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Commercial Archaeology
Working throughout England and Wales

Archaeological Observation

Clifford Castle

Clifford

Herefordshire

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1 Executive Summary

Border Archaeology was commissioned by Alex Whibley of Hook Mason Architects to undertake Archaeological Observation of drainage trench excavations associated with conversion of the upper storey of an existing garage at Clifford Castle to occasional guest accommodation.

The site lies just outside the bailey of Clifford Castle and is outside the Scheduled Ancient Monument. Work followed on from Border Archaeology's programme of excavation connected with the extension of the house and the insertion of a wine cellar, which uncovered evidence for a number of pits and layers containing pottery dating to between the 12th and 13th centuries, with some residual material of 11th -to 12th -century date.

No archaeological deposits or features were seen during the present phase of work, with modern deposits and features lying immediately above natural subsoil.

2 Introduction

Border Archaeology was instructed by Alex Whibley of Hook Mason Architects on behalf of the client to undertake Archaeological Observation (or 'watching brief') of drainage trench excavations associated with conversion of the upper storey of an existing garage at Clifford Castle (NGR SO 24408 45725) to occasional guest accommodation (*figs 1 & 2*).

The site lies just outside the bailey of Clifford Castle and is outside the Scheduled Ancient Monument. Work followed on from Border Archaeology's programme of excavation connected with the extension of the house and the insertion of a wine cellar. This earlier programme of work uncovered evidence for a number of pits and layers containing pottery dating to between the 12th and 13th centuries, with some residual material of 11th -to 12th -century date, and is the subject of a separate report.

