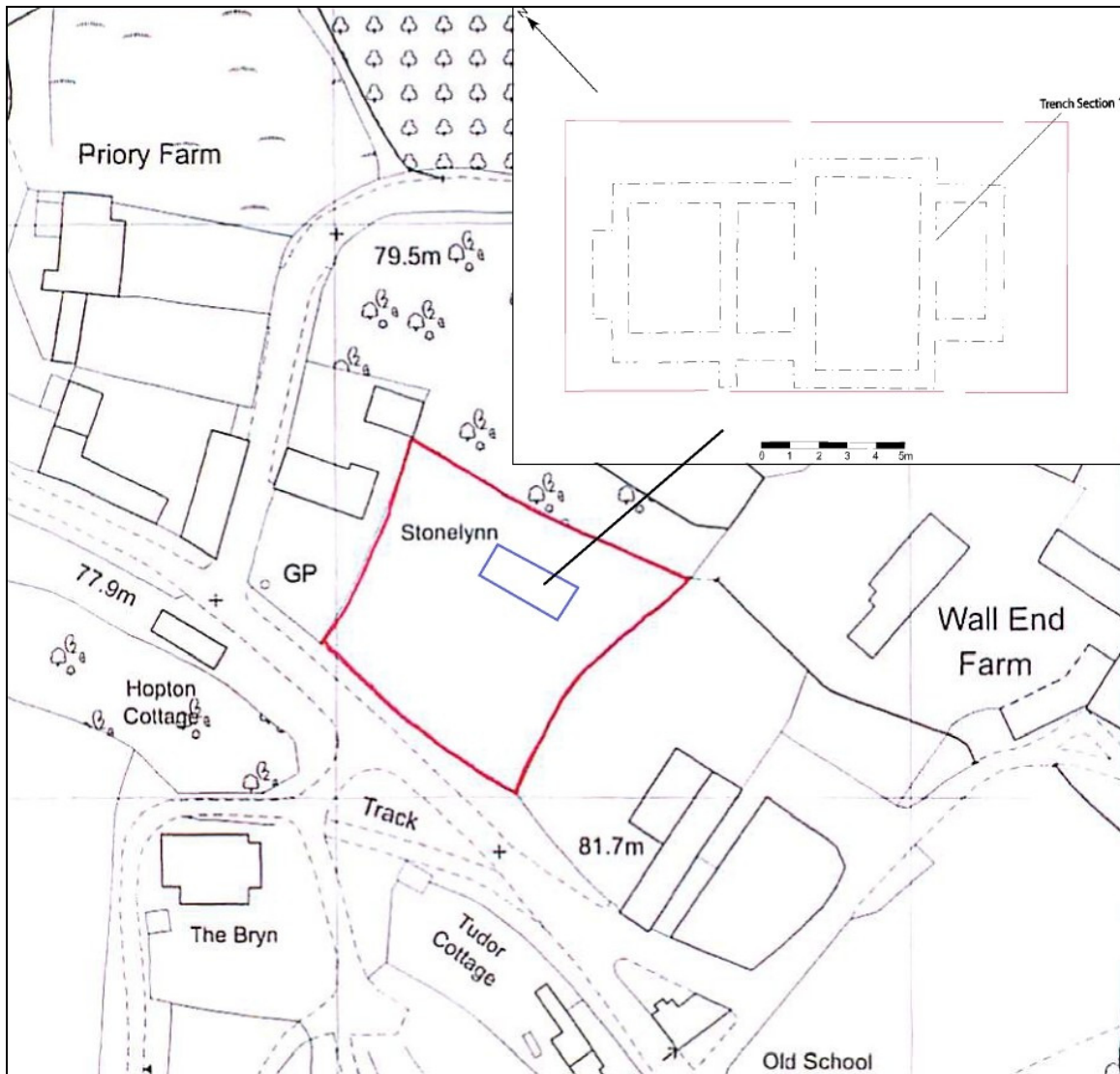


Fig. 2 Plan (at 1:1250 scale) showing location of groundworks for proposed new dwelling (in blue) with inset plan (at scale of 1:100) showing extent of topsoil strip (in red) and foundation trenching

Underlying (101) was (102), a moderately compact mid reddish-brown sandy loam, with frequent medium to large angular, subangular and rounded stones and frequent charcoal flecking and occasional lenses of charcoal, measuring between 0.35-0.5m in thickness. A small quantity of stratified medieval pottery, consisting of two large body sherds and a single rim sherd from a single vessel of Herefordshire A7b fabric (of late 13th-15th century date) was recovered from (102) at a depth of 0.4m. (102) was interpreted as a cultivation soil of probable medieval/early post-medieval date (**Fig. 3; Plate 3**).

