



Eardisley Primary School, Eardisley, Herefordshire:  
archaeological monitoring

Clementine Lovell  
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.

*Eardisley Primary School, Eardisley, Herefordshire: archaeological monitoring  
2003*

Client: Herefordshire Council

Text: Clementine Lovell

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Cover Photograph: Eardisley Primary School



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## **Summary**

*Archenfield Archaeology was commissioned by Herefordshire Council to carry out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at Eardisley Primary School during October and December 2003. On two occasions trenches were dug and groundwork was monitored, but no significant finds or features were encountered.*

## 1.0 Introduction

NGR SO 31330 49140

Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record - Event No 38272

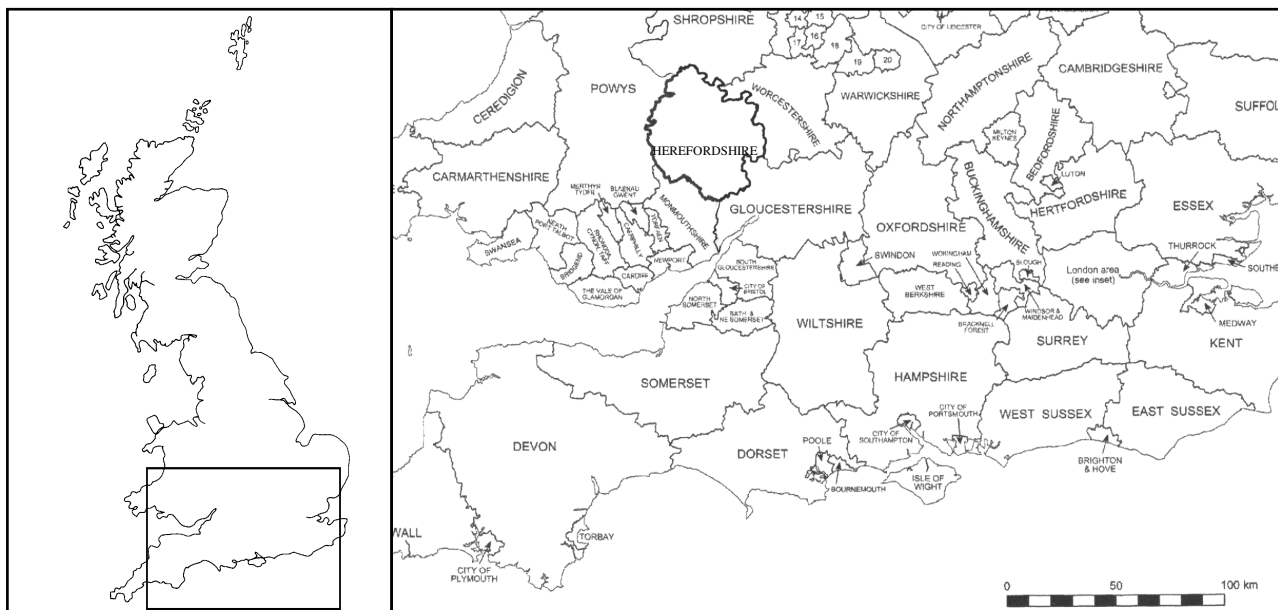


Figure 1: Location plan

Herefordshire Council (the client) commissioned a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording in accordance with a brief issued by the Herefordshire Council Archaeology Service. This was issued in response to planning application NW2002/3582/F for permission to build a classroom extension.

## 2.0 Geological, historical and archaeological background

### 2.1 Geological background and land use

The solid geology of the area consists of the Lower Old Red Sandstone (OS Geological Survey 1979). Currently the site is occupied by Eardisley Primary School.

### 2.2 Historical background

There are three Domesday entries for Eardisley. Listed under the lands of the king in Elsdon hundred is the entry 'Harold also held *Herdeslege*. 2½ hides waste.' Harold is Harold Godwinson, King of England in 1066, who had held the land in the reign of Edward the Confessor. Harold's right to the crown was never accepted by William the Conqueror and when mentioned in Domesday he is always '*comes*' - count, the Norman-French equivalent of the English title, earl.<sup>1</sup>

Another part of Eardisley was held by Roger de Lacy who had subinfeudated it to Robert de Baskerville. This land was not in any hundred and lay in the middle of a wood and there was a fortified house, '*dom una defensabit*' there.<sup>2</sup> This fortified house was presumably the origin of Eardisley castle and the status of this land as a 'castlery' could explain its extra-hundred status.

The third entry for Eardisley is under the lands of Hugh d'Asne.<sup>3</sup> This was half a hide in Elsdon hundred which had also been held by Harold.

### 2.3 Archaeological background

A circular earthwork known as The Camp, 2.5 miles north-west of Eardisley church, has been interpreted from recent aerial photographs as a Neolithic henge. The earthwork is surrounded by a dry ditch and there are traces of an outer bank on its southern half.<sup>4</sup>

Another earthwork close to the church constitutes the remains of Eardisley castle: a roughly oval moated enclosure with a motte on its south-west side rises some 14 feet above a bailey. The existence of '*domus defensibilis*' of Eardisley is recorded in Domesday, and this was perhaps the origin of the surviving earthwork. The castle was still in use in 1263, and was ordered to be held in 1403 despite being ruinous in 1374. The royalist stronghold here was burnt to the ground during the civil war, with only one of the gatehouses surviving, later used as a private family residence by the Blount family. Spearheads and armour have been found in the inner moat, along with a huge piece of masonry thought to be part of a drawbridge or sluice-gate, and there is evidence for further buried foundations and stone on the site.<sup>5</sup>

The other site of archaeological significance is a 15<sup>th</sup> century medieval churchyard, to the south of Eardisley church.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Section 1.68. Domesday information is from Thorn and Thorn 1983.

