

Archaeological Observation

On behalf of

Steve Cresswell Esq

Concerning groundworks at

Limebrook Cottage

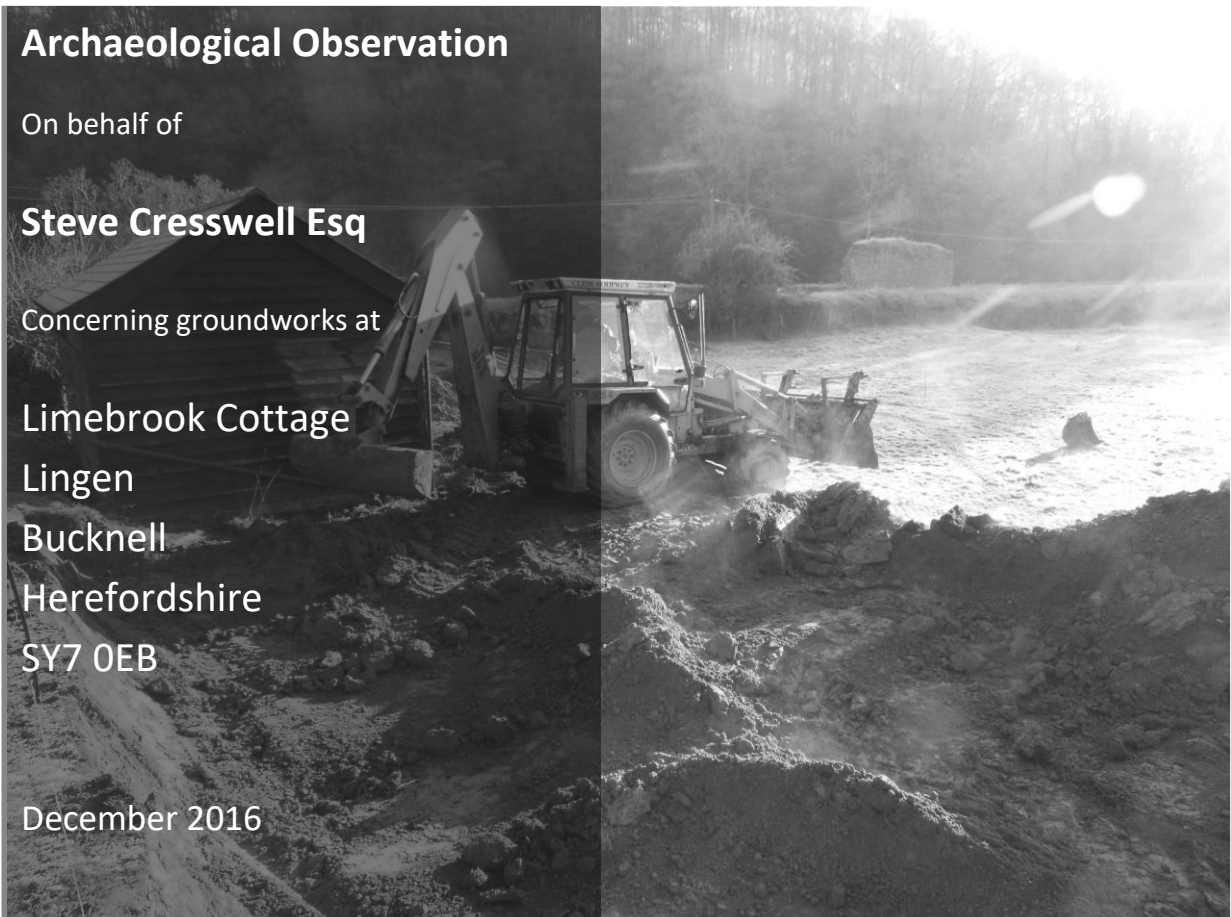
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SY7 0EB

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Report Specification:

Compilation:

Katherine Crooks BA

Artwork:

Holly Litherland BA (Hons)

Editing:

George Children MA MCI fA

Final Edit & Approval:

Neil Shurety Dip. M G M Inst M

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Cover: The site looking southeast, with ruins of the Augustinian Nunnery in the background

General Enquiries: E: info@borderarchaeology.com | T: 01568 610101

Border Archaeology Regional Offices

Bristol

Park House, 10 Park Street,
Bristol, BS1 5HX
T: 0117 907 4735

Leeds

No 1 Leeds, 26 Whitehall Road,
Leeds, LS12 1BE
T: 0113 3570390

Leominster (Administration)

Chapel Walk, Burgess Street,
Leominster, HR6 8DE
T: 01568 610101

Milton Keynes

Luminous House, 300 South Row,
Milton Keynes, MK9 2FR
T: 01908 933765

Newport

Merlin House, No1 Langstone Business Park,
Newport, NP18 2HJ
T: 01633 415339

Winchester

Basepoint Business Centre, Winnal Valley Road,
Winchester, SO23 0LD
T: 01962 832777

Bristol | Leeds | Leominster | London | Milton Keynes | Newport | Winchester

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1 Executive Summary

Border Archaeology Ltd was instructed by Steve Cresswell Esq of Limebrook Cottage Lingen Herefordshire to undertake Archaeological Observation during groundworks associated with the erection of an agricultural building at Lingen in Herefordshire.

The site lies close to the Scheduled Ancient Monument comprising the remains of the Augustinian nunnery of Limebrook, the aim of the archaeological work being to identify and record any finds or features of medieval date potentially associated with the priory.

No archaeological remains were identified during the work, which revealed only a turf topsoil and deposits of natural origin.

2 Introduction

Border Archaeology Ltd (BA) was instructed by Steve Cresswell Esq to carry out a programme of Archaeological Observation (AO) with respect to the erection of a portal-frame agricultural building as a store (stock & implements) at Limebrook Cottage Lingen Bucknell Herefordshire SY7 OEB (NGR: SO37345 66085) (Planning Ref. P161977/F).

The site (*fig. 2*) lies within an isolated rural location on an unclassified road SE of Lingen. The curtilage of Limebrook Cottage contains barns and outbuildings, both the house and one of the buildings being Grade II listed. The site occupies a slightly elevated position to the E of the road with two existing outbuildings to the W. The Scheduled Ancient Monument is located immediately adjacent to the SE of the site.

2.1 Soils & Geology

The site consists of typical stagnogley soils of the STANWAY series (711a), these being slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged, often stoneless, fine silty or fine silty over clayey soils overlying Palaeozoic siltstone, shale and mudstone (SSEW 1983).



Fig. 1: Location plan (site shown in red)

3 Methodology

The programme of archaeological work comprised, in addition to AO, an appropriate and proportionate contingency for limited archaeological excavation should any significant at-risk remains be encountered.

The groundworks comprised ground reduction/levelling operations and excavation of six shallow (0.60m deep) foundation pits (*fig. 2*).