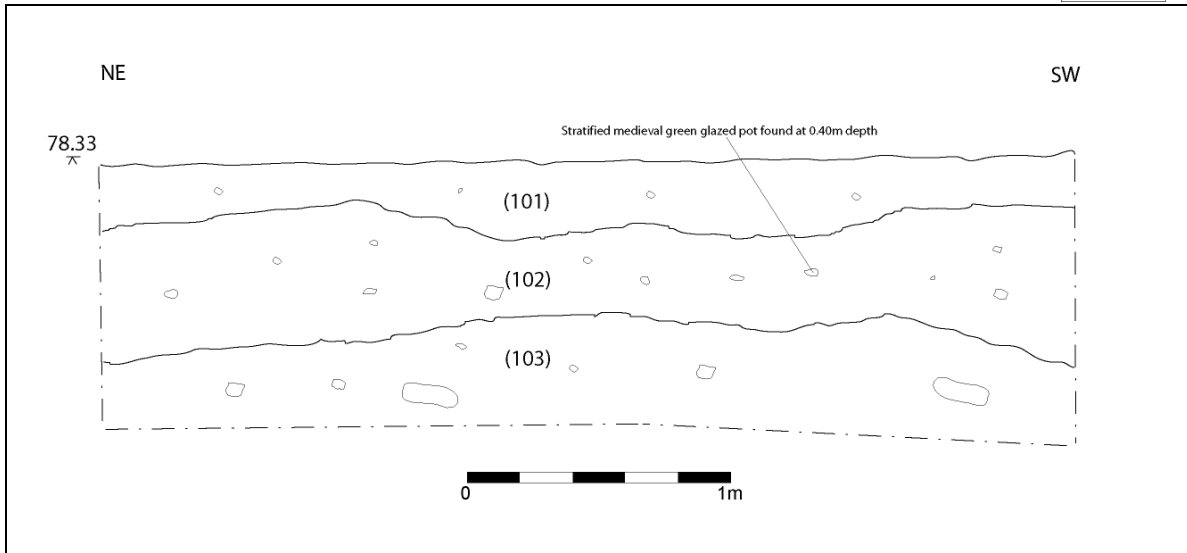


Fig. 3: NW-facing section of Trench Section 1 showing location of stratified medieval pottery

(102) in turn overlaid (103), a firm compacted light reddish brown sandy clay with frequent medium to large angular and rounded stones (degraded sandstone and siltstone) the visible thickness of which measured between 0.3-0.4m and which was interpreted as natural deposition. No archaeological features were identified with the foundation trenches excavated.



Plate 3: View SE showing NW face of Trench Section 1 revealing medieval pottery in (102) at depth of 0.4m (visible to left of scale)

6. Conclusion

No features of archaeological significance were revealed during the course of the groundworks. Subsoil deposit (101) displayed evidence of extensive root disturbance, reflecting the fact that the area was occupied by an orchard at least since the 1840s (and probably earlier). Underlying (101) was a deep cultivation soil (102) containing stratified medieval pottery of 13th-15th century date, which, in turn, overlaid a sterile light reddish-brown sandy clay, interpreted as natural.

A small assemblage of finds was recovered during this programme of archaeological works, consisting of a single pottery rim from a Severn Valley ware vessel of Roman date and a quantity of medieval pottery, consisting of local Herefordshire green glazed wares of 13th-15th century date. Most of this material was recovered from the topsoil strip and must therefore be regarded as being residual in nature, although the stratified medieval pottery sherds found in (102) may be associated with occupation at nearby Wall End Farm, which appears to incorporate fabric of late medieval date.

7. Copyright

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; excepted 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. References

8.1 Bibliography

Herefordshire Archaeology Sites & Monuments Record

Buteux, V., 1996, *Archaeological assessment of Blackwardine, Hereford & Worcester* (Central Marches Historic Towns Survey, Hereford & Worcester County Council)

Hillaby, J., 'Early Christian and Pre-Conquest Leominster: An Exploration of the Sources', *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club* (1987), 557-685.

