



Hope Mill, Lower Sapey, Worcestershire:  
archaeological survey

Huw Sherlock and P J Pikes  
2001



## archenfield archaeology ltd

Principal Archaeologist: Huw Sherlock BA, Diparch, MIFA

Archenfield Archaeology Ltd is a multidisciplinary archaeological consultancy, offering a complete range of archaeological advice and services to the public and private sector. We specialise in giving archaeological advice to developers, housing associations and private individuals. We also undertake archaeological intervention, from monitoring to full-scale excavation; building survey; landscape and geophysical surveys and community-based historical and archaeological projects.

*Hope Mill, Lower Sapey, Worcestershire: archaeological survey  
2001*

*The authors would like to acknowledge the help and support of Evelyn Over, the Marches Woodland Initiative Network Adviser who requested that the archaeological survey work should be conducted. Thanks are also due to the staff of the Worcestershire County Record Office and Worcestershire County Sites and Monuments Record.*

Client: Mrs Gordon, Hope Mill owner

Text: Huw Sherlock and PJ Pikes

Project Manager: Huw Sherlock

Cover Photograph: Hope Mill



## Contents

Geology and Land Use .....	2
Lower Sapey .....	3
Clifton on Teme .....	3
Hope Mill .....	3
The woodland at Hope Mill .....	4
Land parcel 7207 .....	5
Land parcel 4500 .....	6
Land parcel 5789 .....	8
Land parcel 6385 .....	9
Non-woodland areas .....	10
The Mill: Land parcel 7384 .....	10
Land parcel 5600 (Lower Sapey); 6700 (Clifton-on-Teme) .....	10
Land parcel 7200 .....	11
Conclusion .....	12
Bibliography .....	13
Cartographic References .....	13
Copyright .....	13

## Figures

Figure 1: Location plan of the site. ....	2
Figure 2: Location map showing site boundary and areas of woodland .....	3
Figure 3: A tracing from the combined Lower Sapey and Clifton on Teme tithe maps .....	4
Figure 4: Extract from the 1st edition Ordnance survey map (1885) .....	5

## Plates

Plate 1: The mill leat looking south east towards Hope Mill. ....	7
Plate 2: The sluice gate .....	7
Plate 3: The breach in the dam. ....	8
Plate 4: The holloway looking east .....	9



Figure 1: Location plan of the site.

## Geology and land use

The solid geology of the area is beds of the Lower Old Red Sandstone including Downtonian (British Geological Survey Ten Mile Map, South Sheet, Third ed. (Solid) 1979). The land is predominantly in use as rough pasture with orchards and mixed woodland.

## The Background

### Lower Sapey

### Clifton on Teme

### Hope Mill

NGR: SO69806090

The property comprises approximately 8.25 hectares of woodland and meadow lying in a bend on the Sapey Brook and straddling the parish boundary between Clifton-upon-Teme and Lower Sapey.

The mill building and attached cottage are grade II listed buildings. The cottage dates from the seventeenth century and is timber framed with brick infill panels and a plain tile roof. The mill lies at the south-eastern base of the peninsula and is no longer operational but is largely intact and appears to be of nineteenth century date. At the south-west point of the peninsular a substantial stone weir or dam originally diverted part of the brook's flow along a leat to Hope Mill. The mill was part of the Hope Estate in the 1840's.

