



The Old Grange, Littledean, Gloucestershire: archaeological evaluation

Graham Arnold
2007



archenfield archaeology ltd

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The Old Grange, Littledean, Gloucestershire: archaeological evaluation 2007

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Cover Photograph: Photograph of the Old Grange dated 7th September 1913 (SODH 1986.146 283). Reproduced with kind permission of the Gage Library, Dean Heritage Centre.



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Summary

Archenfield Archaeology Ltd undertook an evaluation of any surviving archaeology at the site of the Old Grange, Littledean, Gloucestershire during April 2007. This was in response in the planning application to site a mobile home and horse ménage on the site. The area investigated consisted of 4 trenches each measuring 10 metres by 1.80 metres, excavated by machine until the first significant archaeological or natural level was reached.

Despite evidence that the site was a grange owned by Flaxley Abbey and occupied in the medieval period, all features dated to the later post-medieval house and walled garden and later activities on the site.

Mr Brian Griffin, the chartered surveyor acting on behalf of Janet Cadogan (the client) commissioned an archaeological evaluation in accordance with the brief issued by the Archaeology Section, County Planning Department of Gloucestershire Council.¹ This was issued in response to planning application for permission to site a mobile home and to construct a horse ménage on the site. This document gives details of how the archaeological project was conducted, as stipulated in the brief and the conclusions to the project.



Littledean is situated in the district of the Forest of Dean within Gloucestershire. It lies just west of the town of Cinderford, south of Newent and north of Lydney. The village is west of the A48 which connects Gloucester and Lydney, on the A4151 between Westbury on Severn and Cinderford. The site of the 'Old Grange' lies south of the village of Littledean on Grange Lane between Littledean and Upper Soudley.

