



Oakwood, Eardisley, Herefordshire:
archaeological evaluation

Graham Arnold
2007



archenfield archaeology ltd

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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.

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The author would like to thank Graham Britton and Brenainn Morley for their assistance during the fieldwork and Malcolm Mason for providing historical documentation and sharing his knowledge of the local history.

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Cover photograph: Southern frontage of Oakwood, Eardisley



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Summary

Archenfield Archaeology Ltd undertook an archaeological evaluation at the rear of the Grade II listed building, Oakwood on Church Road, Eardisley, Herefordshire. The fieldwork took place between the 23-24th October 2007. This was prior to the submission of a planning application to construct a building on site and adjust access to the road. The area investigated consisted of 2 trenches each measuring 10 metres by 2 metres, a total of 40 square metres, excavated by machine until the first significant archaeological or natural level was reached.

Evidence for a ditch orientated south-east, north-west, dating to the medieval period survived in trench one, with other garden activity and a pipe trench above. This is thought to be the boundary to the original medieval burgage plot. The second trench contained no significant archaeological evidence.

1.0 Introduction

Mr William Gregory (the client) commissioned an archaeological evaluation in accordance with the written scheme of investigation issued by Archenfield Archaeology Ltd agreed in advance by the archaeological adviser to Herefordshire Archaeology. This was issued in response to planning application for permission to construct a building and change access to the road. This document gives details of how the archaeological project was conducted, in accordance with the project design and the conclusions to the project.

1.1 Site location

Eardisley is situated between Hereford and Kington within Herefordshire on the A4111.