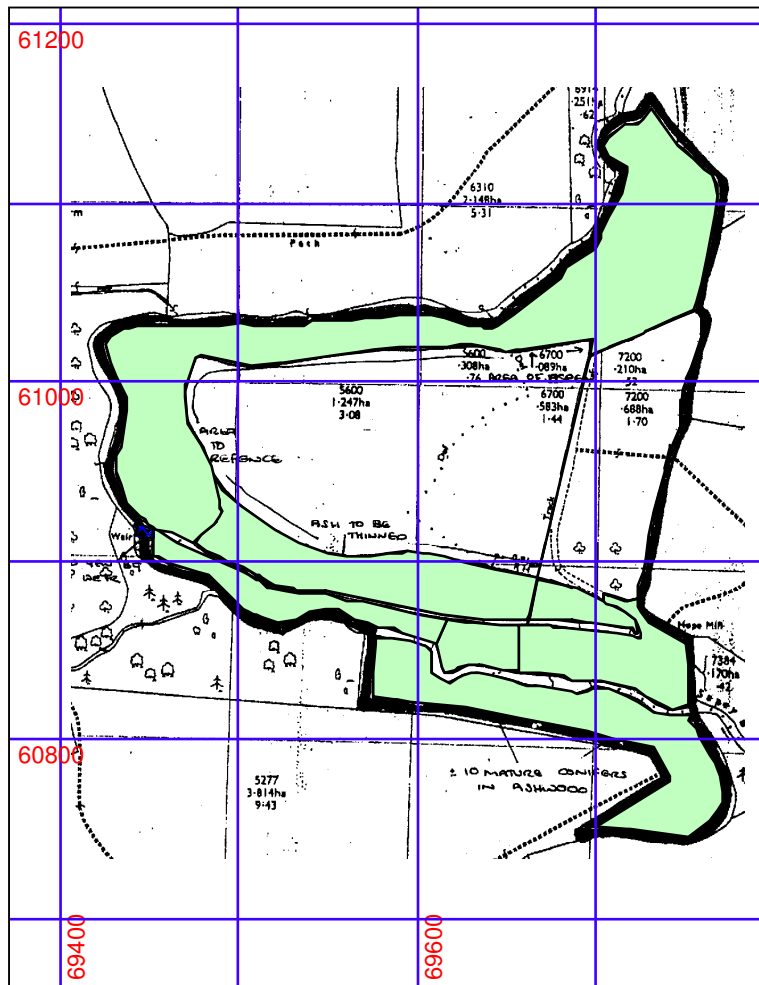
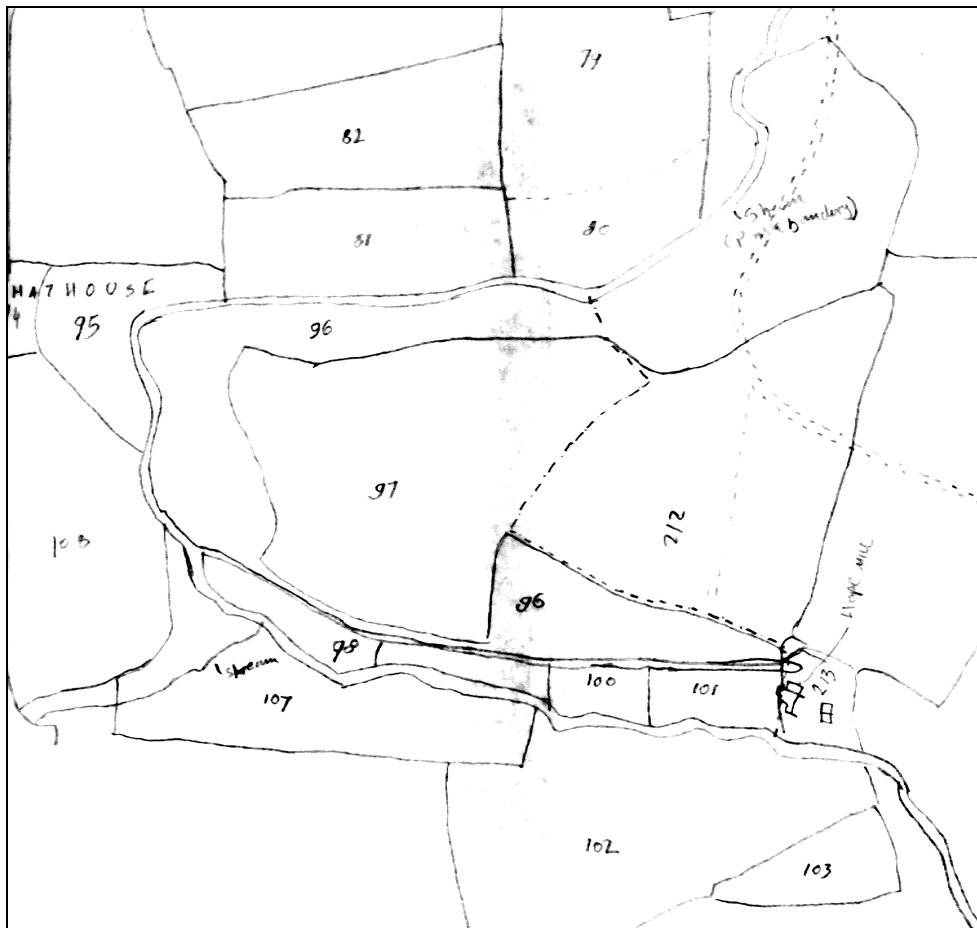


Figure 2: Location map showing site boundary and areas of woodland (highlighted in green)

## The woodland at Hope Mill

The greater part of the woodland on the property occupies the steep sides of a deeply incised meander on the Sapey Brook. This meander encloses a westward pointing peninsula surrounded to the north, west and east by the brook. The Sapey flows south into this meander and south again out of it. The course in both directions is steep sided and wooded.

