



Nether Court Barn, Stoke Lacy, Herefordshire:
archaeological monitoring and building recording

Huw Sherlock
2003



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.

*Nether Court Barn, Stoke Lacy, Herefordshire: archaeological monitoring and building recording
2003*

Client: Mr C Simmonds, land owner

Text: Huw Sherlock BA (hons), Diparch, MIFA

Project Manager: Huw Sherlock BA (hons), Diparch, MIFA

Illustrations: Robert Williams

Cover Photograph: Nether Court barn, looking west



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Summary

Mr. Colin Simmonds commissioned Archenfield Archaeology to carry out a programme of archaeological building recording and monitoring during the conversion of a barn at Nether Court, Stoke Lacy, Herefordshire. The barn was a former coach house and stable and the removal of the brick floor revealed some features associated with the original layout of the building. All the archaeological artefacts or features recorded were contemporary with the construction of the barn. The fieldwork took place in April 2003

1.0 Introduction

N.G.R SO 6196 4941

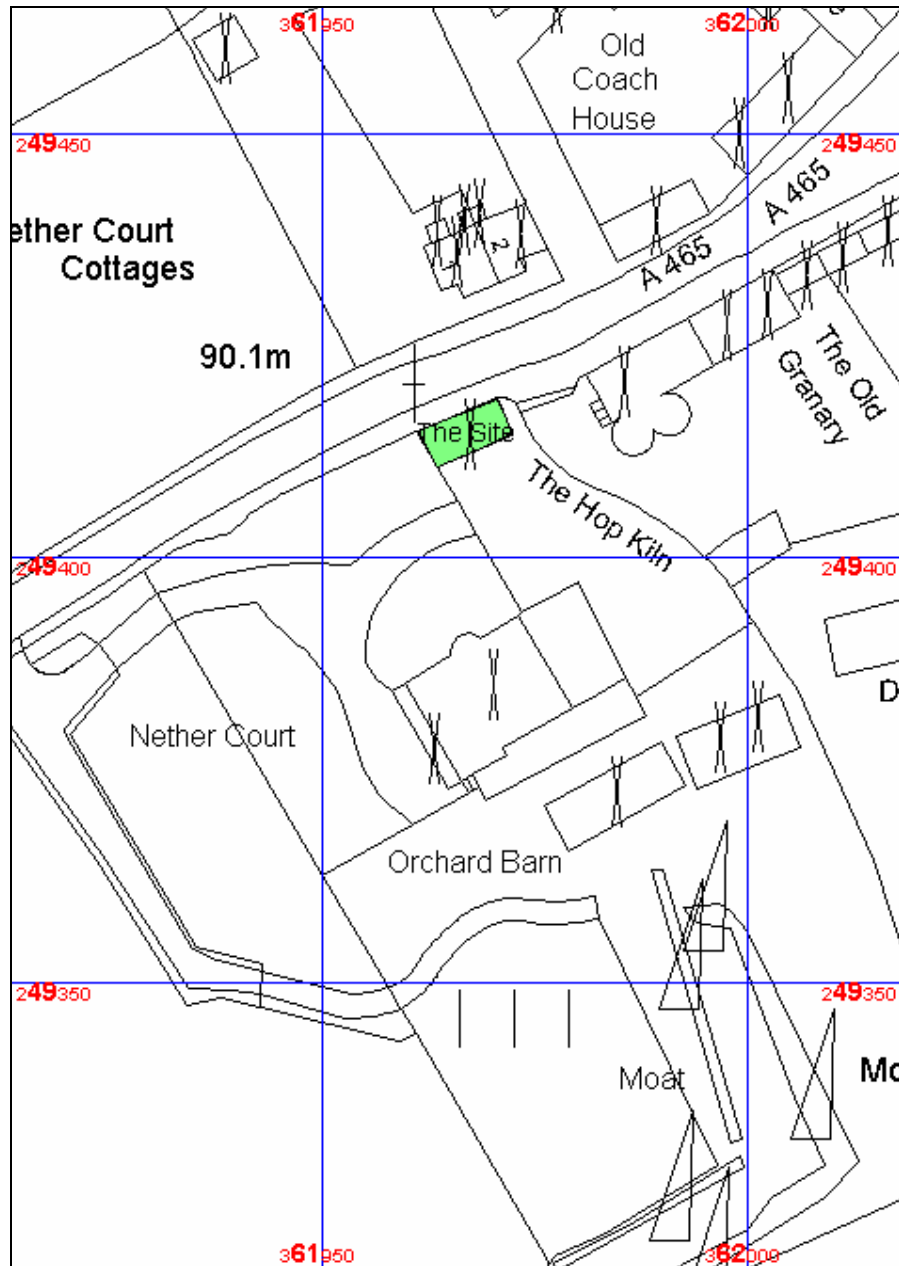


Figure 1: Location plan showing the site in green. Reproduced under license from the Ordnance Survey Superplan data drawing reference: hemc_0000656

Mr Colin Simmonds (the client) commissioned Archenfield Archaeology to carry out a programme of archaeological building recording and monitoring during the conversion of a former coach house and stable at Nether Court, Stoke Lacy, Herefordshire. This was in response to the brief issued by the Archaeological Adviser to Herefordshire Council following receipt of a planning application to convert the building to a garage and studio. This document details the archaeological response to the brief and the results of the fieldwork, which took place in April 2003.

2.0 Geological, historical and archaeological background

2.1 Geological background and land use

The solid geology of the area consists of beds of the Old Red Sandstone which is overlain by drifts of alluvial sand and gravel (British Geological Survey, 1:50000 Solid and Drift Geology plan, 2000). The site is currently in use as outbuildings and a yard.

2.2 Historical background

The Domesday Book for Herefordshire records the following entry for Stoke (Lacy) 'Aelmer Young held it; he could go where he would. 10 hides which pay tax. In lordship 3 ploughs; 22 villagers with 6 ploughs; a further 6 others would be possible. 11 slaves; a mill at 5s. Value before 1066 10s. now the same' (Thorn & Thorn 1983). At the time of the Domesday Survey Stoke Lacy was part of the Plegelgate Hundred. The Manor at Nether Court became the property of Roger de Lacy after the conquest, and subsequently passed to the Devereux family and then to the Berringtons.