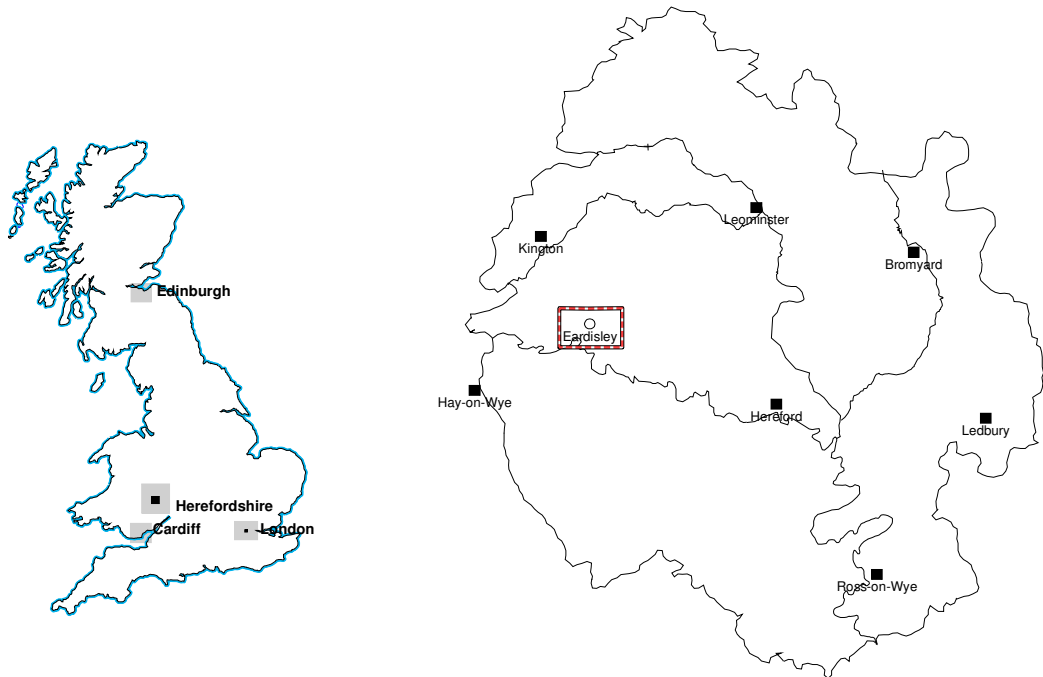


Figure 1: Location of Eardisley within Herefordshire and the UK

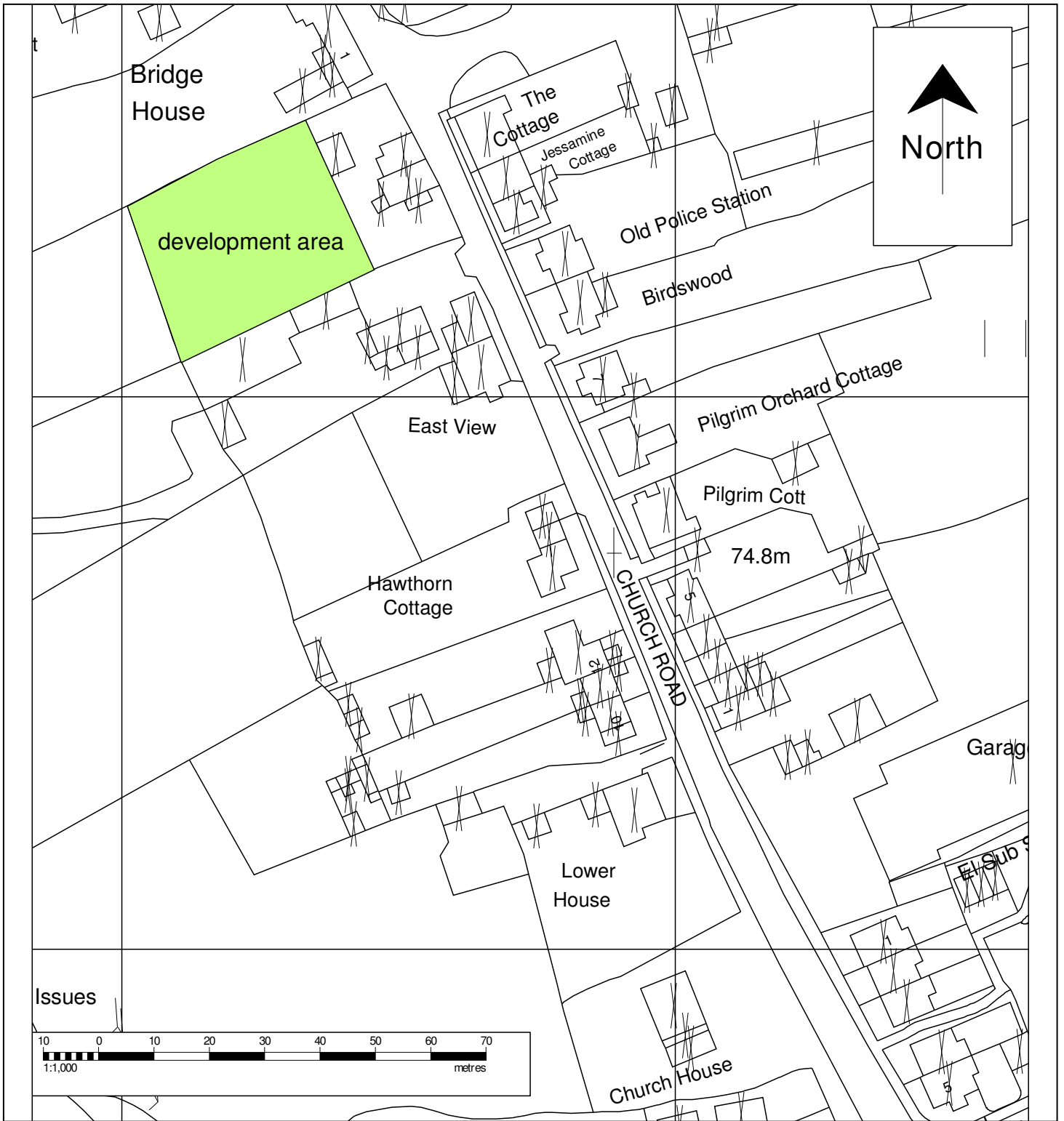


Figure 2: Site location plan OS Superplan data reproduced under license 00126400

1.2 Trench location

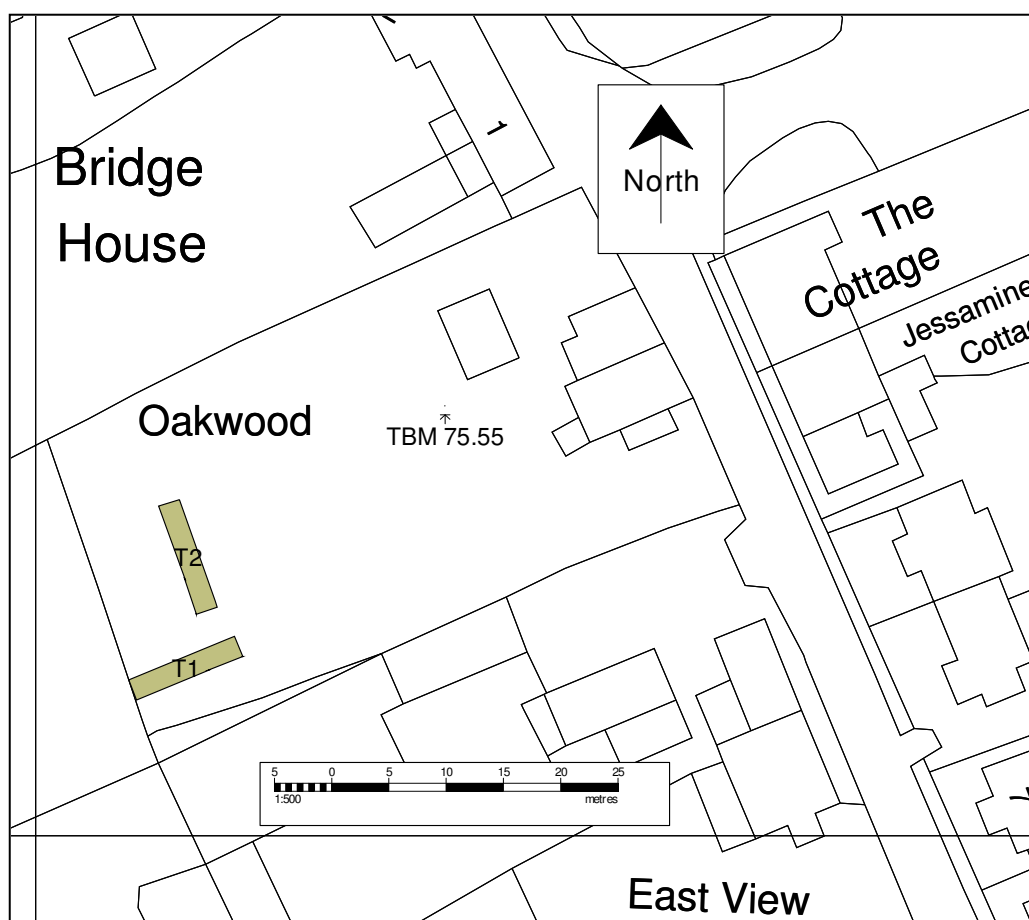


Figure 3: Trench location plan. Ordnance Survey superplan data reproduced under licence 00126400

Two evaluation trenches, each measuring 10 metres by 2 metres (marked on figure 2) were excavated by machine to the top of the archaeological layers or undisturbed natural, in the area where the development is proposed. A temporary benchmark was also located on site.

The trenches were strategically located to coincide with both the evidence of potential archaeology, visible from historical maps and documentary sources consulted as part of the desk-based assessment of the site and the area of the modern development, avoiding drainage pipes running across the land.

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 (British Geological Survey 1979). The site is currently in use as a garden and rough ground to the rear of the Grade II listed building Oakwood.

2.2 Historical and archaeological background



Figure 4: Tithe map of Eardisley 1839, Oakwood is plot number 739 (north) and 740 (south)

English Heritage date Oakwood, a timber-framed house, to the late 16th Century, with mid-19th and mid-20th Century alterations. The history of the occupation of this property is as complex as its construction. It included other buildings on the plot in the past and the ownership of the property was divided into two plots, North and South after inheritance and mortgaging issues in 1735 (James & Mason 2005). The properties ownership is also referenced in the census records running from 1841 up until 1901 (James & Mason 2005). There is evidence of blacksmithing and other small scale industrial activity to the rear of the property and the construction of temporary buildings on the plot. The 1839 tithe map and 1866 OS map (figure 4 and 5) also demonstrate a burgage boundary to the rear of the properties, probably defined by a ditch probably to assist land drainage and deter animals. There may also have been a hedge or a fence to further enhance the visual effect and define the plot boundaries. The First edition OS map also shows that the land behind the boundary was in use as orchards.



