

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF
AT
PERSHORE LIBRARY,
PERSHORE,
WORCESTERSHIRE



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Worcestershire Archaeology
Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service
The Hive
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Archaeological watching brief at Pershore Library, Pershore, Worcestershire

Peter Lovett

With contributions by Dennis Williams and Laura Griffin

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Pershore Library, Pershore, Worcestershire (NGR ref SO 9484 4589; HER ref WSM 48248). It was undertaken on behalf of Pershore Town Council, who obtained permission for an extension to the library subject to conditions including a programme of archaeological works.

Groundworks for the foundations of the extension were monitored. Within the limited window that the excavation provided, medieval and post-medieval deposits were observed. Above natural gravel and clay deposits were a number of undated layers, interpreted as buried sub and garden soils from the early medieval period. Cutting through the higher of these deposits was a large cess pit to the west and, in the east, a post hole and a remnant of a garden wall. The wall incorporated a piece of column masonry, potentially from the Pershore Abbey, suggesting a post-1540 date. The wall was partially robbed of masonry in the 17th - 18th centuries.

The layers of material in the east of the observed trench were suggestive of more domestic activity than the garden soils in the west, and this change, whilst obscured by later truncations, occurs near the remains of the garden wall.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

A watching brief was undertaken at Pershore Library, Pershore, Worcestershire (NGR SO 9484 4589). It was commissioned by Pershore Town Council, who are extending the library for which a planning application has been approved by Wychavon District Council (reference W/12/2814) subject to conditions including a programme of archaeological works

The development site was considered to include heritage assets and potential heritage assets (WSM 16053).

The project conforms to a brief prepared by Mike Glyde of Worcestershire County Council (WCC 2013) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (WA 2013).

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008), *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010),

The event reference for this project, given by the HER is WSM 48248

2 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were as follows:

- To observe all ground breaking activity.
- To make a stratigraphic record of deposits exposed by groundworks.
- To make a record of the extent and depth of groundworks.
- To make a record of all finds and environmental material recovered.

The project was undertaken by Peter Lovett (BSc Archaeology); who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2012 and has been practicing archaeology since 2004. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers (MSc). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt. Dennis Williams (PhD) and Laura Griffin (BA, AIFA) contributed the finds report.

2.1 Documentary research

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER).

Documentary sources

Published and grey literature sources are listed in the bibliography.

2.2 Fieldwork strategy

Fieldwork was undertaken between 3rd June and 5th June 2013. The site reference number and site code is WSM 16053

Observation of all ground works was undertaken. Any such ground reduction was carried out with a toothless grading bucket. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand, with clean surfaces being inspected, in order to determine their nature and significance. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012a).

2.3 Structural analysis

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

2.4 Artefact methodology, by Dennis Williams

2.4.1 Discard policy

The following categories/types of material will be discarded after a period of 6 months following the submission of this report, unless there is a specific request to retain them (and subject to the collection policy of the relevant depository):

- where unstratified
- post-medieval pottery, and;
- generally where material has been assessed as having no obvious grounds for retention.

See the environmental section for other discard where appropriate.

2.4.2 Artefact recovery policy

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Service practice (WA 2012a; appendix 2).

2.4.3 Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were examined. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* date range was produced for each stratified context. These date ranges were used for determining the broad date of phases defined for the site. All information was recorded on *pro forma* sheets.

The pottery and ceramic building material was examined under x20 magnification and referenced as appropriate by fabric type and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by the Service (Hurst and Rees 1992 and www.worcestershireceramics.org).

2.5 Statement of confidence in the methods and results

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved

3 The application site

3.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context

Pershore lies within a bend of the River Avon, with the site overlying Bretford Terrace deposits of sands and gravels with clays, which in turn lie upon the solid Charmouth Mudstone Formation (BGS 1985). The underlying topography consists of a terrace sloping down to the river floodplain in the east (Fig 1). The library itself is situated approximately 100 metres north east of the Benedictine Abbey (WSM05407), and upon the site of a series of houses shown on the 1st Edition OS map (WSM15752).

Archaeological evidence indicates a Roman settlement in Pershore (WSM32257). In the medieval period, the town became moderately prosperous, until the dissolution of the monasteries, when it saw a period of decline. It remains a small market town with a medieval and post-medieval core.