2.3 Archaeological background

There are several sites of archaeological interest in close proximity to the site recorded in the Herefordshire sites and monuments record.

In 1988 a moat (SMR 7437) was recorded at Nether Court consisting of 2 arms, the NE and SE sides, which remained intact and water filled. The course of the NW arm is indicated by shallow depression along the modern hedge line, but the fourth side is now missing entirely. A round disturbance in the centre of the enclosed area was interpreted as possibly indicating the site of the original house.

A mill with house and garden (SMR 30770) is recorded 200 metres west of Nether Court in the 1840's. It is shown on the tithe map as field number 224 (mill and garden) and 171 (mill pond). This is the property currently known as Mill House.

The parish church of Saints Peter and Paul is recorded as SMR 6872. Duncumb, writing in 1812, notes that the Abbey & convent of Gloucester had held it. He describes it as being a small building with one aisle, a chancel with a low tower with 4 bells, and that it had 'lately undergone considerable repairs'. The churchyard is noted to be the 'most extensive in county, 4 statute acres'. Pevsner notes that the church was entirely rebuilt in 1863 by F. R. Kempson. He describes it as being in the Early English style, and that it has a 'specially ugly west tower; ugly in mixture of rockfacing & smooth dressings & in outline of spire. He states that 'the nave is rock faced too, chancel of different masonry. Inside the chancel arch is Norman, but incorporates a reconstructed mid twelfth century chancel arch, and has a late fifteenth- sixteenth century screen'.

3.0 Project aims and objectives

- To monitor all groundwork undertaken by the contractor.
- To make a record of the extent and depth of all such groundwork.
- To make a record of any archaeological features or deposits exposed.
- To record the presence of archaeological material within the trenches and in the spoil removed during excavation, and to retrieve any potential dating evidence.
- To make a record of all finds and any environmental material recovered.
- To ensure that if any environmental evidence was preserved, that a sufficient sample be 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.