Figure 5 : 1886 OS map of Eardisley and Almeley parish. The Oakwood plots are situated on the lefthand side of the main road, in between the large S and L.

3.0 Project Aims and Objectives

3.1 General evaluation aims

The aims of the project were to determine the potential for archaeological evidence on the site, in particular, whether evidence of the medieval burgage plot boundary ditch survived, marked on the tithe map, activities within the burgage plot and any segregation of the land when the house was divided into two dwellings during the 18th century.

3.2 Objectives

The aims were addressed by means of the following objectives:

- archaeologically excavating 2 trenches (a total of 40 square metres) in order to evaluate the survival of archaeological features or deposits relating to the land to the rear of Oakwood, a late 16th Century house
- recording the extent and depth of all groundwork
- making a record of any archaeological features or deposits exposed
- making a record of all finds, environmental evidence and any other dating 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 Herefordshire 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

A suitably qualified archaeologist monitored all activity that involved disturbance of the ground surface. Two evaluation trenches measuring 10 metres x 2 metres were opened using a mini-digger equipped with a toothless bucket. The use of the mechanical excavator 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.

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 The results

5.1 Stratigraphy

Trench 1

Trench 1 measured 10 metres x 2 metres and was orientated east-west. The stratigraphy included topsoil (1), averaging 0.50m in depth, with a mottled yellowy subsoil above the red gravelly clay natural. On the Western edge of the trench was a ditch that had been backfilled a varied and widespread usage. A recently created pipe trench, with a sharp straight edge (cut 3), filled with re-deposited red gravelly clay (2), laid on top of a 19th/20th Century backfill of stones, building rubble and ceramic building material (4), with a shallow curved cut (5). Below this, cut into the natural red gravelly clay (7) was a sharper ditch (9) with a light brown silty fill (8), which contained finds such as occasional sherds of 13th/14th Century medieval ceramics and animal bone.



Figure 6 : Photograph of the site with trench 1 and 2 open, looking West, from the back of the plot towards Oakwood.