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1.2 Trench location

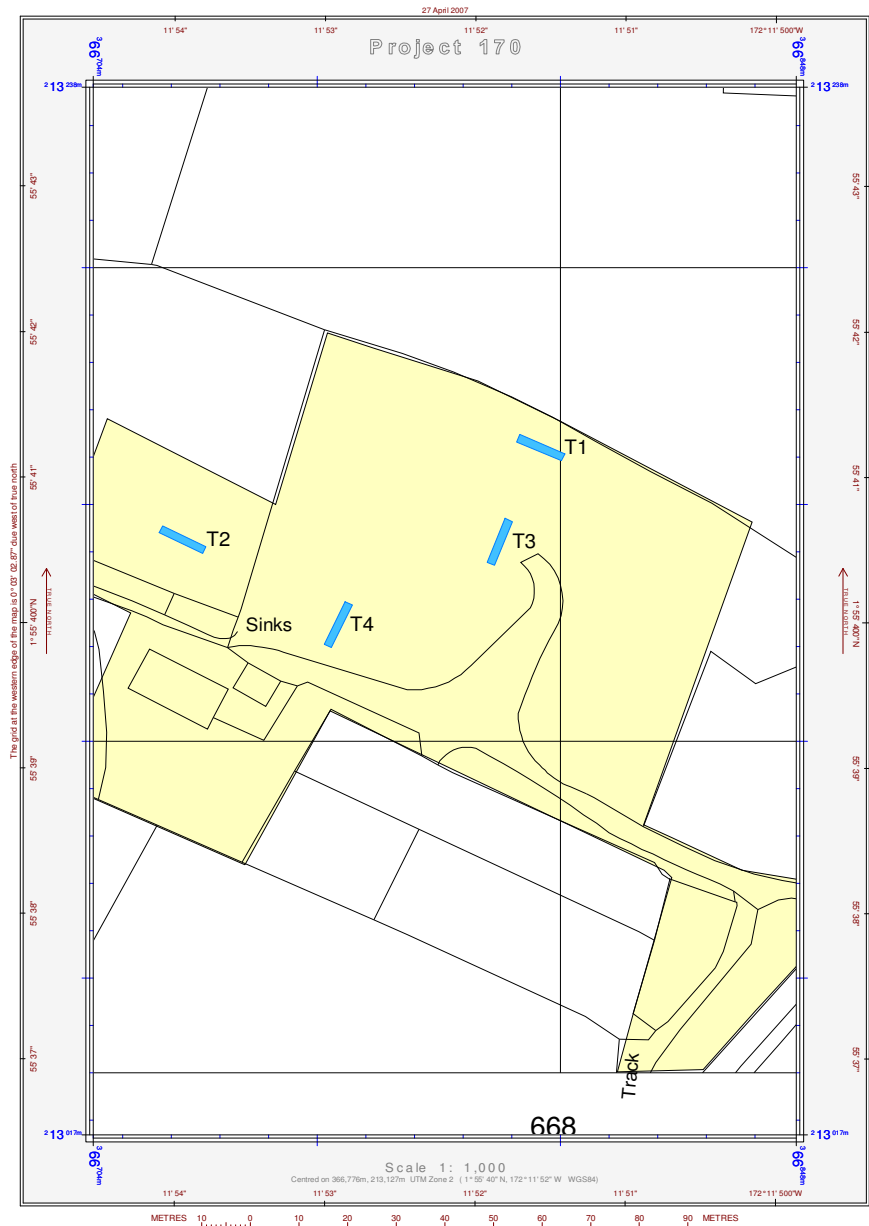


Figure 2: Trench location plan. Ordnance Survey superplan data reproduced under licence

Four evaluation trenches, each measuring 10 metres by 1.60 metres (marked in blue on figure 2) were excavated by machine to the top of the archaeological layers or undisturbed natural, in the three areas where development is proposed.

The trenches were strategically located to coincide with both the evidence of site activity visible on the 1886 Ordnance Survey map of the Old Grange site and other cartographic and documentary sources consulted as part of the desk-based assessment of the site and the modern development outlines. Trench 3 was placed over a suggested garden boundary wall, whilst trench 4 also tested more suggested outhouse activity within the mobile home platform development. Trenches 1 and 2 evaluated the likelihood of archaeological activity under the northern section of the ménage and in the field to the west of the property.

2.0 Geological, historical and archaeological background

2.1 Geological background and land use

The underlying geology of the area consists of Lower Old Red Sandstone, including Downtonian. The site is currently in use as mixed grazing for horses and other livestock with a stable building and other agricultural buildings. Littledean parish lies at the heads of valleys whose streams drain to the north, north-east, and south. It takes in the surrounding hillsides rising to over 240 metres on Littledean Hill and, less steeply, to over 185 metres in the east and south-east. Only in the north-east does the land fall below the 120 metre contour.

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The site is shown on the 1886 six inch map as 'The Grange', consisting of a house with an associated complex of outbuildings and two ponds, one situated to the east and the other to the north-west. The Grange was a three storeyed Tudor house dating from approximately 1540, and surrounded by a walled garden (Heane Ellis, M, 1927). A detailed archaeological desk-based assessment had previously been prepared to examine the known archaeological potential of the site (Sherlock, 2006). It is not proposed to reproduce this here, but, in summary, the site has a long and complex archaeological and historical background, having been a monastic grange belonging to Flaxley Abbey since the twelfth century. Post-dissolution, it became a private residence and was in continuous occupation until the twentieth century when it fell into ruins. A well-built stone residence with a walled garden, the Grange also had outlying buildings and fishponds which can still be seen in the immediate environs.