A Flandrian river bed was discovered to the east of the library site in 1974 (WSM32259), and is thought to have been backfilled at some point in the medieval period, probably starting in the 13th Century, though a fish pond associated with the channel did survive up to the mid 19th Century. It has been suggested that a 400 hundred year gap in the pottery sequence retrieved from this channel is indicative of foul conditions unsuitable for human settlement.

3.2 Current land-use

The site is currently used as a car park.

4 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figs 2 - 4. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

4.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

Where observed, natural deposits were formed of a mid greenish yellow sandy clay, with frequent gravel clasts.

4.1.2 Phase 2: Medieval deposits

Above the natural substrate was layer 110, a soft mid greyish green sandy clay, probably an early subsoil. No dateable artefacts were retrieved from this deposit. Overlying this was another undated, homogeneous accumulation layer 109, a soft mid greyish green sandy clay. It was only in the south west end of the trench that the excavation was deep enough to observe this deposit.

In the south west end of the excavation, layer 109 was truncated by a large pit, 107. This feature was steep sided, flat bottomed and 0.68m deep. It was filled by three deposits, all organic and cessy, with the middle fill, 105, being a very dark, extremely organic material. Whilst animal bone was present in small amounts (butchered cow long bones), there was once again no firm dating from within this cess pit.

In the north east end of the trench, 109 was truncated by post hole 115. Whilst not particularly deep, this feature had a fill consisting almost entirely of charcoal, with a large stone at the top, and another at its base, probably acting as a post pad.

Stone wall 111 has an uncertain relationship with layer 109. Due to the confines of the excavation strategy, it was not possible to determine whether the wall sat within a construction cut that truncated 109. The wall itself was unbonded, and consisted of four courses of stone, including one piece of dressed masonry that was probably part of a column in an ecclesiastical building. It was in a poor state of survival, with only an assumption that it ran roughly north-south. A single sherd of pottery found within the masonry dated to between 1200-1500, but this could be residual, as the reused church masonry suggests a post-1540 date, after the Abbey was partially demolished.

4.1.3 Phase 3: Post-medieval deposits

Sealing wall 111, cess pit 107 and post hole 115 was another accumulation layer, 103. This material would have developed over the next century or so, and was cut by robber trench 117, over the top of wall 111. The backfilling of this intrusion contained the majority of the finds from the site, with large amounts of 13th-17th century pottery and tile, with later 17th-19th century artefacts giving the *terminus post quem*.

4.1.4 Phase 4: Modern deposits

A late 19th to early 20th Century makeup layer, 101, covered the majority of the excavated area, being truncated by various services and a large inspection chamber at the north east end. This inspection chamber was over three metres in length, and spanned nearly the whole width of the trench, so that end of the excavation was severely truncated. Above this and sealing everything was modern hardcore and concrete to form the current surface level.

4.2 Artefactual analysis, by Laura Griffin and Dennis Williams

The artefactual assemblage came from five stratified contexts and dated from the medieval period onwards (see Table 1). Using pottery as an index of artefact condition, this was generally good with the majority of sherds displaying moderate levels of abrasion, and the mean sherd weight being above average.

period	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	weight (g)
medieval	ceramic	-	pot	2	28
late med/early post-medieval	ceramic	-	pot	10	440
post-medieval	ceramic	-	pot	3	82
medieval	ceramic	-	roof tile	1	198
late med/early post-medieval	ceramic	-	roof tile	7	1232
late med/early post-medieval	ceramic	-	floor tile	2	292
	stone			1	14000
	bone	animal bone	pig jaw	1	78
totals:				27	16350

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

Pottery

The pottery assemblage consisted of sherds of a small range of late medieval and post-medieval fabric types, as summarised in Table 2. Diagnostic sherds provided *terminus post quem* dates for four contexts (contexts 111, 112, 113 and 116; see Table 3).

Sherds of oxidised glazed Malvernian ware (fabric 69) formed the bulk of the pottery assemblage. Vessels of this fabric type were produced between the 13th and early 17th centuries. Diagnostic sherds within this assemblage came from vessels such as flared bowls and pipkin/jar forms dating to the latest period of this production around 16th–early 17th century. Other contemporary sherds included the rim from a very fine Cistercian ware cup (fabric 72) and a small sherd of Italian Majolica (fabric 82.2), which had lost all surface glaze.