4.0 Methodology

4.1 Field methodology

The following methodology was employed:

- Suitably qualified archaeologists monitored all activity that involved disturbance of the ground surface.
- The building was recorded photographically and by making an annotated ground plan based on the architect's drawing.
- 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 artefacts and was recorded with a description of their type, quantity and original location. The spoil was scanned for significant finds but 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, and a board displaying a unique context number. Each photographic exposure was recorded in the photographic log.
- Staff carrying out the monitoring of the groundwork followed the guidelines laid down in the Archenfield Archaeology Health and Safety Policy.
- 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 Institute of Field Archaeology Standards and Guidance or Draft Standards and Guidance.

4.2 Processing methodology

- All retained artefacts and ecofacts were subjected to further analysis.
- All data were entered into a Microsoft Access relational database.

5.0 Results

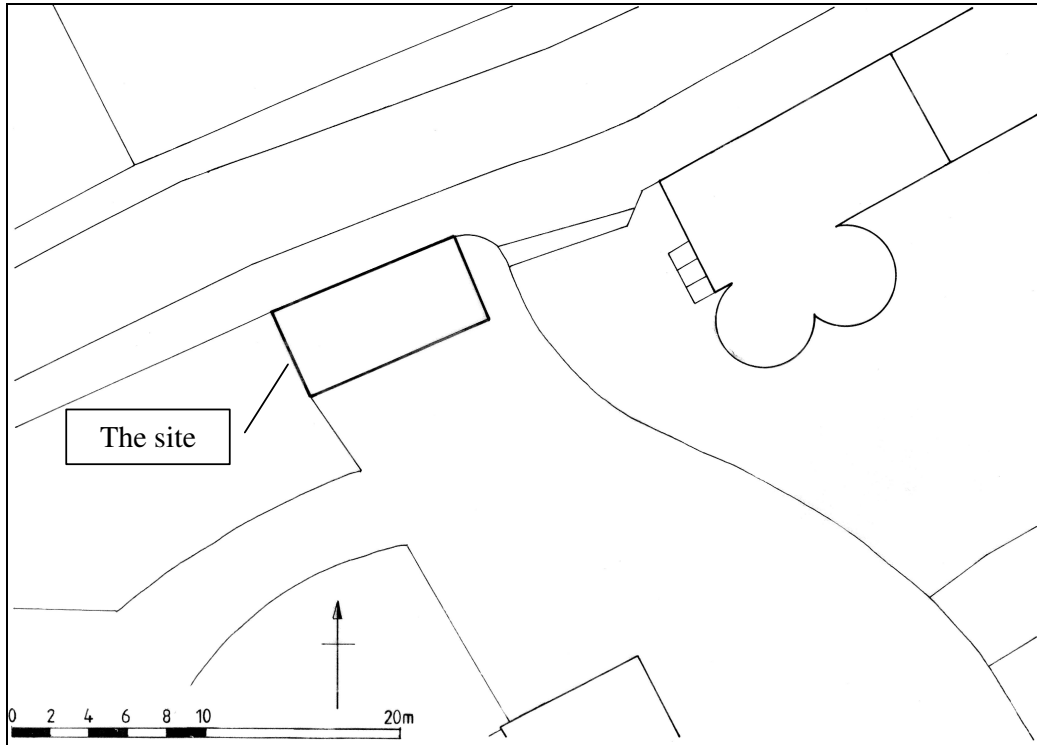


Figure 2: Location plan showing the position of the site



Plate 1: The southern elevation of the building

The building is of one storey and built in brick with a simple pitched roof covered in ceramic tiles. It is very similar in style to the adjacent hop kilns and other outbuildings, suggesting that it was constructed at the same time. The ground

floor was built as two unequal rooms, a cart shed/tack room and a stable. The western room still has the original brick arch headed doorway with wooden door surrounds, but the eastern room has had a new entrance inserted with a simple wooden lintel replacing the original doorway. The original position of the stable door can still be seen as a construction break (see plate 1). The upper storey has three unequally spaced casement windows with protruding lintels.