The ecological survey conducted on behalf of the Marches Woodland Initiative by John Thompson in October 2000 characterised the woodland as being semi-natural with the majority of the trees being mature broad-leaved varieties. Some small areas of the site are under a plantation of Norway Spruce. Large areas were coppiced, with both hazel and ash trees showing signs of having been coppiced until as recently as 30-40 years ago. The edges of woodland banks, old hedge lines (running through woodland) and trackways are defined by the presence of stands of coppiced hazel. Modern post and wire fencing has been introduced to supplement the existing hedges, but the original layout of the field boundaries remains fossilized.



**Figure 3: A tracing from the combined Lower Sapey and Clifton on Teme tithe maps**

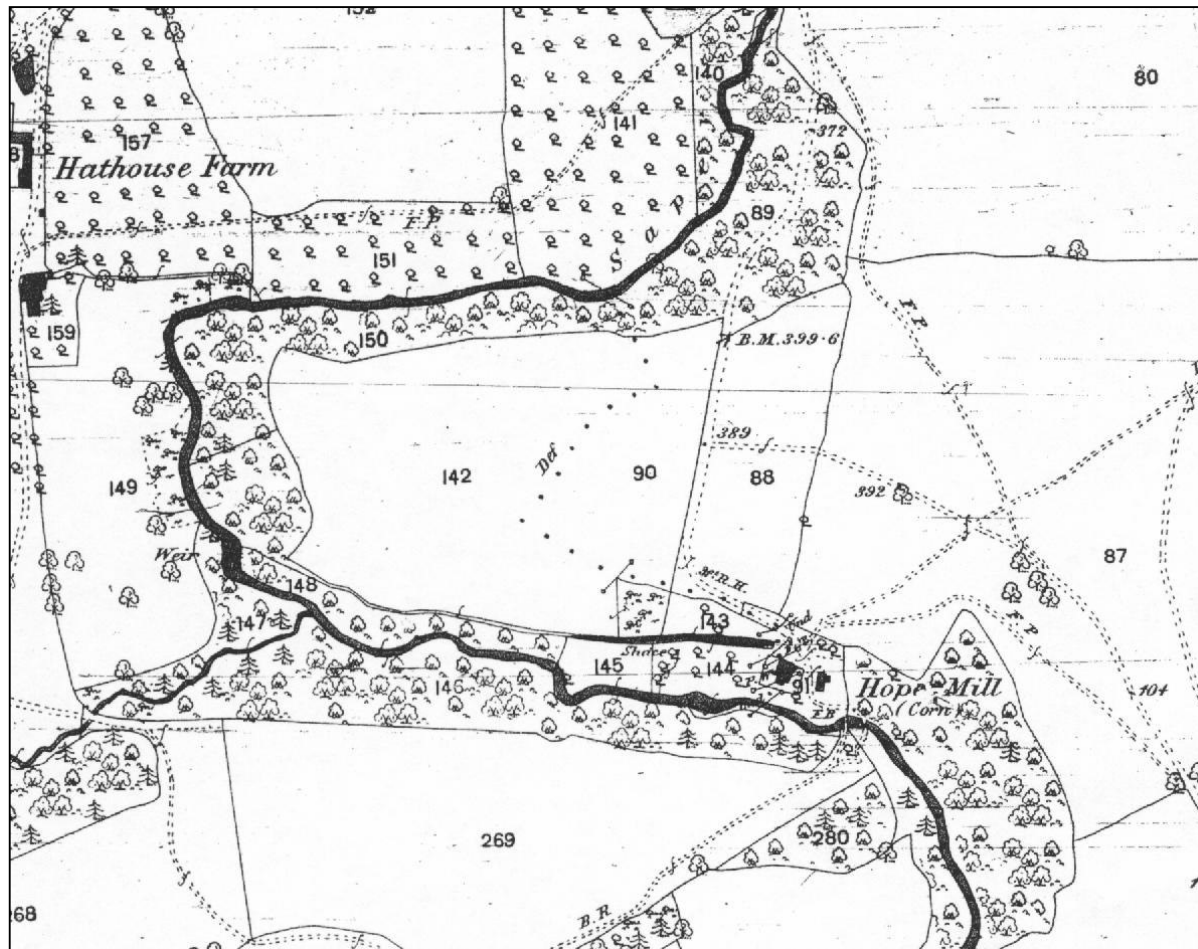


Figure 4: Extract from the 1st edition Ordnance survey map (1885)