The latest sherds from the site consisted of a small fragment of Nottingham stoneware (fabric 81.3; context 116), which could be dated to the mid 18th century and a sherd from a black glazed red ware bowl (fabric 78; context 116) which was of a similar date.

period	fabric code	fabric common name	count	weight (g)
Late medieval/early post-medieval	69	Oxidized glazed Malvernian ware	10	436
Late medieval/early post-medieval	82.2	Italian tin-glazed ware	1	24
Early post-medieval	72	Cistercian ware	1	8
post-medieval	78	Post-medieval red wares	2	78
post-medieval	81.3	Nottingham stoneware	1	4

totals:	15	550
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Table 2: Quantification of the pottery

Ceramic building material

Samples of roof and floor tile were recovered from fill 116. All flat roof tile could be assigned to the late medieval/early post-medieval period dating from the late 15th century onwards. The group included nibbed fragments, one of which was stamped with a 'Maltese cross' design (context 116), similar to an example identified within the medieval assemblage from Deansway, Worcester (Fagan 2004, 358, fig. 207.15). A further, indistinct, but roughly circular stamp was also identified from this context.

In addition to the flat roof tile, a single fragment of glazed Malvernian ridge tile was also retrieved (context 116).

Two fragments of floor tile were also found in context 116. Both were evenly fired, had bevelled edges and a sanded base and neither had any glaze or decoration surviving on the upper surface. These fragments are thought to be of similar date to the flat roof tile from the same context.

Stone

A piece of worked stone was recovered from wall 111. This appears to be a section from a column and is moulded on all the side faces and worked on its top and lower faces. The shape of the moulding suggests that it comes from a Decorated period column. This puts its date at between 1270 and 1370 which ties in with work carried out on Pershore Abbey between 1290 and 1330. At this time the tower of the Abbey was rebuilt in the Decorated style (S Robson-Glyde pers. comm.)

Bone

Part of a pig jaw was recovered from fill 116.

5 Significance

The assemblage from this site is of limited archaeological significance, but does constitute evidence for late medieval activity in this area of Pershore, close to the Abbey. *Terminus post quem* date ranges for the contexts are shown in Table 3.

context	material class	object specific type	fabric code	count	weight(g)	start date	end date	tpq date range
104	ceramic	roof tile	-	1	98	L15C+		Late 15 th century onwards
111	ceramic	pot	69	1	10	13C	15C	15 th century
111	stone			1	14,000			
112	ceramic	pot	69	1	10	16C	E17C	Early 17 th century
113	ceramic	pot	78	1	12	17C		17 th century
116	ceramic	pot	72	1	8	16C		mid-late 18 th century
	ceramic	pot	81.3	1	4	M18C	L18C	
	ceramic	pot	78	1	66	L17C	18C	

ceramic	pot	82.2	1	24	L15C	16C
ceramic	pot	69	2	206	16C	E17C
ceramic	pot	69	1	58	16C	E17C
ceramic	pot	69	1	18	13C	15C
ceramic	pot	69	1	16	16C	E17C
ceramic	pot	69	1	24	L15C	16C
ceramic	pot	69	1	50	16C	E17C
ceramic	pot	69	1	44	16C	E17C
ceramic	roof tile	-	1	368	L15C+	
ceramic	roof tile	-	1	232	L15C+	
ceramic	roof tile	-	3	348	L15C+	
ceramic	floor tile	-	1	264	15C	16C
ceramic	floor tile	-	1	28	15C	16C
ceramic	roof tile	-	1	198	13C	15C
ceramic	roof tile	-	1	186	L15C+	

Table 3: Summary of context dating based on artefacts

6 Synthesis

Whilst the limitations and restrictions of a watching brief are not conducive to full comprehension of an archaeological sequence, a rough understanding can be made of the deposits seen at Pershore Library. Modern intrusions obfuscate the relationships of key features, but a general theme can be discerned. The south west end of the trench is indicative of external features, back of the plot features like cess pits, cut through old garden or plough soils, whilst the north east end, with its noticeable increase in artefact recovery, suggests closer proximity to structures, dwellings, habitation. The moment when this change occurs is obscured, but it happens somewhere near wall 111. As to the function of that wall, and its possible relationship to post hole 115, there is little that can be said with any confidence. One of the more likely options is as a garden wall, possibly demarcating a property edge, or at least a functional change from yard to garden.

7 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

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Groundworks for the foundations of the extension were monitored. Within the limited window that the excavation provided, medieval and post-medieval deposits were observed. Above natural gravel and clay deposits were a number of undated layers, interpreted as buried sub and garden soils from the early medieval period. Cutting through the higher of these deposits was a large cess pit to the west and, in the east, a post hole and a remnant of a garden wall. The wall incorporated a piece of column masonry, potentially from the Pershore Abbey, suggesting a post-1540 date. The wall was partially robbed of masonry in the 17th - 18th centuries.