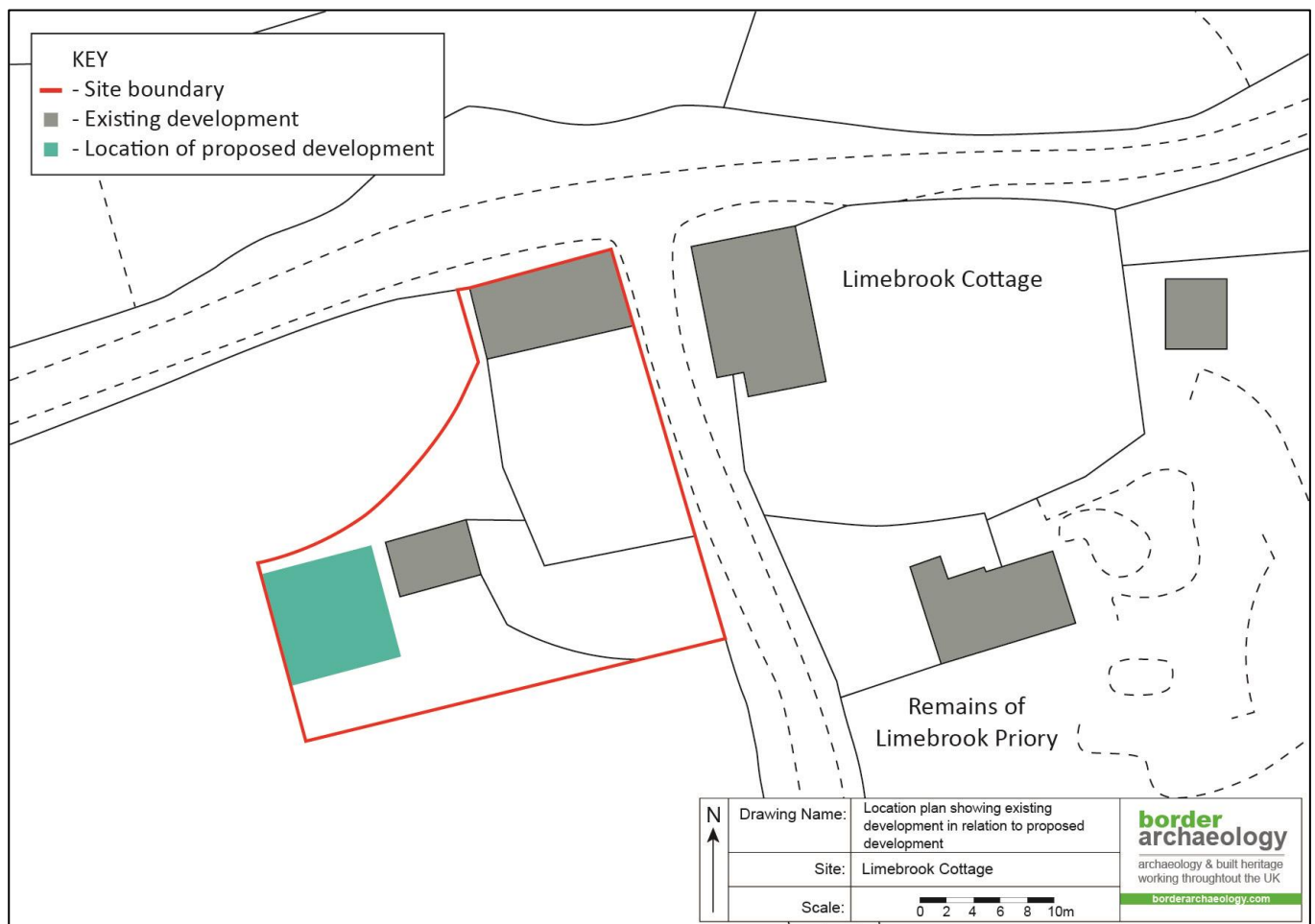


Fig 2: Location of development

Work was carried out according to the *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014). BA adheres to project management advice set out in *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The Project Managers' Guide* (Lee 2015) and with *Standards for Archaeological Projects in Herefordshire (Issue 1)* (Herefordshire Council 2004). BA is cognizant of *Archaeology & Development Supplementary Planning* (Herefordshire Council 2010).

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014, 4) states that the purpose of AO (or 'watching brief') is:

1) 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.

2) 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 ground-breaking works were carried out under archaeological supervision, with topsoil and subsoil routinely checked for significant finds. A record was made in accordance with BA's *Field Recording Manual* (2014) and comprised completed numbered context sheets in conjunction with high-resolution digital photography. As a result of the lack of archaeological features, the drawn record comprised sketch plans and sections on *pro-forma* context recording sheets.

No archaeological features or deposits were present and no deposits suitable for palaeoenvironmental/palaeoeconomic sampling were encountered.

4 Historical and Archaeological Background

Limebrook lies a short distance to the SE of Lingen, a place-name of uncertain etymology but which is presumed to represent a pre-English stream-name. The first element 'Lime' appears as 'Ling' in some earlier forms and relates to 'Lingen', with the addition of *broc*, meaning 'brook' (Coplestone-Crow 2009, 141-2).