### ***Land parcel 7207***

Grid ref. SO697611

Area 0.932 ha

Tithe map – Clifton-on-Teme (1846)

211, name - Coppice, use- wood

owner – Sir Thomas Edward Winnington, bart

occupier – Osborne William Peacey

This area of woodland forms the northern extremity of the property and lies on a west facing slope with the Sapey Brook, flowing north north-east to south south-west, at its base. It is bisected by the access road to Hope Mill, which runs north to join the Clifton on Teme Road. To the east of the track, in the ground sloping up towards the fields above, is an overgrown but still clearly defined quarry.

The south-eastern boundary of this wood, formed by a hedge, is of some antiquity and may well be the oldest field boundary on the property. A projection of the course of this hedge to the south west would mark the boundary between the parishes of

Lower Sapey and Clifton-on-Teme. Although the boundary at this point now runs across an open field (5600 in Lower Sapey, 6700 in Clifton-on-Teme) it was following a field boundary on the tithe map. To the west of the track, a large semi-circular area has begun to collapse into the brook.

### ***Land parcel 4500***

Grid ref SO69456100

Area 3.07 ha

Tithe map – Sapey Pitchard (1841)

96 (part), name - Mill Field Coppice, use - wood and coppice

owner – Sir Thomas Edward Winnington, bart

occupier – Osborne William Peacey

98, name - Mill Pond Ashbed, use - wood and coppice

owner – Sir Thomas Edward Winnington, bart

occupier – Osborne William Peacey

This woodland occupies land beside three stretches of the Sapey Brook. First, the steep north facing slope of the south bank of the brook where it runs almost due west along the northern boundary of the property and second the east bank of the brook from the point where it turns south at the north-west corner of the property. A third, a narrow strip runs east from the weir and is bounded by the brook to the south and the mill leat to the north.

This woodland is now divided from the field to the south and east (5600 in Lower Sapey, 6700 in Clifton-on-Teme) by a wire fence. Several meters to the north and west of the present fence is an old hedge line marked by coppiced hazel. Two old wooden gateposts stand on the north-west corner of this line. Each of the gateposts has two horseshoes driven into them to form supports for two horizontal poles, which must have formed the barrier. From this gateway a much overgrown track led down to the west. These two areas formed the greater part of Mill Field Coppice in 1841.<sup>1</sup>

The southern part of this land parcel occupies land which in 1841 was known as Mill Pond Ashbed, bounded to the north by the mill leat and to the south by the brook.

The mill leat runs northwest-southeast for approximately three hundred metres from the sluice gates adjacent to the weir on the Sapey Brook to a point some 40 metres immediately north of the mill. At this point the leat butt ends and a pipe runs underground to the wheel pit. The leat and associated sluice gates is in good order, having been dredged by the previous owner. A raised causeway flanks the entire length of the leat, which has been reinforced by the deposition of builder's rubble and other material. The leat is heavily silted at the north western end, but is otherwise relatively clear, and is approximately 1.75 metres deep and 3 metres wide. At the south eastern end a sluice would have allowed water to flow through a short length of brick lined culvert into a fishpond. It has not been possible to ascertain the date of this feature, but it is possible that it is of fairly recent origin.

---

<sup>1</sup> A detached part of Mill Field Coppice is now part of land parcel 5789.





**Plate 1: the mill leat looking south east towards Hope Mill, visible to the right in the background.**



**Plate 2: The sluice gate controlling the inlet of water into the sluice from the weir.**

The mill dam is constructed of roughly faced, regularly coursed stone with a rubble infill. It is approximately 3.5 metres high and 15 metres wide. The remains of the weir are visible in front of the dam wall, but only a fragment of the original fabric survives. Recent heavy rain has swollen the Sapey Brook to such an extent that a breach in the western bank now means that the water is no longer cascading over the dam but has cut a new channel to one side. This recent damage has uncovered a series of waterlogged wooden stakes driven into the bed of the stream (see plate 3). These may relate to an earlier phase of dam construction, and dendrochronological dating of these might provide further information.