On the ground floor inside the western room attached to the western gable a series of wooden 'L' shaped supports survive. These were probably used to store saddles or other items of tack (see plate 2). The eastern gable end of the building has a door at first floor level was reached by a flight of external wooden steps. The floor of the first floor room had recently been replaced with new timbers and a hardboard floor.



Plate 2: The wooden supports probably used for storing saddles

5.1 Stratigraphy

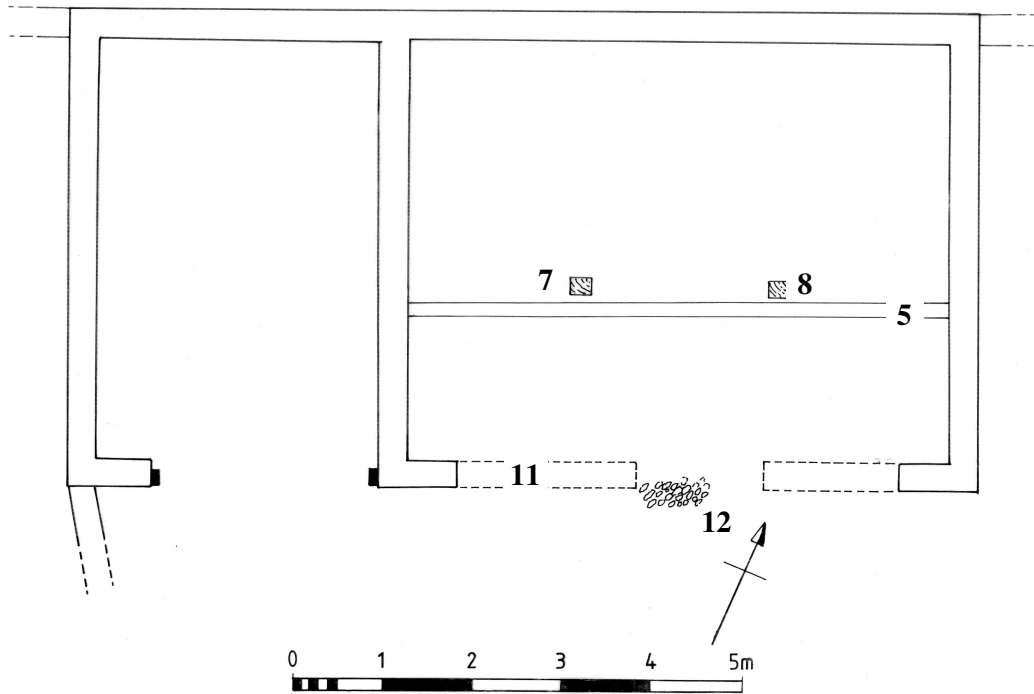


Figure 3: Ground plan showing the location of features recorded during the watching brief

The brick floor of the former stable was removed by hand (context 1). The bricks were hand made, had no frog and were 220 millimetres x 110 millimetres by 70 millimetres. The bricks were laid onto a lime mortar base which was 100 – 150 millimetres deep. A shallow gully was visible as a depression in the floor running north south across the width of the floor. Once the brick floor had been removed the underlying ground surface was examined for archaeological structures or deposits. This consisted of a deposit of mid brown silty clay with sand (context 3), which was 100 millimetres thick. This lay over a deposit of mid red clay (context 4). A brick lined drain (context 5) running north east – south west across the floor corresponding with the position of the gully visible in the brick floor above. This consisted of two rows of bricks (the same type as the floor was made from) laid on edge approximately 350 millimetres apart. Two pieces of roughly hewn tree trunk (contexts 7 & 8, see plate 3) had been buried to a depth of between 1 metre to 1.5 metres in the floor, apparently acting as supports for wooden partitions dividing the stable into separate stalls. The base of both these supports was very waterlogged. The position of the wooden supports corresponded with holes in the rear wall of the stable indicating where the partitions were fixed to the wall.



