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Archaeological Observation

On behalf of

David Wilkes Esq

At

**Old Church Cottage
Castle Road
Richards Castle
Herefordshire
SY8 4ET**

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Lyndsey Bromage BSc (Hons)

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George Children MA MCI^fA

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GENERAL ENQUIRIES

e: info@borderarchaeology.com

t: 01568 610101

Administration

The Plaza, Owen Way, Leominster Enterprise Park, Leominster, HR6 0LA

Post-Ex Facility – Leominster

Telephone 01568 610101

Email postex@borderarchaeology.com

Post-Ex Facility – Milton Keynes

Telephone 01908 533233

Email postexmk@borderarchaeology.com

REGIONAL OFFICES

Milton Keynes

Common Farm
Calverton Lane
Milton Keynes, MK19 6EU
t: 01908 533233

Leeds

No1 Leeds
26 Whitehall Road
Leeds, LS12 1BE
t: 0113 8187959

Shoreditch

The Old Fire Station,
140 Tabernacle Street,
London, EC2A 4SD
t: 02033 015670

Newport

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

Bristol

First Floor,
Citibase Bristol Aztec West,
Aztec Centre, Aztec West
Almondsbury,
Bristol, BS32 4TD
t: 0117 9110767

Winchester

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



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1 Executive Summary

Border Archaeology (BA) was instructed by David Wilkes Esq to carry out Archaeological Observation (AO) of groundworks at Old Church Cottage for a detached single-storey structure, a single-storey porch on the northeast elevation and the installation of a sewage treatment plant and discharge outlet (NGR SO48488 70270) (Planning Refs. P173538/FH; P173538/L).

The groundworks methodology proposed open-cut excavations within the grounds of Old Church Cottage for the single-storey building and porch and the adjacent land for the installation of the sewage treatment plant and discharge outlet. In the event, an existing drain was located on the northwest verge of Wheatcommon Lane and the groundworks methodology was thus revised to create an alternative, shorter 5m discharge outlet.

No significant archaeological finds, features or deposits were encountered.

2 Introduction

Border Archaeology Ltd (BA) was instructed by David Wilkes Esq to carry out Archaeological Observation (AO) of groundworks for a single-storey building, porch, sewage treatment plant and discharge outlet (NGR SO 48488 70270) within the Scheduled Area of Richard's Castle (List entry Number: 1011020; Herefordshire HER No. 1661) (Planning Refs. P173538/FH; P173538/L). The Castle is considered to be a monument of exceptional significance, comprising a motte-and-bailey with enclosed settlement, probably founded c.1050.