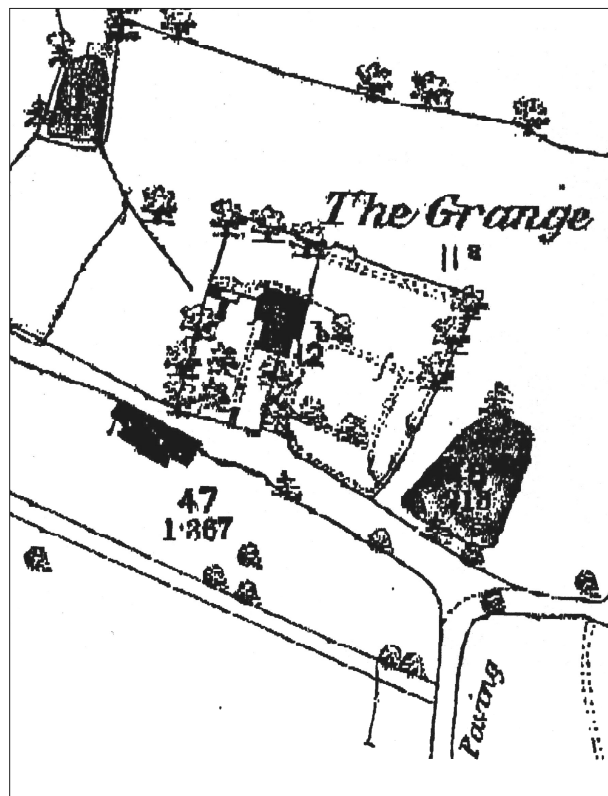


Figure 3: 1886 6-inch OS map showing 'The Grange' house, walled gardens and associated outbuildings

3.0 Project aims and objectives

3.1 General evaluation aims

The aims of the project were to provide further evidence about the specific research questions identified by the desk-based assessment (Sherlock, 2006): -

- the presence and nature of medieval remains relating to the use of the site as a monastic grange
- the presence or absence of Roman remains relating to a possible Roman road in the vicinity
- the likely degree of survival of garden features relating to the later medieval and post-medieval periods
- the degree to which the dumping of modern debris on the site has impacted the archaeological resource.

3.2 Objectives

The aims were addressed by means of the following objectives:

- archaeologically evaluating 4 trenches (labelled T1-T4, see figure 2 above) in order to evaluate the survival of archaeological features or deposits relating to the monastic grange, post medieval house and garden features
- recording the extent and depth of all groundwork
- evaluating a sample of the total site area by excavating trenches to investigate the presence or absence of archaeological features or deposits and to provide information about the nature, extent, sensitivity, depth and potential of any such archaeological findings
- making a record of any archaeological features or deposits exposed
- recording the presence of sensitive archaeological material within the trenches and in the spoil removed during excavation, retrieving any potential dating material
- making a record of all finds and any environmental material recovered
- ensuring that if any environmental evidence is preserved, that a sufficient sample is retained to allow for further analysis.
- to ensure that the location and of the area excavated was accurately recorded on a suitably scaled plan.
- to record negative evidence and to consider its implications
- to ensure that where important archaeological remains existed, plans for the preservation *in-situ* of such remains were discussed with the Archaeological Advisor for Gloucestershire Council and the client
- to ensure that a recording strategy was adopted that allowed for the production of a stratigraphic record of the deposits encountered, and a record of the extent and depth of the excavations

4.0 Methodology

The following methodology was employed: -

- a suitably qualified archaeologist monitored all activity that involved disturbance of the ground surface.
- four evaluation trenches measuring 10 metres x 1.60 metres were opened using a JCB equipped with a toothless bucket (see figure 2 for trench locations). The use of the JCB was stopped at what were judged to be significant archaeological remains or undisturbed natural deposits.
- all structures and stratigraphic sequences observed in the trenches were recorded on scaled plans and sections.
- sampled excavation of recorded features within the evaluation trenches further examined the stratigraphy, depth and nature of the deposits. Any potentially informative sections exposed drawn and a plan of the features and areas excavated was made.
- the presence of sensitive archaeological material in the trenches was recorded using stratigraphic units (contexts) and were recorded in a written, drawn and photographic format.
- the stratigraphic units (contexts) have been entered into a Harris Matrix to clearly define the stratigraphic nature of the contexts. If any further evaluation work is required, the Harris Matrix will be up-dated to form a relational framework for the site.
- all data has been entered onto a standard Archenfield Archaeology database giving an inter-relational framework for records taken on-site.
- an assessment of the archaeological significance of finds, structures and deposits was made and appropriate action taken.
- structures and stratigraphic sequences observed were recorded on scaled drawings and the position of all work disturbing the ground, and any archaeological features, was located on them.
- the presence of any significant artefacts was recorded with a description of their type, quantity and original location. The spoil was scanned for significant finds but, in fact none were observed.
- all descriptions of structures and deposits, photographic records and drawing numbers were recorded on the relevant data capture documents in accordance with Archenfield Archaeology's standard site recording procedures.
- significant features were, where possible, photographed next to an appropriate scale rule. Each photographic exposure was recorded in the photographic log.
- staff carrying out the evaluation excavation followed the guidelines laid down in the Archenfield Archaeology Health and Safety Policy and completed all relevant documentation relating to the risk assessment for the project. Suitable safety clothing such as steel-toe capped boots, fluorescent jackets and hard-hats were worn on site.
- Archenfield Archaeology conforms to the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct and code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual arrangements in Field Archaeology*. All projects are, where applicable, carried out in accordance with *IFA Standards and Guidance*.