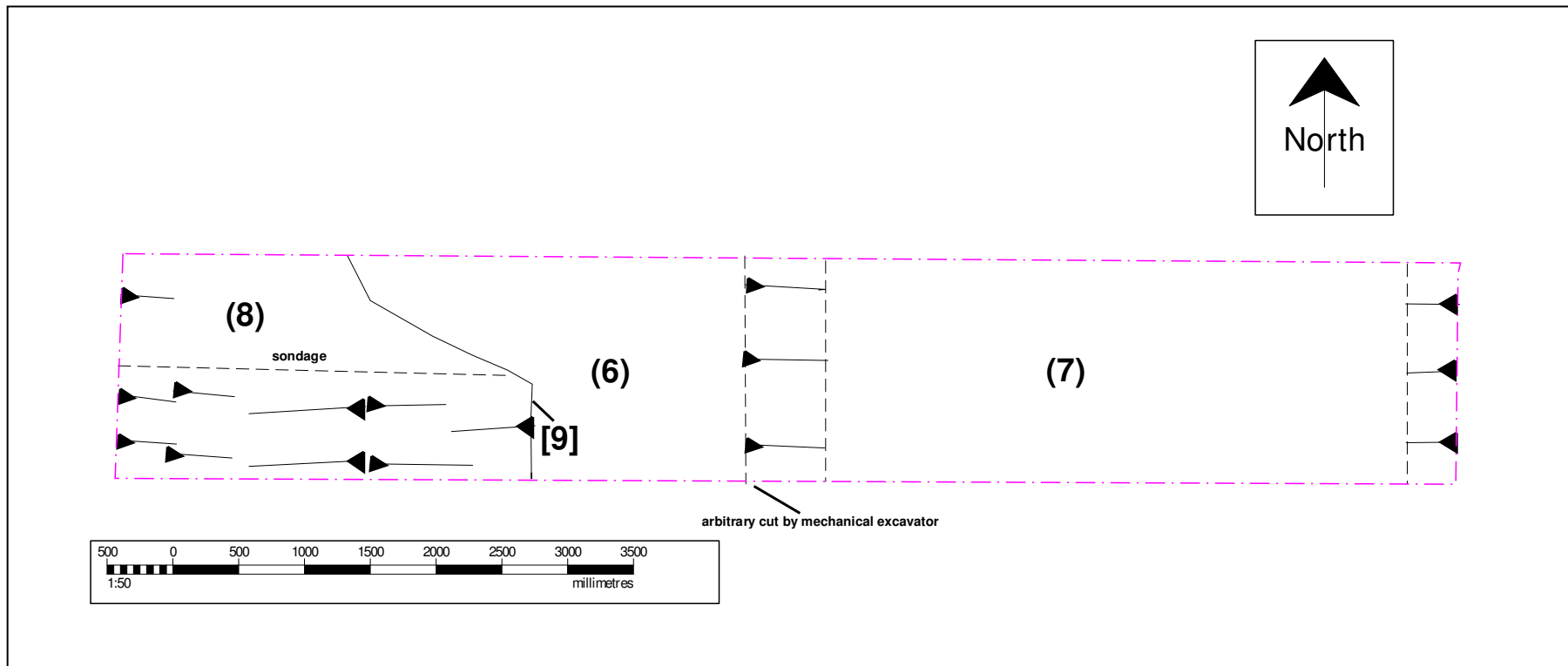


Figure 7: Plan of Trench 1

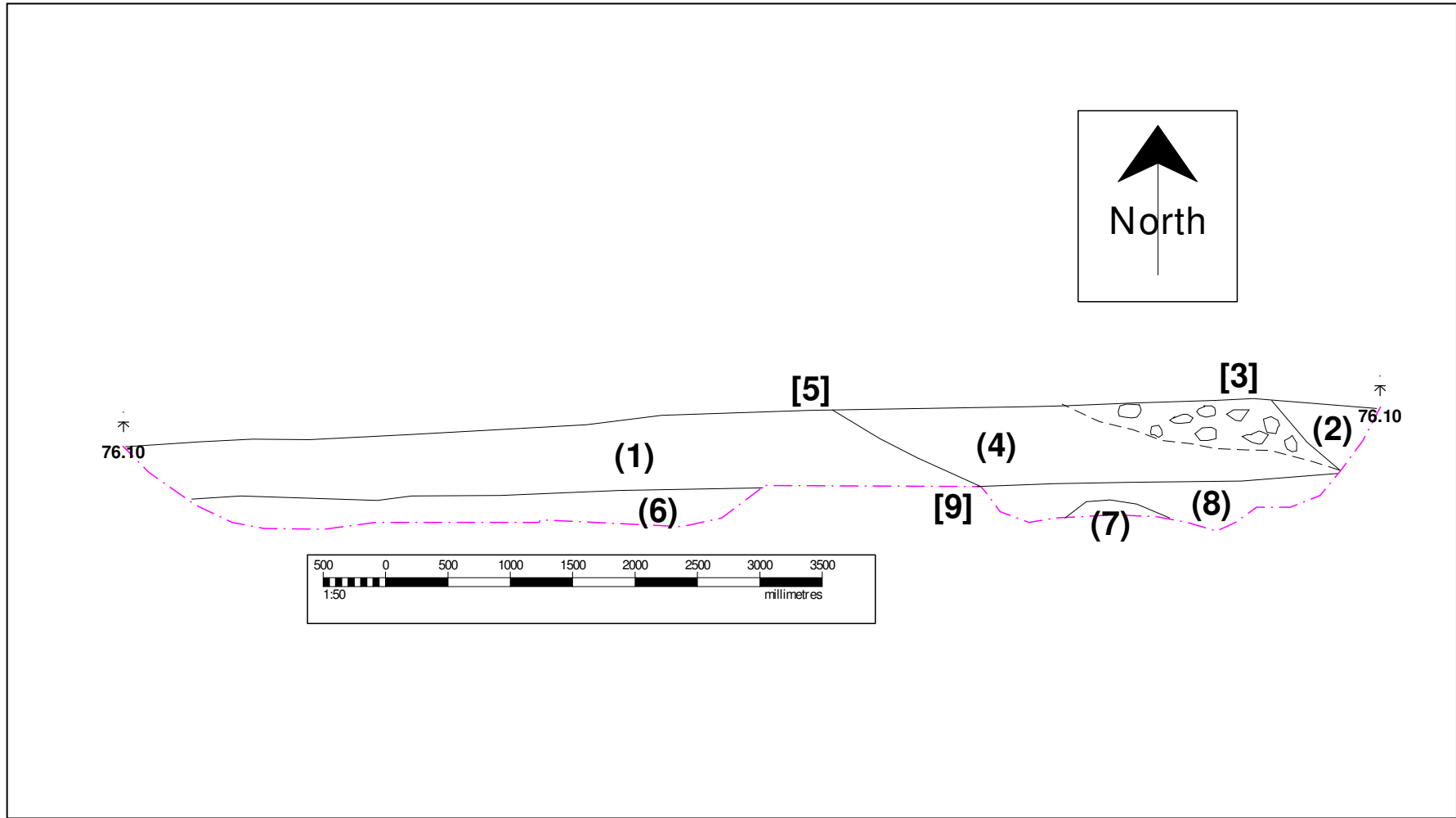


Figure 8: North-facing section of trench 1



Figure 9: (left) Trench 1 ditch feature [3] and (4) before excavation, looking East.

Figure 10: (right) Trench 1 ditch sondage, looking west





Figure 11 : Trench 1, western extent of north-facing section, showing ditch stratigraphy (4), [5], (8) and [9]



Figure 12: Trench 1, looking north-west, showing south-facing section and sondage through ditch (8) and [9] and arbitrary cut through natural by the mechanical excavator.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was orientated north-south. No significant archaeological features were discovered. The stratigraphy was similar to trench one, with topsoil (1), yellowy clay subsoil (6) and natural red clay and gravels (7). There is no sign of any truncation of the site. The negative evidence from this trench suggests that the most westerly limit of the plot had no occupational activity. However, this does not preclude activity closer to the main existing building and thoroughfare.