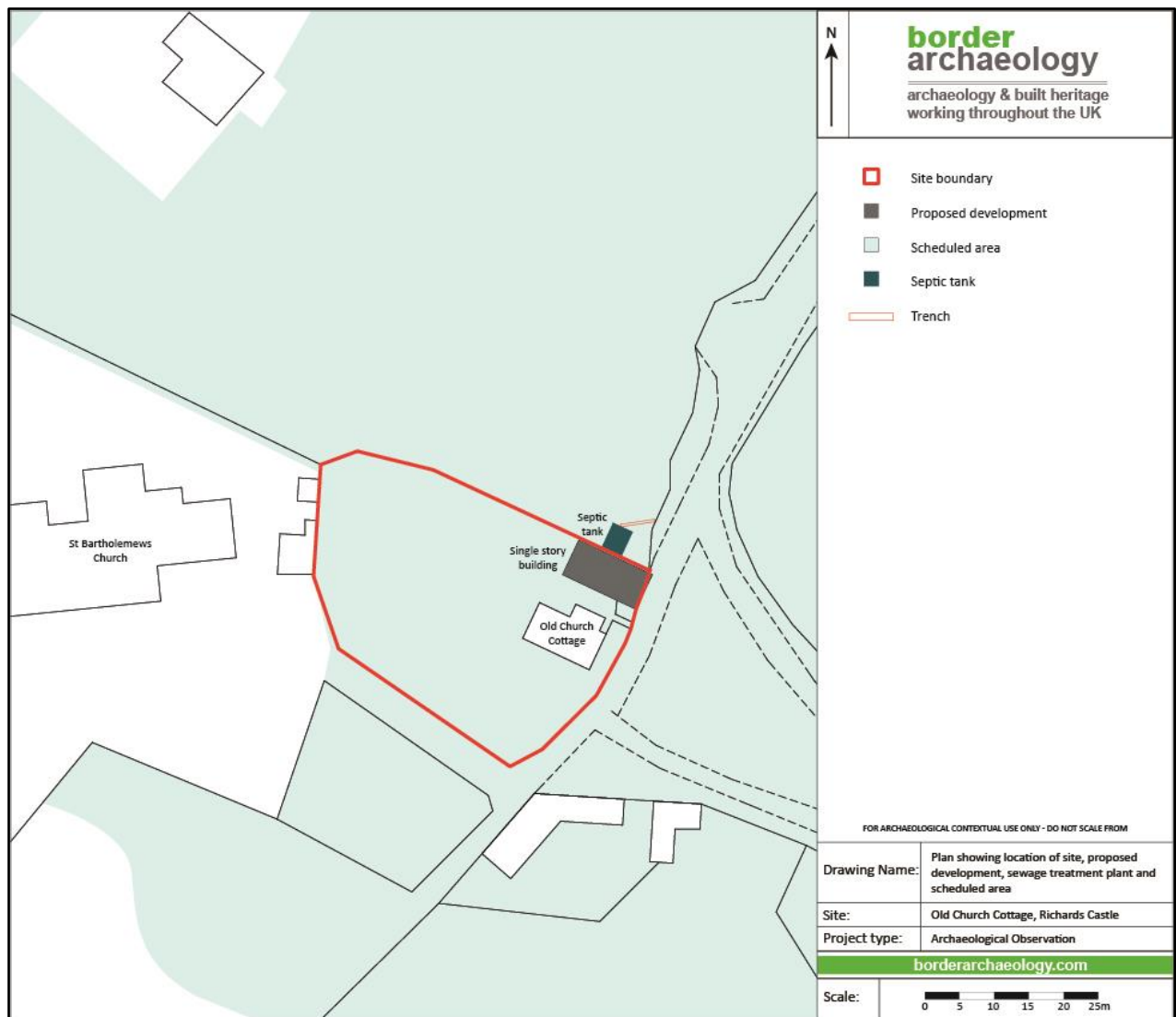


Fig. 1: Site Location Plan

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The programme of archaeological recording was carried out under Scheduled Monument Consent in accordance with the Brief (b173538s2) issued on April 4th 2018 by Julian Cotton Archaeological Advisor Herefordshire Council and the Written Scheme of Investigation (BA 2018) approved by Mr Cotton on April 20th 2018.

2.1 Site Description

Old Church Cottage is a detached Grade II listed property situated approximately 175m AOD and some 1.30km to the NW of the village of Richards Castle. The development is sited within the outer bailey of the Castle and the Grade I listed Church of St Bartholomew stands immediately to the W of the property.

2.1.1 Soils and Geology

The soils within this area are typical brown earths of the MUNSLOW series (541i) consisting of well-drained, coarse silty soils over Silurian siltstone (SSEW 1983).

3 Historical and Archaeological Background

Scant evidence of prehistoric activity has been found within the vicinity of the proposed works, the nearest site being a possible 'Neolithic fold' at Haye Park (NGR SO480 717) (Herefordshire HER No. 12655, 12656). Cropmark evidence of Romano-British occupation has been noted to the NW of the site (Herefordshire HER Nos. 22864, 56091, 56095, 56094, 22864) but the dating of these features remains provisional.

The Castle (NGR SO48337 70268) (List entry Number: 1011020; Herefordshire HER No. 1661) is believed to have been founded c.1050 by Richard Fitz Scrob, one of several Norman lords granted estates in the Marches by Edward the Confessor. It is first recorded as the castle of 'Auretone' in the Domesday Survey of 1086, a name possibly derived from the nearby hamlet of Overton. It was then held by Osbern fitz Richard, under whose tenure it was valued at 20s (Thorn & Thorn 1983, 186d).

Extant remains comprise the substantial earthworks of the motte-and-bailey, an octagonal shell-keep standing atop the motte and the remains of a gatehouse, curtain wall and mural towers of 12th -13th century date. Archaeological evidence suggests that the large outer enclosure to the E, which was evidently designed to protect the parish church (the earliest fabric dating from the 12th century) and a small settlement established under the protection of the castle, post-dated the foundation of the Castle and was probably associated with the establishment of a planned urban settlement or borough at Richard's Castle in the late 12th or 13th centuries (Curnow & Thompson 1969).

Documentary evidence indicates that the settlement adjacent to the Castle had developed into a borough by the end of the 13th century. Robert de Mortimer obtained a grant of a fair and a weekly market at Richard's Castle in 1216 and 103 burgages are recorded there in 1304, clearly implying that the settlement had achieved urban status by the early 14th century.

The subsequent history of the borough of Richard's Castle is poorly documented but it appears to have declined rapidly during the late medieval period, contemporaneous with the abandonment and gradual dilapidation of the Castle. The Tudor antiquarian John Leland, writing in about 1535-40, makes no mention of an urban settlement at

Richard's Castle, suggesting that it had ceased to be regarded as a borough by that date and that the focus of settlement shifted away from the Castle during the early post-medieval period (Curnow & Thompson 1969, 107). The existing pattern of settlement, consisting of a small grouping of farmhouses and cottages to the E and SE of the Castle site, appears to have been established by the first half of the 17th century.