<sup>2</sup> Section 10.46

<sup>3</sup> Section 29.17

<sup>4</sup> Herefordshire SMR number 946

<sup>5</sup> Herefordshire SMR number 1626

<sup>6</sup> Herefordshire SMR number 1071

### **3.0 Project aims and objectives**

The aims of the project were: -

- 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**

The following methodology was employed: -

- Suitably qualified archaeologists monitored all activity that involved disturbance of the ground surface.
- All descriptions of deposits, photographic records and drawing numbers were recorded on the relevant data capture documents in accordance with Archenfield Archaeology's standard site recording procedures.
- The location of the work was recorded on scale drawings.
- 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 IFA Standards and Guidance or Draft Standards and Guidance.

### **5.0 Results**

Trenches were dug on two separate occasions and the stratigraphic sequences recorded. In October 2003, trenches 50cm wide and 90cm deep showed yellowish hard soil beneath the topsoil, below which was a reddish clay, both free from intrusions. The southern trench revealed mostly rubble, associated with the footings of the school buildings. In December soakaways to a depth of 2 meters encountered natural gravel at the base, above which lay a natural red clay marl. This was overlain by a mid-brown sandy silt, below 100-150cm of dark humic topsoil. See Appendix for trench location plan.

No finds were observed during excavation or in the spoil.

### **6.0 Conclusions**

There were no significant finds or features observed during the groundwork.

### **7.0 Archive deposition**

The primary project archive, consisting of any original paper records, 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.

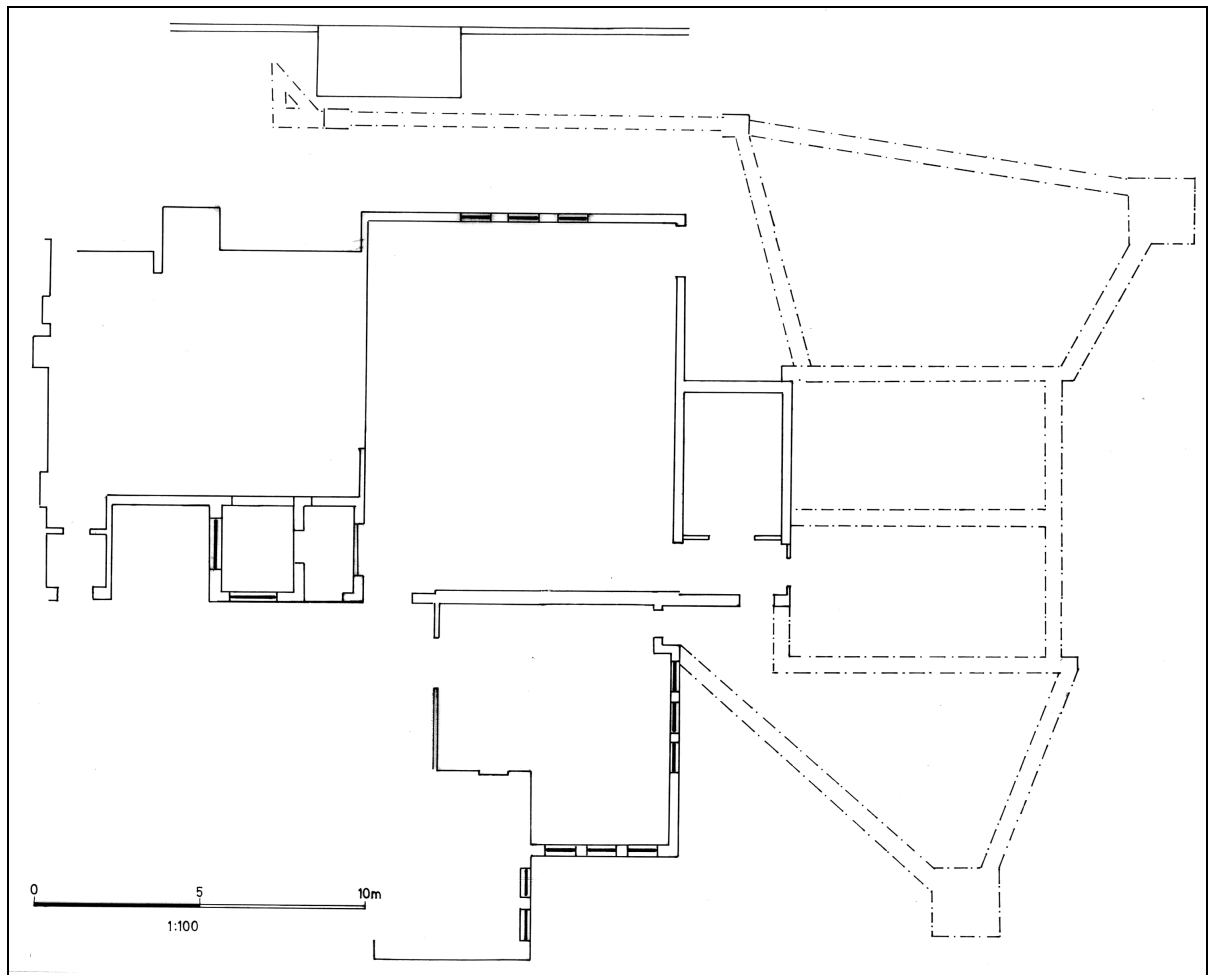
## 8.0 Publication and dissemination proposals

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 *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists Club*.

CDs of this report, 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.

## Appendix



**Figure 2: Trench location plan**

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