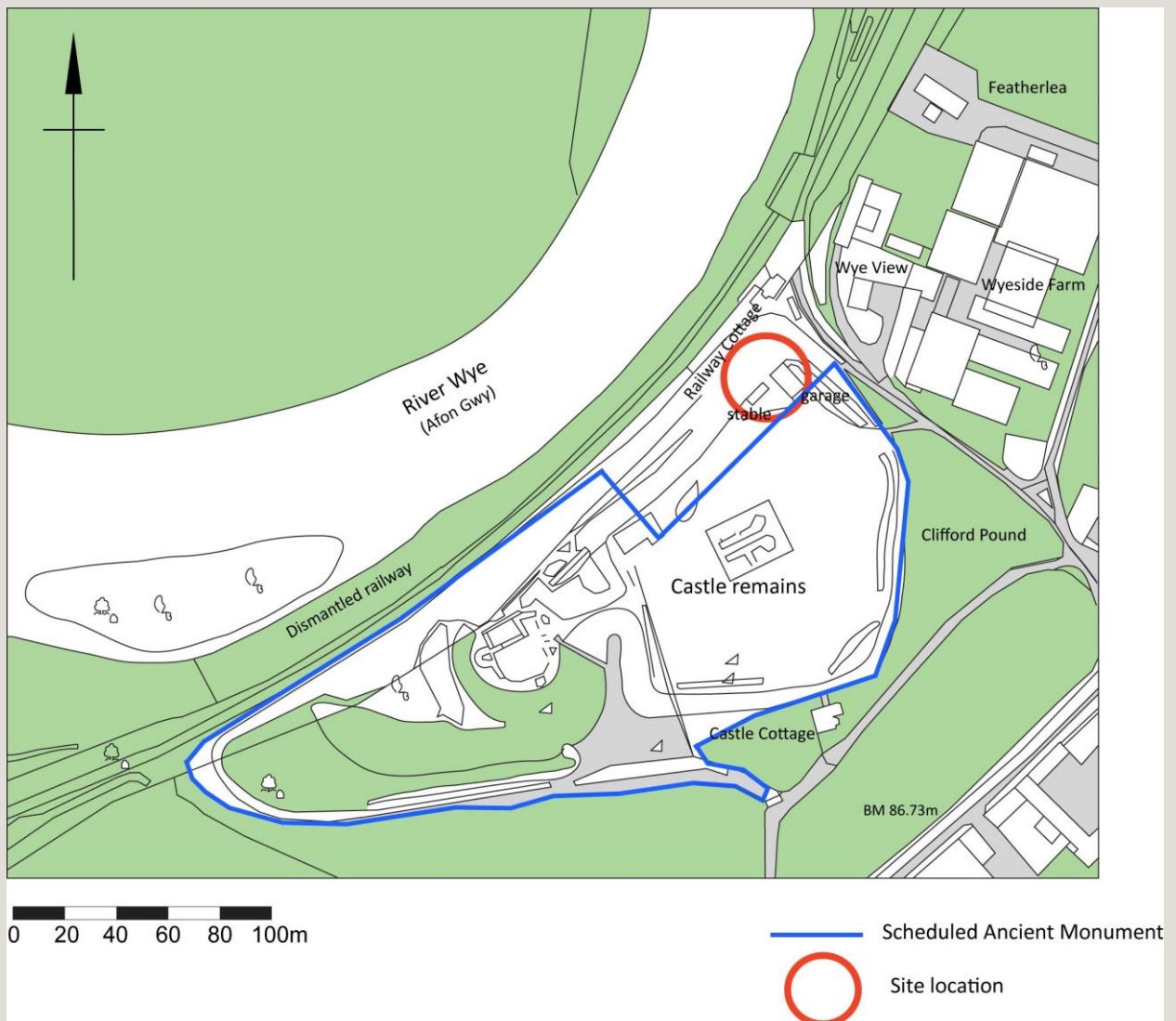


Fig. 1: Location of drainage work at Clifford Castle

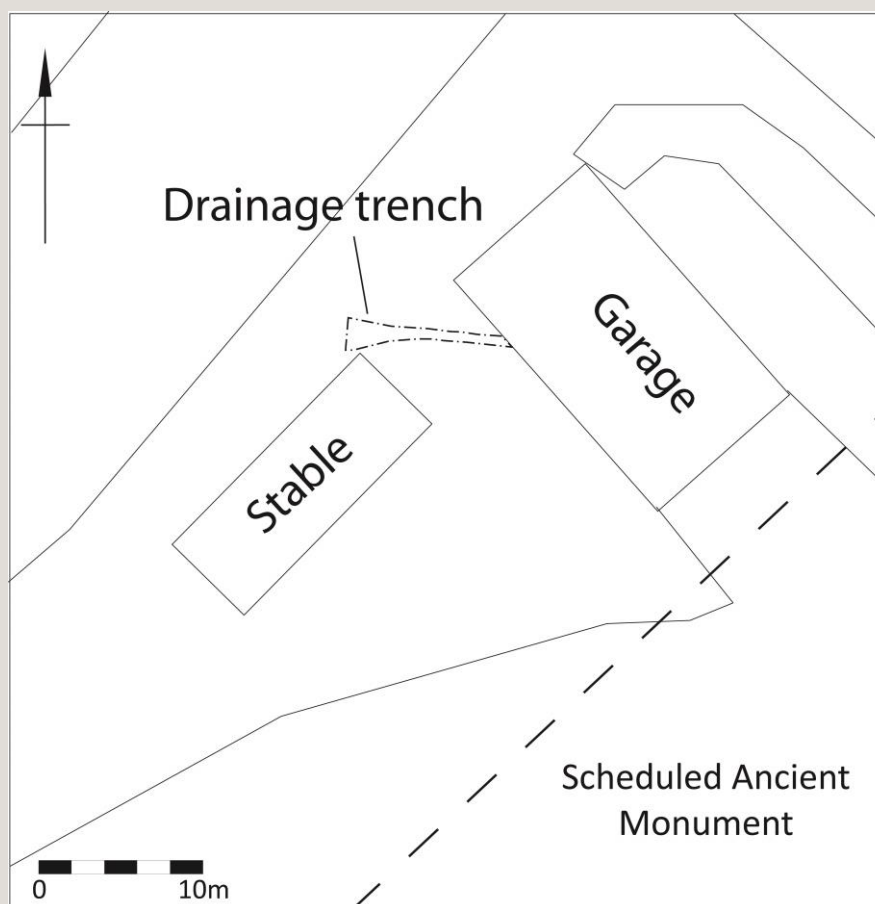


Fig. 2: Plan showing location of drainage trench

2.1 Soils & geology

The soils on the site consist of typical argillic brown earths of the Newnham series (571w), composed of well-drained reddish coarse and fine loamy soils over gravels with some similar soils being affected by groundwater. The underlying geology consists of Old Red Sandstone, including Downtonian.

3 Historical & archaeological background

The site lies to the NE of the gatehouse of Clifford Castle and outside the area of the Scheduled Ancient Monument. It is at the very NE edge of the outer ward of the bailey. Clifford Castle was intended to protect a planned Norman settlement at Clifford and to guard a strategically important river crossing along the border between England and Wales (Coplestone-Crow 1989).