**Plate 3: The breach in the dam. The tops of the row of wooden stakes are visible in the centre of the picture**

***Land parcel 5789***

Grid ref SO698609

Area 0.526 ha

Tithe map – Lower Sapey

97 (part), name - part of Mill Field, use - pasture

owner – Sir Thomas Edward Winnington, bart

occupier – Osborne William Peacey

96 (part), name - Mill Field Coppice, use - wood and coppice

owner – Sir Thomas Edward Winnington, bart

occupier – Osborne William Peacey

This western part of this woodland stands on the fairly gently sloping northern bank of the brook. The western boundary is contiguous with the previous land parcel at a point a little to the east of the dam, where the brook turns sharply back to the east. The woodland thins towards the east and the slope becomes steeper. The woodland forms a strip bounded by the field to the north (5600 in Lower Sapey, 6700 in Clifton-on-Teme) and the mill leat to the south.

The western part of this piece of woodland formed part of Mill Field on the tithe map and was used as pasture. It seems therefore that this area reverted to woodland comparatively recently. A clear lynchet or bank several meters to the north of the wire fence dividing this woodland from the field to the north indicates that another boundary existed at some period.

The eastern part was an almost detached part of Mill Field Coppice, see above.

### ***Land parcel 6385***

Grid ref SO69656085

Area 0.129 ha

Tithe map – Lower Sapey

100 name - Mill Gardens, use - garden

owner – Sir Thomas Edward Winnington, bart

occupier – Osborne William Peacey

102 (part) name - Mill Piece, use - pasture

owner – James Seward

occupier – Benjamin Rea

103 name - Mill Piece Ashbed, use - coppice

owner – James Seward

occupier – Benjamin Rea

This heterogeneous land parcel consists of three distinct areas. The first, north of the brook was a small piece of ground to the east of the southernmost part of land parcel 4500 was Mill Garden in 1841. This was owned by Sir Thomas Winnington and occupied by Mr Peacey in 1841, but seems likely to have been sub-let to the miller.

To the south of the brook, the bank formed part of Mill Piece, reported as pasture-land and to the east of this was Mill Piece Ashbed, a coppice. Both of these were owned by James Seward and occupied by Benjamin Rea, who were, respectively, the owner and occupier of Hope Farm to the south-east.



**Plate 4: The holloway looking east at the point where it leaves the woodland**

A hollow trackway, on the south-eastern edge of land parcel 5277 (The old Mill Piece) runs into the south-western corner of Mill Piece Coppice and curves down towards the brook, its right hand edge formed by the coppice boundary. The present bridle path seems to perpetuate the stretch of track where it fords the stream under the modern footbridge.

### **Non-woodland areas**

#### ***The Mill: Land parcel 7384***

Grid ref SO69736085

Area 0.170 ha

Tithe map – Clifton-on-Teme

213 House – Hope Mill and pleck

owner – James Seward

occupier – Benjamin Rea

The building is of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and 18<sup>th</sup> century with modern restoration. The Mill complex is a grade II listed building.

No miller is recorded at the mill in the apportionment, which accompanies the tithe map. The overshot mill wheel, marked J. Wyer, 1853, is 10 feet in diameter, and obviously replaced an earlier one which was likely to have been wooden. Much of the machinery remains and there are two *in situ* mill stones on the first floor. It is marked on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps as a corn mill and apparently went out of use in 1914 (Gwilliam).

#### ***Land parcel 5600 (Lower Sapey); 6700 (Clifton-on-Teme)***

Grid ref SO69736085

Area 2.227 ha

Tithe map – Clifton-on-Teme

212 (part), name - part of Mill Ground, use – pasture

owner – James Seward

occupier – Benjamin Rea

Lower Sapey

97, name - part of Mill Field, use – pasture

owner – James Seward

occupier – Benjamin Rea

96 (part), name - Mill Field Coppice, use - wood and coppice

owner – Sir Thomas Edward Winnington, bart

occupier – Osborne William Peacey

This area forms the plateau defined by the gorge of the Sapey Brook to the north, west and south, and is currently open grassland with newly fenced partitions. Although pasture existed here in 1841, all of the present boundaries of this field are more recent than that date.