**Figure 13 : Trench 2 looking north (left);
Trench 2, looking north-west, showing east-facing
section (below).**



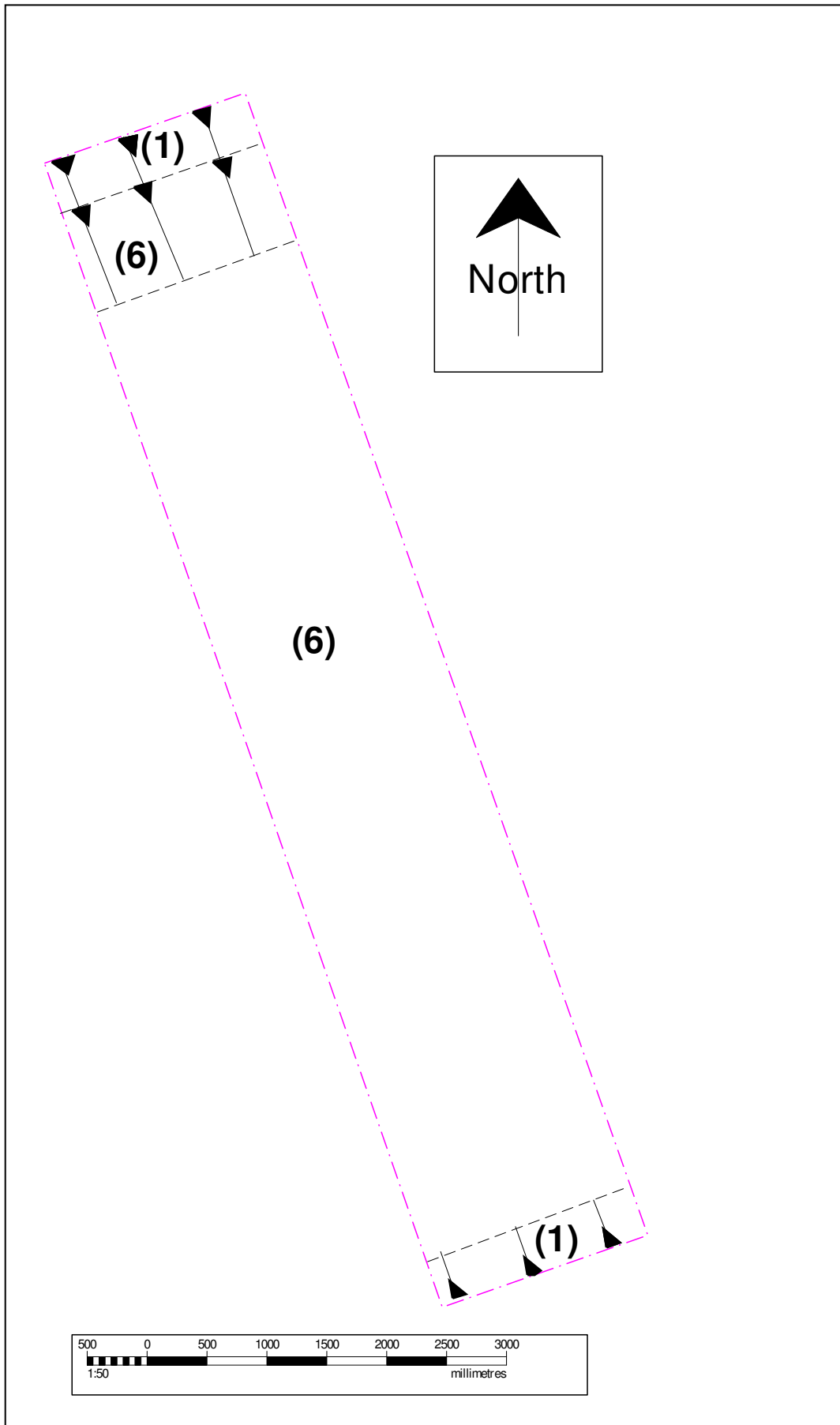


Figure 14: Plan of trench 2

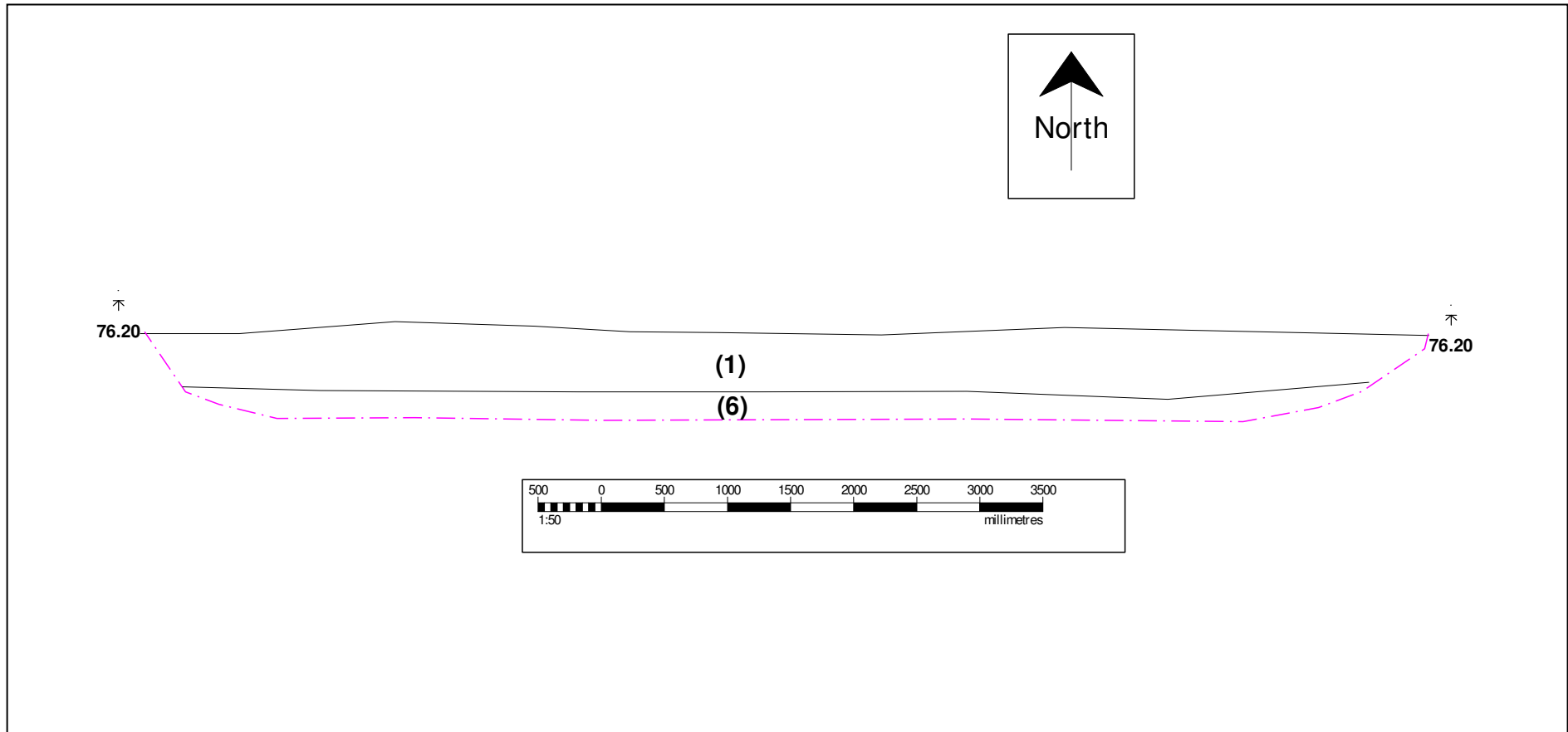


Figure 15: East-facing section of trench 2

5.2 The Finds

Finds from the two trenches and spoil heaps included pottery, ceramic building material, animal bone, glass, clay pipe sherds, undiagnostic slag and one copper alloy button. Within fill (8) 7 sherds of ceramics of a medieval date were recorded which are consistent with medieval fabric types of 13th/14th Century date.

Context number	Fabric description	Sherd count	Spot date
1	Grey decorated slipware	3	20 th Century
4	White porcelain china	1	20 th Century
	Black decorated slipware	3	
8	Green-glaze,	6	13 th -14 th Century
	Black cooking pot fragment	1	

Table 1: Identified fabric types by context

6.0 Conclusions

The only archaeological feature exposed during the excavation was the medieval boundary ditch orientated south-east, north-west on the eastern edge of trench 1. This lines up with the historical maps and accounts, such as the tithe map and First edition OS map (figure 4 and 5) that there was an eastern boundary ditch running across the back of the burgage plots. This area is still used for drainage today and had later backfills of 19th / 20th Century date and a modern pipe trench recently created to control the drainage of the site. The earliest stratified finds discovered during the evaluation of the development site at Oakwood from the fill at the base of the ditch were dated to the 13th /14th Century and related to the burgage boundary ditch cut into the natural. No other significant archaeology was discovered during the evaluation although there is potential for archaeology to exist closer to the existing house, with accounts of blacksmithing, agriculture and other temporary building structures Mason, 2005, pers com).

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 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 Hereford 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 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. Information will also be available on OASIS, after completion of the report and an OASIS form (<http://.ads.ahds.ac.uk>)

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

9.0 General bibliography

James, D. & Mason, M (ed) 2005	<i>Eardisley: Its houses and their residents</i> , Eardisley History Group, St Leonards Press, Ludlow
Arnold, G 2007	<i>Oakwood, Eardisley, Herefordshire: project design for an archaeological evaluation</i> , Archenfield Archaeology, unpublished report

10.0 Cartographic material

OS Superplan Data 2007	Reproduced under license number 00126400
British Geological Survey 1979	Geological Survey ten mile map, South sheet, third edition (Solid)
Tithe map 1839, tithe commissioners	
1886 OS Map	Herefordshire 24 NE Eardisley and Almeley Parishes

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