A nunnery presumed to be of the Augustinian order and dedicated to St Thomas Becket was founded at Limebrook, perhaps as early as 1189, either by Robert de Lingen or by one the Mortimer family. This early date has not been confirmed; however, a documentary reference to Limebrook in the *Coram Rege Rolls* for 1227 mentions a landholding at Bodenham (Tonkin 1974, 149), suggesting the nunnery was already well-established by that time. There appears to be some uncertainty as to the order to which Limebrook belonged, although it is documented at the time of Bishop Booth (1516-35) that it was tenanted by Augustinian nuns. The *Bishops' Registers* consistently refer to the nuns' poverty: Bishop Swinfield, for example, secured remission from the 'procurations' due from the 'nuns of Lingbrook and the relaxation of the sentence of excommunication, which they had incurred through non-payment' (Power 1922, 183). However, this would appear to conflict with the fact that the nunnery continued to acquire property and a wealth of good farming land until its dissolution in 1539.

The Scheduled remains (National Heritage List for England: UID 1001722; Herefordshire SMR No. 1675) (NGR: SO3741 6607) are Grade II Listed (LB Ref. 1157383) and now comprise a single ruined building of 13th-century date, measuring 7m x 14m and lying E-W. The extant masonry is local sandstone rubble, although almost all dressings have been removed. The S wall has three single-light windows and the remains of a doorway, with one jamb of a second doorway in the N wall. Whilst extensive turf-covered foundation mounds are visible in the field to the E, these are badly mutilated and no indication of general arrangement of the remains can thus be determined. Some

of the confusion may be attributable to phases of rebuilding that took place throughout the life of the community, some of it only just before its dissolution (Tonkin 1974, 160).

Limebrook Cottage (Herefordshire SMR No. 4004) is a Grade II Listed Building (LB Ref. 1082041) and may be that 'dwelling house in Limebrook, being the house of the late dissolved priory there', which was referred to in a marriage settlement of November 7th 1628 by one Frances Wilkes of Limebrook (Thomas 1986, 23-4). It has indeed been suggested that the property may have been the guest-house of the nunnery or the lodgings of the prioress (Tonkin 1974, 156).

Architecturally, Limebrook Cottage is described as a two-part, timber framed property with a through-passage leading to a later lean-to, the earlier features suggesting a late 15th-century date. The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments (1934, 136-7), however, describes the house as a two-storey, timber-framed and plastered structure built probably in the 16th century, with later alterations, and incorporating reused materials from the nunnery. These include 15th -and early 16th -century moulded beams and a doorway with moulded jambs and a triangular arch in a square head. The string of the staircase is described as a reused barge-board carved with running vine-ornament. The Barn, to the W of the house, is described as a timber-framed 17th-century structure of three bays.

5 Results

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	101		Deposit	Topsoil	Firm mid-to-light brown silt clay; occasional angular & sub-angular stones; 0.20m thick, trench wide. Overlying (102).	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	102		Deposit	Subsoil	Firm yellowish-brown silt clay; occasional-to-moderate small angular & sub-angular stones; 0.40m thick, trench wide. Underlying (101).	-	-	-	-	-	Interface with (101) and (103) not clearly defined
3	103		Deposit	Natural	Firm/hard yellowish-grey clay; occasional angular stones; 0.80m thick, trench-wide. Underlying (102).	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	104		Deposit	Natural deposition	Mid brown stony clay; >0.10m thick. Underlying (103).	-	-	-	-	-	Seen in foundation pits only

6 Discussion

No deposits, features or structures of archaeological significance were uncovered during work at Limebrook Cottage, the only deposits present being topsoil and subsoil and naturally derived material. No finds were recovered or seen during the course of the work. The N part of the site lies on a fairly steep slope, which may have precluded occupation or development. The topsoil was not clearly defined, which may suggest that little cultivation had taken place.



Plate 1: View E showing natural deposits in Foundation Pit 1

The natural deposit of yellowish-brown clay, as seen in the foundation pits, became stonier with depth (*Plate 1*).

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