The northern and western boundaries of the field have moved inwards by several metres along its entire length, while a new boundary has cut the field off from the mill stream leat in the south-west.<sup>2</sup>

The straight eastern boundary of the field is entirely new, following the western side of the access track to Hope Mill. This cuts through the field known as Mill Ground in 1841 and leaves the western part of it, and the parish boundary which coincided with its western boundary, cut off from the part to the east of the track, land parcel 7200.

***Land parcel 7200***

Grid ref        SO 69726095

Area            0.898 ha

Tithe map – Clifton-on-Teme

212 (part), name - part of Mill Ground, use – pasture

owner – James Seward

occupier – Benjamin Rea

This originally formed part of the field numbered 212 On the Clifton-on-Teme tithe map. It became divided into two by the trackway which now leads to the mill.

---

<sup>2</sup>

Although evidence of another boundary on this side exists in the form of a bank or lynchet – see section on land parcel 5789.



## **Conclusions**

### ***Discussion***

The track which crosses the Sapey Brook beneath the present footbridge curves up the right bank of the brook to form the southern boundary of land parcel 6385 before crossing as a distinct sunken way into land parcel 5277. From here the track appears to run south towards the old Lower Sapey parish church of St Bartholomew.

The old church<sup>3</sup>, dating from the early 12<sup>th</sup> century, stands on the site of what was the original settlement of Lower Sapey. Sapey is mentioned in a deed of Offa in 781 and in 1086 Osbern Fitz Richard held 3 hides in Sapey. Osbern's father, Richard Scrope, was the eponymous lord of Richard's Castle in Herefordshire.

The field boundaries and other features on the property suggest a long history of human intervention in an originally natural woodland area, and a total utilisation of the resources of that area.

The parish boundary marks the western edge of a now vanished enclosure of great age. Part of the hedge of this enclosure is still preserved towards the north and at the east of the property. This enclosure may represent assarting, when the original woodland in this area was first felled in order to gain more plough-land, and may well be Saxon.

The plough-land subsequently would have expanded to occupy all the land that was not too steep to plough. This land remained wooded by default, but was in no way an un-managed area. The coppicing of woodland was an essential component of the medieval economy, providing building materials, fencing and fuel in the form of firewood and charcoal. The woodland provided cover for game and pannage for pigs. Coppicing had probably been practised here for a millennium or more before being discontinued within living memory.

Other elements in this landscape were also valuable. Most obviously, the stream itself was a major power source, utilised by the mill. Where structures were made of stone, this would be quarried from the nearest available source and quarries on the property would have provided stone for the mill and the dam.

The utilisation of all these components of a pre-industrial economy, wood, water and stone, together with the tracks, which allowed transport, and the fences, which protected crops and tree shoots from grazing animals, have all left evidence in this area of woodland.

### ***Management recommendations***

Care should be taken to respect the line of any banks within the woodland that may mark former compartments. Similarly the hollow-way through the woodland should not be subject to backfilling. The line of the mill leat should be kept clear of undergrowth and the sluice gates should be maintained. Severe erosion of the stream banks around the mill dam has occurred due to recent flooding. The future preservation of this feature is problematical, but further damage may be avoided by shoring up the banks by some suitable and cost effective means. The original field boundaries are often delineated by the presence of stands of coppiced hazel. These should be maintained, where possible, and where stock proof fencing is being inserted it would be advantageous to lay the hedges.

---

<sup>3</sup>

Worcestershire Sites and Monuments Record WSM 05589

## **Bibliography**

Tithe Commissioners Clifton on Teme Apportionment, 1845  
Tithe Commissioners Sapey Pitchard (Lower Sapey) Apportionment, 1843  
Gwilliam, H, 1968 CBA Industrial Archaeology Report

## **Cartographic References**

Tithe Map (Sapey Pitchard, 1843)  
Tithe Map (Clifton on Teme, 1846)  
1st Edition (1885) OS County Series – Worcestershire XXVII.5  
2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (1909) OS County Series – Worcestershire XXVII.5

## **Copyright**

Archenfield Archaeology will retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents, under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act* 1998 with all rights reserved; excepting that it hereby provide an exclusive licence to the client for use of such documents by the client in all matters directly relating to the project.