The layers of material in the east of the observed trench were suggestive of more domestic activity than the garden soils in the west, and this change, whilst obscured by later truncations, occurs near the remains of the garden wall. An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Pershore Library, Pershore, Worcestershire (NGR 9484 4589). It was undertaken on behalf of Pershore Town Council, who obtained permission for an extension to the library subject to conditions including a programme of archaeological works.

8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project; Mrs Ann Dobbins, Town Clerk for Pershore Town Council and Mike Glyde, Historic Environment Planning Officer Worcestershire County Council.

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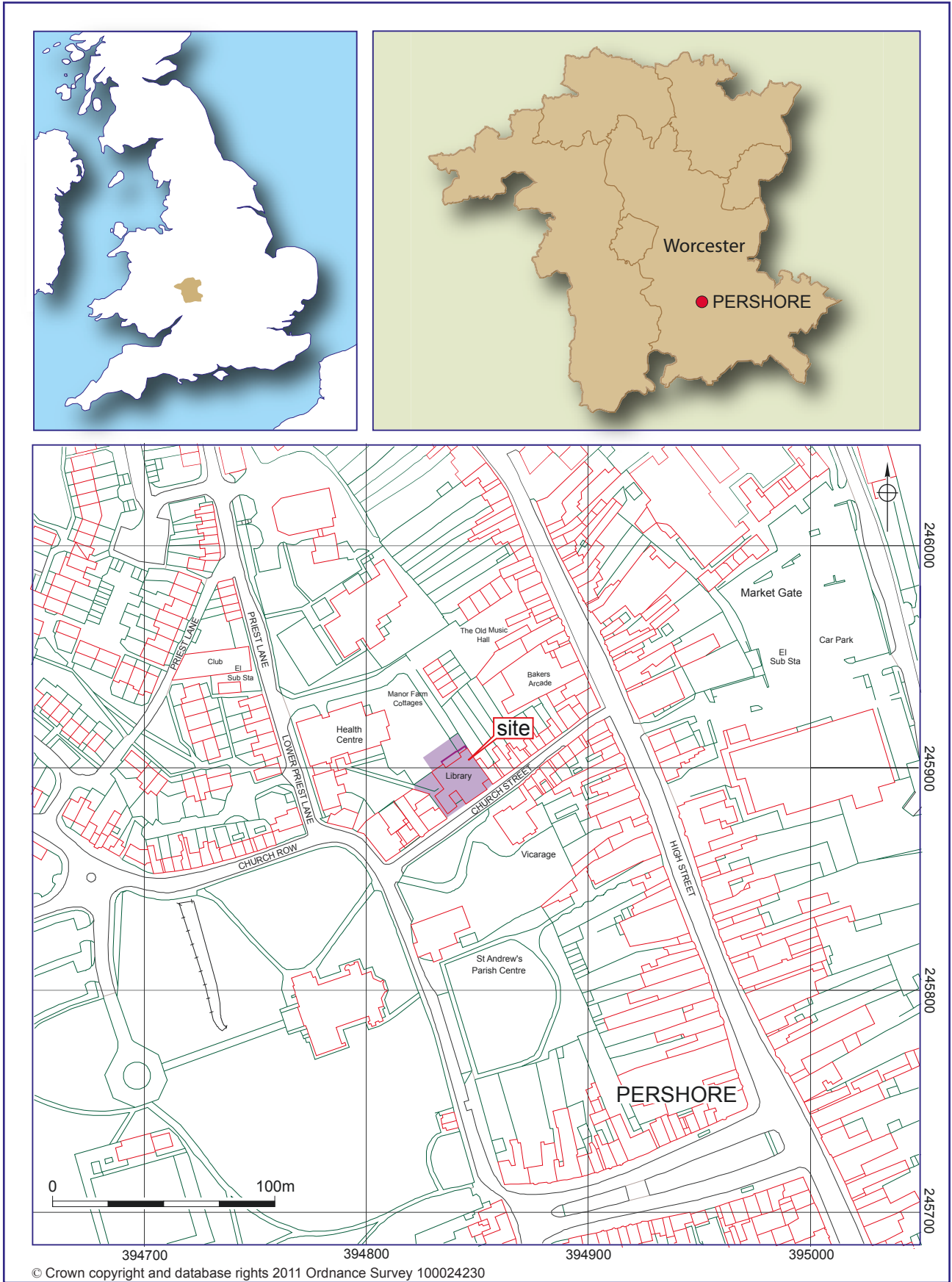
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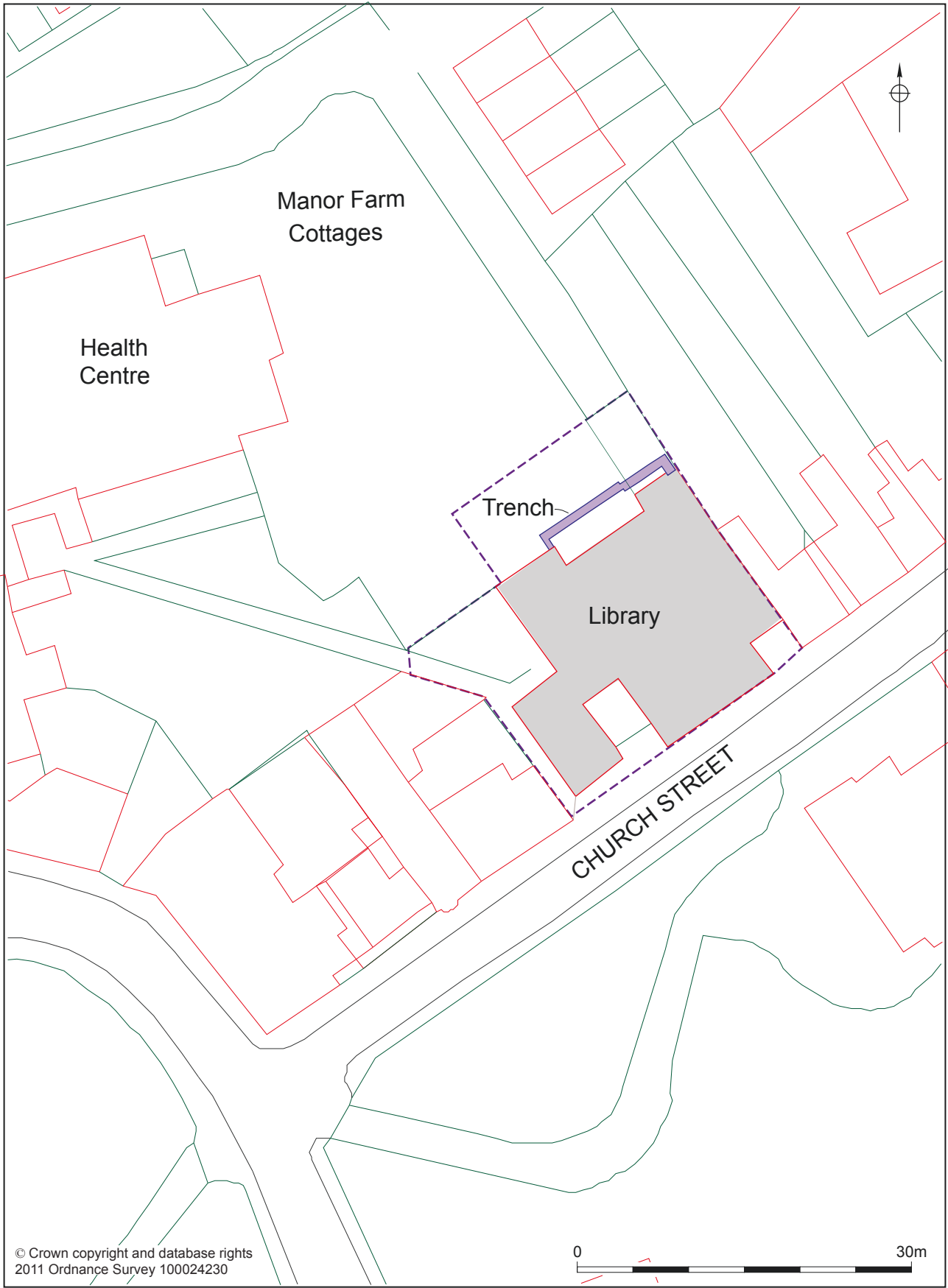
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Figures