5.0 Results

5.1 Stratigraphy

Trench 1

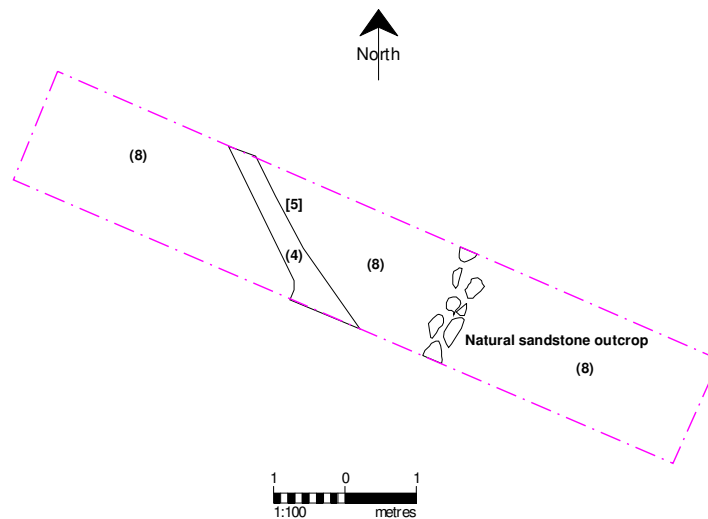


Figure 4: Plan of Trench 1

Features in trench 1 consisted of two dumps of modern 20th century demolition and debris material (**2 & 6**) and one water drainage channel (**5**) running downhill from the north-west to the south-east of the site, filled with loose rubble. Undisturbed red silty clay and sandstone bedrock outcrops were discovered at a depth of 0.90 metres.



Figure 5: (left to right) Trench 1, looking west; trench 1, south-facing section showing cuts 3 filled by modern refuse and 5, a water drainage channel filled by loose sandstone rubble.

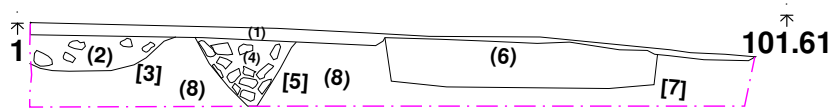


Figure 6: South-facing section of trench 1

Trench 2

No significant archaeological features were discovered in evaluation trench 2. This was situated in a field that had a long period of plough activity. Dumps of modern farming refuse (21) were recorded cut into the natural undisturbed plough soil (23).



Figure 7: (left to right) Trench 2, looking west; South-facing section of trench 2, showing modern refuse material