The castle stands on the bank of the River Wye and comprises a large motte, with substantial masonry remains of a shell keep on top, including 12th-century D-shaped towers and a great hall. There are two baileys, the bigger of which, when excavated in the 1950s, was found to contain the base of a large gatehouse and barbican

(Shoesmith, 2009, 89-90, *fig. 15.17*). The castle appears to have been built by William fitz Osbern and is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086 as being held by Ralph de Tosny.

During the 12th and 13th centuries, the castle was held by the Clifford family and later came into the possession of the Mortimers (RCHM 1931, 39). It was whilst in the ownership of Walter de Clifford in the 1220s that the castle was rebuilt in stone (Pettifer 1995, 94). It was destroyed by Welsh forces during the rebellion of Owain Glyndŵr in 1402 and subsequently fell into decay, its masonry being re-used in properties in the village.

An excavation undertaken in 1925-8 uncovered the base of towers flanking the entrance and possible evidence for a portcullis, guardrooms the S tower and part of a curtain wall.

Excavations undertaken in 2008 revealed a substantial wall oriented SW/NE parallel to the NW curtain wall. The earliest deposit contained 12th -century pottery. Further medieval features included fire pits, demolition rubble and a rubbish pit containing medieval cooking pot and fragments of animal bone (Archenfield Archaeology 2008).

Recent work undertaken by Border Archaeology in January 2014 revealed a number of pits, possibly associated with the construction of the stone castle and sealed by layers containing pottery dating to the later 12th and early 13th centuries.

4 Methodology

The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with practices set out in *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008 -updated Nov 22nd 2013) and *Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008, updated Nov 22nd 2013). Border Archaeology adheres to the IfA *Code of conduct* (2013, updated Mar 20th 2014) and *Code of approved practice for the regulation of contractual arrangements in archaeology* (2008, updated Mar 20th 2014) and to Herefordshire Archaeology's *Standards for Archaeological Projects in Herefordshire (Issue 1)* (Herefordshire Council 2004).

The Institute for Archaeologists states (2008, 2) that the purpose of a watching brief is:

- To allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works;
- To provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard

All intrusive ground works were carried out by machine under archaeological observation. Ground works activity was halted where necessary to enable areas of archaeological interest to be defined and recorded. It proved

impracticable to insert the trench to the rear of the stable block due to lack of space and an alternative drainage plan involving the excavation of a pit 0.90m deep and pipe run was adopted.

Examination and cleaning of all archaeological deposits was carried out manually, using appropriate hand tools, and any archaeological deposits revealed were examined and recorded both in plan and section. Topsoil and subsoil were routinely checked during the ground works to collect and record any significant finds. However, no such finds were identified.

4.1 Recording

Full written, graphic and photographic records were made in accordance with Border Archaeology's *Archaeological Field Recording Manual* (2014). Records included:

- A *pro-forma* context record for each stratigraphic unit
- Plans of excavated areas showing: the extent of the area (tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid), the extent of all stratigraphic units and appropriate detail within stratigraphic units.
- A photographic record of all stratigraphic units, in addition to a representative photographic record of the progress of the archaeological work. The record was made using a high-resolution digital camera and each photograph contained an appropriate scale; all photographic records were indexed and cross-referenced to written site records. Details concerning subject and direction of view were maintained in a photographic register, indexed by frame number.

5 Results

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	(101)	-	Deposit	Topsoil/subsoil	Moderately compact mid brown silty clay; moderate rounded cobbles, plastic, rubble, modern pottery & tile. Overlies (103)	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	(102)	-	Deposit	Natural	Firm hard yellow silt clay natural; moderate rounded stones. Beneath (103).	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	(103)	-	Deposit	Subsoil	Firm mid brown silt clay; frequent small to medium rounded cobbles. No finds. Underlies (101), overlies (102)	-	-	-	-	-	Cleaner than topsoil (101)

6 Discussion

The trench measured some 10m in length and - with the exception of the pit intended for the pump - about 0.45m deep. It was apparent that the area had been undisturbed until the construction of the garage and the stable block associated with the 20th -century house. The topsoil contained what appeared to be a builders' dump of tile, together with modern pottery (transfer printed wares), none of which was retained. Excavation of the pit for the pump reached a depth of some 0.90m beneath the existing ground level, at which point the silt clay natural deposit (102) with rounded stones was present.



Plate 1: The excavated trench, view NW

The area lay outside the Scheduled Area of Clifford Castle in the outer ward of the main bailey. The possibility is that it was some distance from the structures which would have occupied the inner ward of the main bailey. Whilst it is known that there were buildings, including a chapel, in the bailey, it is likely that this would have lain within the inner ward.

7 Copyright

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