Pevsner, N., 1963, *The Buildings of England: Herefordshire*, London

RCHME, 1934, *Inventory of Ancient and Historic Monuments in Herefordshire Volume 1: Herefordshire North West*, London

8.2 Cartography

Land adjacent to Wall End Farm Stoke Prior Herefordshire



Stoke Prior tithe map and apportionment - 1843

1886 OS 1st Edition 25-inch map (Herefordshire 19.4)

1891 OS 1st edition 6-inch map (Herefordshire 19 NE)

1905 OS 2nd edition 6-inch map (Herefordshire 19 NE)

1953 OS provisional edition 6-inch map (Herefordshire 19 NE)

9. Appendix: Context Register

9.1 TOPSOIL STRIP

Context No	Description
(001)	Moderately compact dark reddish-brown silty clay, evidence of significant root disturbance, frequent charcoal flecking and moderate quantities of post-medieval pottery sherds, occasional medieval green glazed pottery, single rim sherd of Severn Valley ware & a single piece of unworked chert. Measures 0.3m thick. Overlies (101).
INTERPRETATION:	<i>Topsoil</i>

9.2 FOUNDATION TRENCHING

Context No	Description
(101)	Friable mid greyish-brown silty loam subsoil, frequent small to medium sized subangular and rounded stones, very occasional post-medieval pottery & evidence of considerable root disturbance. Extends trench wide to a maximum thickness of 0.3m. Overlies (102). Underlies (001).
INTERPRETATION:	<i>Deposit associated with use of field as orchard during post-medieval period</i>
(102)	Moderately compact mid reddish-brown sandy loam, frequent medium to large angular, subangular and rounded stones, frequent charcoal flecking & occasional lenses of charcoal. Extends trench wide measuring 0.35-0.5m thick. Several body sherds of medieval green glazed pottery. Underlies (101). Overlies (103).
INTERPRETATION:	<i>Medieval/post-medieval cultivation soil.</i>
(103)	Firm light reddish-brown sandy clay, frequent medium to large subangular & rounded stones (degraded sandstone and siltstone). Extends trench wide to a maximum visible thickness of 0.4m. Full depth of deposit not ascertained. Underlies (102).
INTERPRETATION:	<i>Sterile subsoil deposit. Natural</i>

Site Summary

Report Name & Title	Archaeological Observation: Land adjacent to Wall End Farm Stoke Prior Leominster Herefordshire	
Contractor's Name and Address	Border Archaeology, PO Box 36, Leominster, Herefordshire, HR6 0YQ	
Site Name	Land adjacent to Wall End Farm Stoke Prior Leominster Herefordshire	
Grid Reference (8 fig)	SO 5230 5650	Planning Application Number: DCN090815/F
SMR number of site	51341	
Date of Field Work	January 2010	
Date of Report	January 2010	
	NUMBER AND TYPE OF FINDS	
Pottery	Period: Roman/Medieval	Number of sherds: 10
Other	Period:	Quantity:
	NUMBER AND TYPE OF SAMPLES COLLECTED	
Sieving for charred plant remains	No of features sampled N/A No of buckets N/A	
C¹⁴/scientific dates	No and Type N/A Result N/A	
Pollen	No of columns/spot samples N/A Name of pollen specialist N/A	
Bone	Number of buckets sieved for bone N/A Quantity Recovered N/A Period N/A	
Other	Type and specialist N/A	
Summary of the report	<p>The initial groundworks consisted of a topsoil strip over the area of the proposed development, measuring approximately 17.5m x 8.5m (NW-SE), to a uniform depth of 0.3m. A small quantity of residual pottery of Roman and medieval date was found within the topsoil, as well as large quantities of 19th century pottery sherds. Following the topsoil strip, a series of interconnecting foundation trenches were excavated to a maximum depth of 1.1m. The upper subsoil deposit displayed significant evidence of root disturbance, probably associated with the use of the field as an orchard during the post-medieval period, underlying which was a deep cultivation soil containing stratified green glazed pottery sherds of 13th-15th century date. This overlaid a sterile subsoil deposit extending to the base of the foundation trench, which was interpreted as natural deposition. No archaeological features were identified during this programme of works.</p>	

Document Control

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Report edited by: <i>George Children MA MIfA</i>	
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Approved for issue: <i>Neil Shurety Dip.M. G.M.Inst.M</i>	