Plate 3: One of the two buried tree stumps (contexts 7&8)

Some evidence relating to the original form of the building before the new doorway was inserted was observed. The original brick footings of the frontage of the building were clearly visible (context **11**), and showed that originally the stable had a single centrally placed doorway. A patch of cobbling (context **12**, see plate **4**) was still visible in front of the original position of the door. This appeared to continue beneath the tarmac yard surface.



Plate 4: The cobbles uncovered in front of the original doorway (context 12)

5.2 Pottery

Very few finds were made during the watching brief. A single example of a porcelain salt glazed egg was recovered. These are commonly used to encourage hens to lay. No medieval or early post medieval pottery was found.

6.0 Conclusions

The observations made during the watching brief revealed no evidence of any archaeological features or deposits pre-dating the construction of the building. The intrusions made to facilitate the conversion were very limited and it is therefore still possible that some medieval or earlier archaeological deposits are present at depth. The fact that the ground was heavily waterlogged below 1 metre means that any underlying deposits might potentially have well preserved environmental (pollen and plant macrofossil) evidence present within them.

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 Hereford 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 Hereford 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 Herefordshire Council, Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record and Hereford City Library. A short note on the project will be prepared for publication in the Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club.

A digital version of this report on CD-Rom, together with the supporting archival material will be available from Archenfield Archaeology.

The complete photographic record, including the negatives, will be retained by Archenfield Archaeology.

General bibliography

- | | |
|---|--|
| Duncumb 1812 | History of Herefordshire Vol .II |
| | Littlebury's Directory and Gazetteer of Herefordshire, 1876-7 |
| Pevsner, N 1963 | The Buildings of England; Herefordshire |
| Royal Commission on Historical Monuments 1932 | Inventory of Monuments, Herefordshire East, Vol II Herefordshire East, Volume II II, 174 |
| Thorn F and C Thorn 1983 | Domesday Book: Herefordshire Domesday Book |

Cartographic material

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Tithe Commissioners, 1840 | Tithe map of Stoke Lacy Parish |
| Ordnance Survey, 1888 | 1st edition 1:2500 plan. County Series, Herefordshire |
| Ordnance Survey 1964 | 1:10,000 or 10,560 Map |

Appendices

Description from Littlebury's Directory and Gazetteer of Herefordshire, 1876-7

STOKE LACY is a parish and village situated on the main road between Bromyard and Hereford; and on the river Leadon; is distant 4 miles S.S.W. of Bromyard, 10 N.E. of Hereford, 11 S.E. of Leominster, and 12 N.W. of Ledbury; is in Broxash hundred, Bromyard union, petty sessional division, and county court district, and Ocle Pychard (Burley Gate) polling district. The population in 1861 was 348; in 1871, 346; inhabited houses, 75; families or separate occupiers, 76; area of parish, 2,005a. 3r. 3p.; annual rateable value, £2,708. The Right Hon. Earl Somers, of Eastnor castle, is lord of the manor, and Miss Luxmore and George Thomas Dent, Esq., are the principal landowners. The soil is clayey; subsoil, limestone; products, wheat, barley, beans, hops, fruit, &c. Stoke Lacy is in the diocese and archdeaconry of Hereford and rural deanery of North Froome; living, a rectory; value, £334, with residence and 19 acres of glebe; patron and rector, Rev. Henry Morgan, LL.B., of St. John's College, Cambridge, who was instituted in 1871. The church, dedicated to *St. Peter and St. Paul*, is a small stone edifice, consisting of nave, chancel, porch, square tower, and spire, with four bells. The chancel was rebuilt about thirty years ago. The nave and tower were rebuilt in 1863-64 at a cost of £963, of which £500 was contributed by Church Building Societies. The interior is plain, and contains stone pulpit, screen, and nearly 200 sittings, all of which are free. The register commences with the year 1567. A new parochial school, to accommodate about 60 children, was erected in 1875 by voluntary contributions.

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