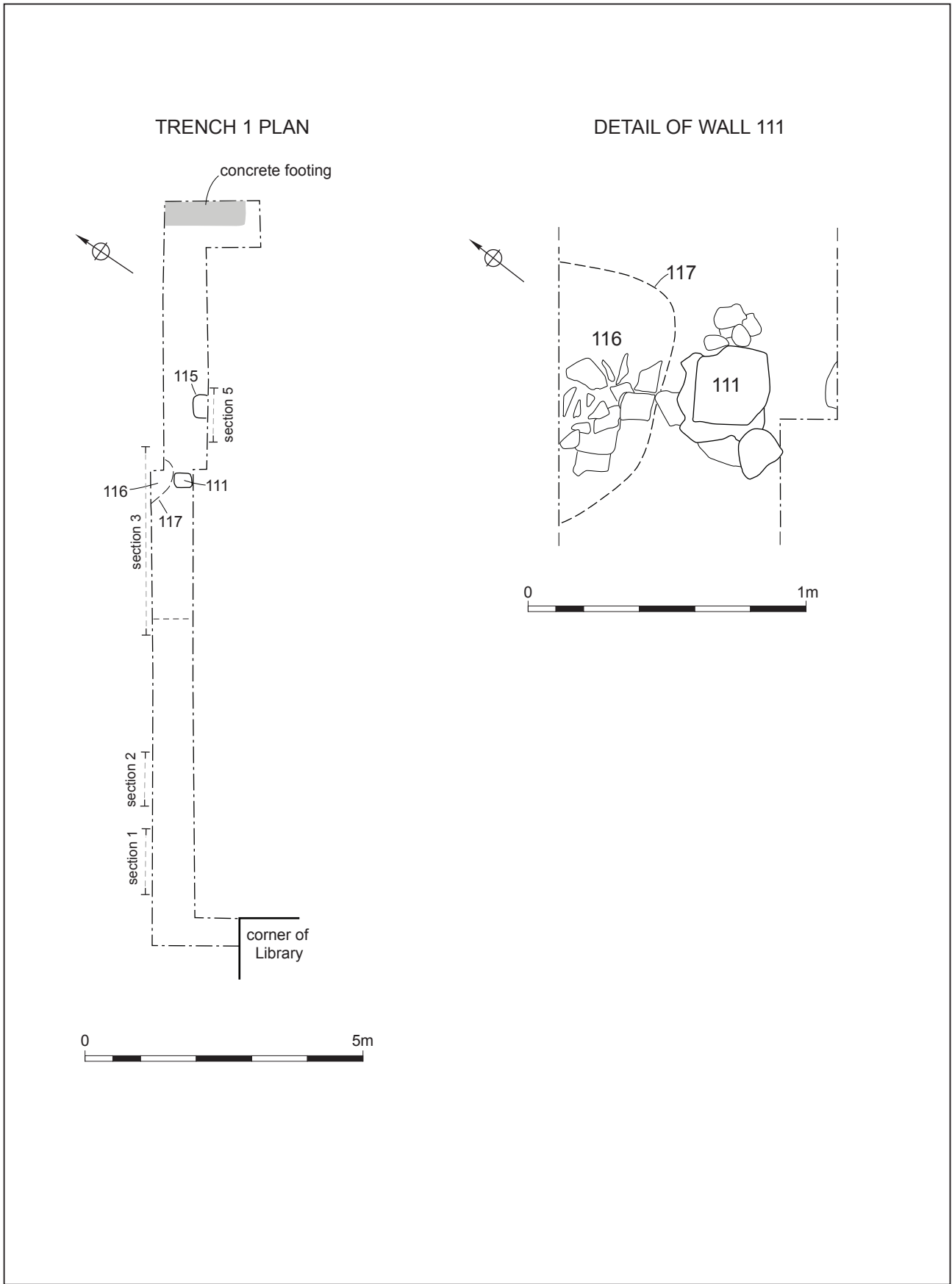
Location of the site

Figure 1



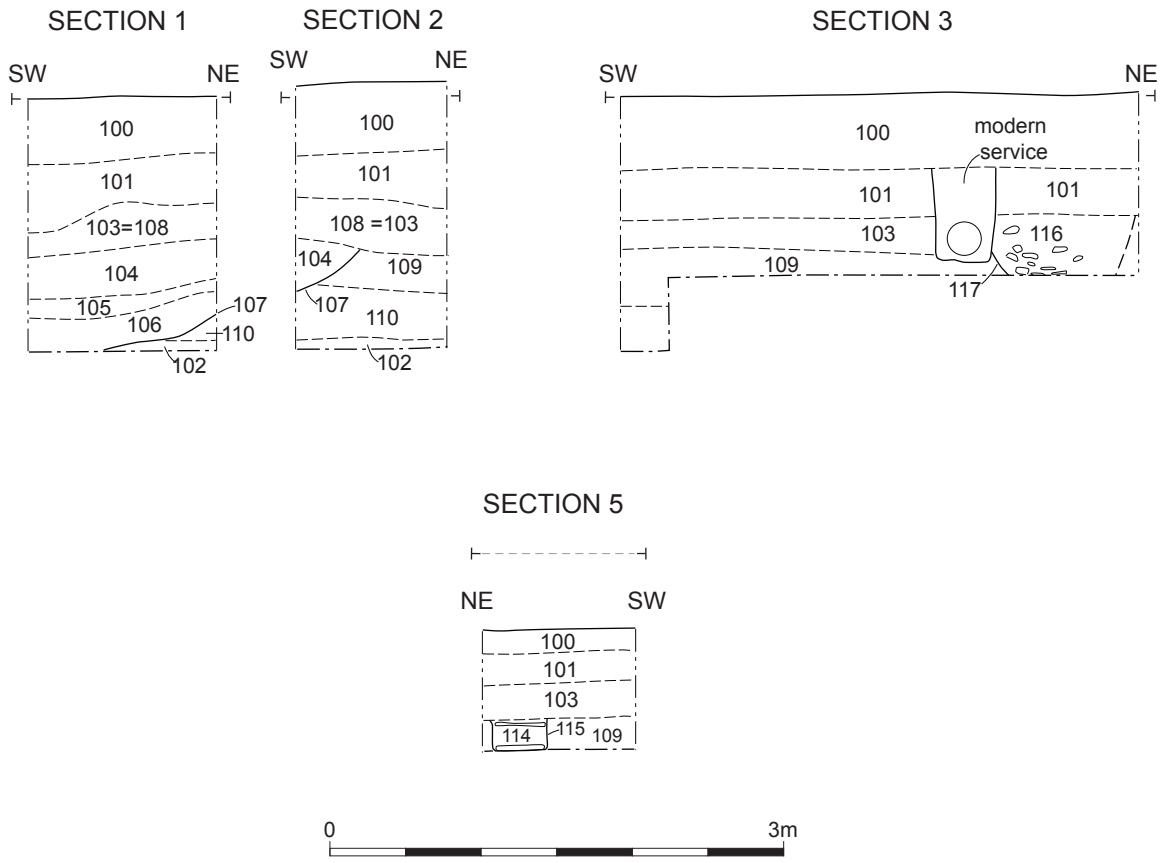
Trench location plan

Figure 2



Trench 1 plan and detail of wall 111

Figure 3



Sections

Figure 4

Plates



Plate 1 Section 1, Pit 107



Plate 2 Section 3, Robber Cut 117



Plate 3 Section 5, Post Hole 115



Plate 4 Wall 111 and Robber Cut fill 116



Plate 5 Trench looking south west



Plate 6 Reused stone from Wall111

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Site area: Pershore Library

Maximum dimensions: Length: 13.4m Width: 1.75m Depth: 1.1m to 1.7m

Orientation: North east to south west

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Current surface	Modern tarmac on rubble hardcore	0.4m thick
101	Make up layer	Firm dark brownish grey sandy silt with occasional brick and stone rubble, occasional scrap metal fragments. Cut by modern services and inspection chamber	0.4m bgs. 0.48m thick
102	Natural	Firm mid greenish yellow sandy clay, with frequent gravel clasts.	1.68m bgs.
103	Layer	Soft light greyish brown silty clay, sealing pit 107 and wall 111. Cut by robber trench 117	0.70m – 1.00m
104	Fill	Soft dark greyish brown silty clay. Fill of pit 107	1.00m – 1.30m
105	Fill	Very soft dark grey black sandy silt. Very humic fill of pit 107.	1.30m – 1.46m
106	Fill	Soft mid greenish grey sandy silt. Earliest visible fill of pit 107.	1.46m – 1.68m
107	Cut	Large pit, probably a cess pit. Filled by 104, 105 and 106. Cuts layer 109.	1.00m – 1.68m
108	Layer	Soft light greenish grey silty clay. Same as 103.	0.76m – 1.12m
109	Layer	Firm mid greenish grey sandy clay. Medieval garden soil cut by cess pit 107. The layer through which wall 111 is probably cut.	1.00m – 1.40m
110	Layer	Soft mid greyish green sandy clay. Earliest deposit seen. Overlies the natural 102.	1.40m – 1.70m