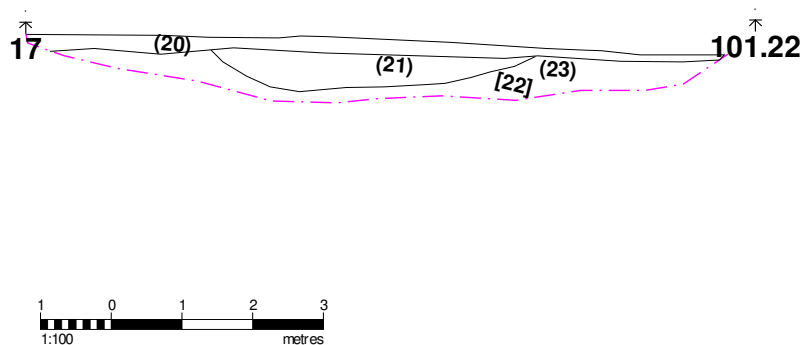


Figure 8: South-facing section of trench 2. Original scale 1:50

Trench 3

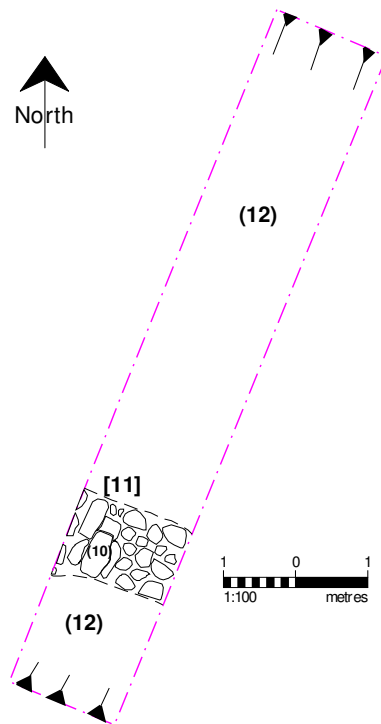


Figure 9: Plan of trench 3

Trench 3 demonstrates the presence of rubble foundations **(10)** for a substantial wall orientated east/west, cut into the natural red sand and degraded sandstone. The wall consisted of unevenly spaced, re-used, shaped sandstone masonry blocks of various sizes. This is presumed to be a boundary wall of the post-medieval walled garden, built re-using demolition masonry from the earlier buildings on the site and is visible on the 1886 OS map for the Old Grange site. All ceramic finds were post-medieval, the earliest dating from the 18th century.

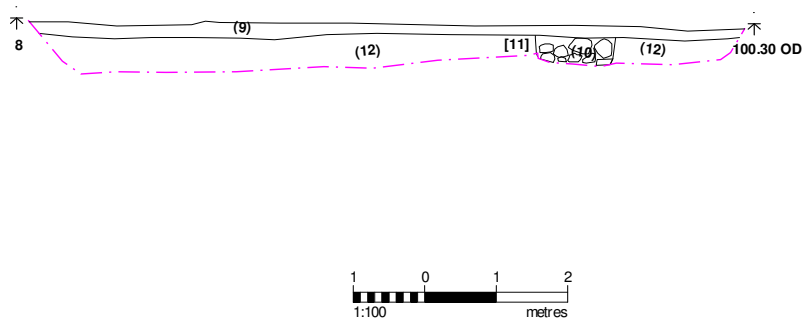


Figure 10: West-facing section of trench 3



Figure 11: Trench 3, looking north and wall (10) looking west

Trench 4

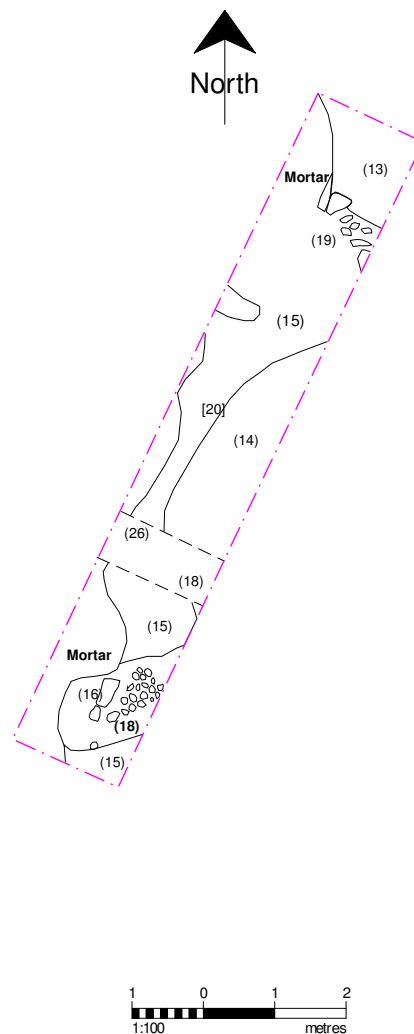


Figure 12: Plan of trench 4

Trench 4 had a layer consisting of lime mortar and crushed sandstone **(13)** which spread across the entire base of the trench. This was cut by a dump of vitreous iron ore, slag and ash **(14)**. Taken together this indicates that the original building was subject to demolition and that industrial activity was occurring on or near the site in the 19th and 20th centuries. In the south-eastern corner of the trench a compacted pebble and sandstone surface was discovered beneath the mortar and mixed topsoil. An exploratory sondage was cut through the southern edge of the slag spread to discover its nature and extent. This uncovered a possible rubble wall **(16)** which was 0.60 metres in width, orientated north/south and ran into the bulk to the south with remnants emerging. No cut was visible for the rubble wall, which lay on the natural red silty clay and old red sandstone pebbles.