The now-redundant Grade I Listed Church of St Bartholomew dates from the 12th century (nave and chancel) and was extended in the early 14th century (S aisle and N chapel) and 15th century (S porch). Additional work was carried out over the following centuries, including work on the 17th century seven-bay nave roof and the S aisle ceiling supported by three raking wooden struts. The Church was restored during the late 19th century.

4 Methodology

The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with 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 *Requirements for Archaeological Projects in Herefordshire* (Herefordshire Council 2005, amended 2017). BA is also cognizant of *Archaeology and Development Supplementary Planning* (Herefordshire Council 2010).

All groundbreaking works were carried out by machine and ditching bucket (wherever possible) operating under Archaeological Observation. Topsoil and subsoil routinely checked for significant finds.

The garden area of Old Church Cottage was stripped to bedrock (001003), which occurred at a depth of 0.95m; the total area works were 6.4m × 4.5m.

The excavation area for the new sewage treatment plant (located adjacent to the existing septic tank) was 3.70m × 3.10m × 3.10m. The discharge outlet, which was originally orientated NE-SW, was changed to follow an ENE-WSW orientation towards a drain on the NW verge of Wheatcommon Lane. The trench measured 5m × 0.45m × 3m.

5 Results

5.1 Old Church Cottage

Context No.	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
				Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
(001001)	Deposit	Topsoil	Dark brown-black organic topsoil. Made-ground below heavily planted established garden. 0.70m thick. Overlying (001002).	-	✓	✓	✓	-	Late Post-Med./Modern – not retained.
(001002)	Deposit	Disturbed subsoils	Mid-brown silty clay; occasional siltstone. 0.25m thick. Overlying (001003). Underlying (001001).	-	-	-	✓	-	-
(001003)	Deposit	Natural	Siltstone. Same as (002003). Underlying (001002)	-	-	-	-	-	-

5.2 Sewage Treatment Plant & Discharge Outlet

Context No.	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
				Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
(002001)	Deposit	Topsoil	Mid-brown silty clay; no inclusions. 0.10m thick. Overlying (002002).	-	-	-	-	-	-
(002002)	Deposit	Redeposited subsoil	Mid-brown silty clay; occasional siltstone. 0.39m thick. Overlying (002003). Underlying (002001).	-	-	✓	✓	-	Modern - not retained.
(002003)	Deposit	Natural	Siltstone. Same as (001003). Underlying (002002). Cut by [002004].	-	-	-	-	-	-
[002004]	Cut	Cut for existing septic tank	Rectangular in plan; aligned NNE/SSW; measured 0.35m × 3.70m. Filled by (002005). Cuts (002003).	-	-	-	-	-	Modern machine cut. Not excavated.

Context No.	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
				Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
(002005)	Fill	Fill of [002004]	Redeposited natural fill. 0.35m × 3.70m. Fill of [002004].	-	-	-	-	-	-

6 Discussion

The area within the garden of Old Church Cottage showed evidence of disturbance within the upper deposits, (001001) & (001002). The garden had been heavily landscaped, with topsoil imported onto site, resulting in a very substantial deposit of 0.70m (*Plate 1*). The subsoil (001002) also showed evidence of disturbance, containing a moderate quantity of building rubble together with a small number of late post-medieval and modern pottery sherds and fragmented siltstone derived from the underlying bedrock (001003). The concrete foundations of the now-demolished garage and paraffin tank were built directly onto bedrock. Any archaeology in this area is therefore likely to have been removed during previous garden landscaping and construction.



Plate 1: View NNW of the garden at Old Church Cottage

The adjacent site for the installation of the new sewage treatment plant (*Plate 2*), which also contained the existing septic tank, had a shallow topsoil (002001) above redeposited subsoil (002002). Much of the disturbance observed in the immediate area can be attributed to the redeposition of natural during the installation of the septic tank. The heavy disturbance seen in this area would almost certainly have removed any features that may have been present.



Plate 2: View SSW of excavation for sewage treatment plant

7 Conclusion

The garden of Old Church Cottage, in common with others in the immediate vicinity, has been subject to landscaping activity and is heavily banked throughout, up to the W boundary with St Bartholomews Church. Any archaeological deposits that may have been present prior to landscaping would have been heavily disturbed or removed and finds within the topsoil and subsoil were all residual.

The adjacent land containing the existing septic tank and replacement sewage treatment plant had not been intensively landscaped but installation of the tank had resulted in substantial local disturbance.

In the absence of any significant archaeological finds, features or deposits, these results demonstrate that any medieval archaeology within these specific areas has been either removed in its entirety or subject to heavy disturbance. Consequently, there would appear to be little potential to contribute any further information relevant to those research priorities identified in *The Archaeology of the West Midlands: A Framework for Research* (Hunt 2011, 193-5).

8 Copyright

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11.1 Cartography

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