Figure 13: (left to right) Sondage with wall (16) looking south; Trench 4, looking south

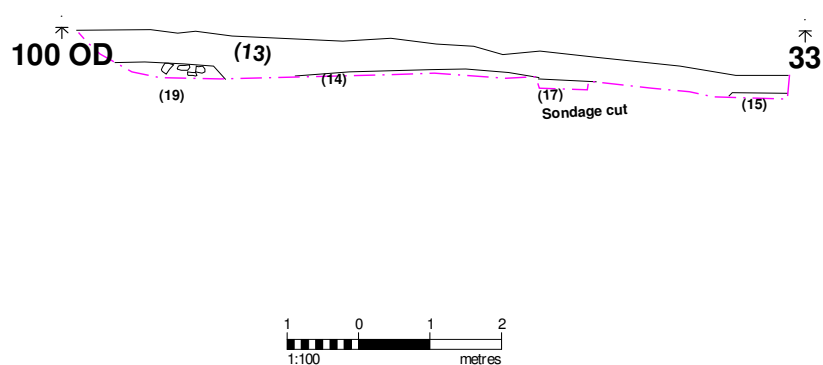


Figure 14: East-facing section of trench 4. Original scale 1:50

5.2 The finds

Finds from the four trenches and spoil heaps included pottery, oyster shells and glass, all of post-medieval date, with one fragment of unstratified medieval green glaze recovered from the plough soil of trench 2, demonstrating medieval occupation of the site or that activity had occurred in the vicinity, but could not be associated with any specific features.

Context number	Fabric description	Sherd count	Spot date
10	Staffordshire Black Glazed Earthenware	4	19 th century
10	Staffordshire red earthenware	2	19th century
10	White porcelain	1	19th century
13	Staffordshire slip trailed red earthenware	4	18 th century

Table 1: Identified fabric types by context

6.0 Conclusions

The earliest stratified finds discovered during the evaluation of the Grange site were dated to the 18th Century. The rubble sandstone garden boundary wall located in trench 3 is visible on the 1886 OS map of the site. The wall foundations and compacted floor surfaces discovered in trench 4 are also thought to be associated with outbuildings of the post-medieval house and were covered by a general lime mortar demolition layer, mixed with the compacted topsoil. No archaeological remains relating directly to the use of the site as a monastic grange were discovered in the course of the evaluation. Notably no evidence for Romano-British activity associated with a possible road was encountered, and equally no prehistoric finds or features were recorded.

7.0 Archive deposition

The primary project archive, consisting of the excavated material and any original paper records, will be prepared and stored in accordance with the guidelines laid down in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' guidelines for the preparation and storage of archives. The primary archive will be stored with Gloucester City Museum.

A copy of the digital archive, stored on CD and consisting of context, artefact and ecofact data, together with the site plan and selected photographs, will accompany the primary archive.

The client, in consultation with the project manager, will make provision for the deposition of all finds from the excavation with the Gloucester City Museum. On completion of the fieldwork and the processing, collation, recording and analysis of the finds from the excavation all finds will be handed over to the museum staff, along with the project archive. Arrangements will be made with the museum for the transfer of title.

8.0 Publication and dissemination proposals

Paper copies of this report will be lodged with the Archaeological Adviser to Gloucestershire Council, Gloucestershire Sites and Monuments Record and Gloucester Library. A short note on the project will be prepared for publication.

CDs of this report, together with the supporting archival material will be available from Archenfield Archaeology Ltd.

The complete photographic record and database will be retained by Archenfield Archaeology Ltd.

General bibliography

British Geological Survey 1979	<i>Geological survey 10 mile map, south sheet, 3rd edition</i> (solid) 1979 1:625000
Heane Ellis, M, 1927	<i>Transactions of The Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society</i> vol.XLIX pp 259-276.
Sherlock, H, 2006	<i>Archaeological Desk-based Assessment of the Old Grange site, Littledean, Gloucestershire.</i> Unpublished report by Archenfield Archaeology
Sherlock, H, 2007	<i>Project Design for an archaeological evaluation at the Old Grange, Littledean, Gloucestershire.</i> . Unpublished report by Archenfield Archaeology

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