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
111	Structure	Limestone wall with reused piece of masonry. No cut seen for construction, but is truncated by robber cut 117.	C. 1m bgs
112	Layer	Soft mid brownish grey sandy clay. Possibly an isolated remnant of a post-med deposit that was elsewhere removed by C20th levelling.	0.70m – 0.90m
113	Layer	Firm mid greenish grey sandy clay. Probably the same as 103/108.	0.90m bgs
114	Fill	Soft dark greyish black silty charcoal, with two large sub-angular cobbles. Fill of a posthole, being almost entirely charcoal. A large flat stone sits at the top the deposit, and one sits at the bottom of the cut. Post pad and packing?	1.00m – 1.20m
115	Cut	Posthole filled by 114. Isolated feature though possibly contemporary with wall 111.	1.00m – 1.20m
116	Fill	Firm mid greenish grey sandy clay, with frequent sub-angular cobbles and pebbles, CBM tiles. Backfill of robber cut 117, through wall 111.	0.80m bgs
117	Cut	Probable robber cut through wall 111.	0.80m bgs

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive (site code: WSM 48248)

The archive consists of:

- 15 Context records AS1
- 3 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 65 Digital photographs
- 1 Drawing number catalogues AS4
- 2 Scale drawings
- 1 Trench record sheets AS41
- 1 Box of finds
- 1 CD-Rom/DVDs
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum
Museums Worcestershire
Hartlebury Castle
Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416

Summary of data for Worcestershire HER

WSM 48248 (event HER number)

P4095

Artefacts

period	material class	object specific type	count	weight (g)	start date	end date
late med/early post-med	ceramic	floor tile	1	28	1300	1600
late med/early post-med	ceramic	floor tile	1	264	1500	1800
late med/early post-med	ceramic	roof tile	3	348	1500	1800
late med/early post-med	ceramic	roof tile	1	232	1500	1800
late med/early post-med	ceramic	roof tile	1	368	1500	1800
late med/early post-med	ceramic	roof tile	1	98	1500	1800
medieval	ceramic	pot	1	24	1200	1500
medieval	ceramic	pot	1	10	1200	1500
medieval	ceramic	pot	1	10	1500	1620
medieval	ceramic	pot	1	24	0	0
medieval	ceramic	pot	2	206	1200	1620
medieval	ceramic	pot	1	58	1200	1620
medieval	ceramic	pot	1	16	1200	1620
medieval	ceramic	pot	1	50	1200	1620
medieval	ceramic	pot	1	44	1200	1620
medieval	ceramic	pot	1	18	1200	1620
medieval	ceramic	roof tile	1	198	1100	1300
medieval	ceramic	roof tile	1	186	1200	1500
post-medieval	ceramic	pot	1	66	1600	1800
post-medieval	ceramic	pot	1	4	1600	1800
post-medieval	ceramic	pot	1	8	1600	1800
post-medieval	ceramic	pot	1	12	1600	1800

Notes

- 1) In some cases the date will be "Undated". In most cases, especially if there is not a specialist report, the information entered in the Date field will be a general period such as Neolithic, Roman, medieval etc (see below for a list of periods used in the Worcestershire HER). Very broad date ranges such as late Medieval to Post-medieval are acceptable for artefacts which can be hard to date for example roof tiles. If you have more specific dates, such as 13th to 14th century, please use these instead. Specific date ranges which cross general period boundaries can also be used, for example 15th to 17th century.

period	from	to
Palaeolithic	500000 BC	10001 BC
Mesolithic	10000 BC	4001 BC
Neolithic	4000 BC	2351 BC
Bronze Age	2350 BC	801 BC
Iron Age	800 BC	42 AD
Roman	43	409
Post-Roman	410	1065
Medieval	1066	1539
Post-medieval	1540	1900
Modern	1901	2050

period specific	from	to
Lower Palaeolithic	500000 BC	150001
Middle Palaeolithic	150000	40001
Upper Palaeolithic	40000	10001
Early Mesolithic	10000	7001
Late Mesolithic	7000	4001
Early Neolithic	4000	3501
Middle Neolithic	3500	2701
Late Neolithic	2700	2351
Early Bronze Age	2350	1601
Middle Bronze Age	1600	1001
Late Bronze Age	1000	801
Early Iron Age	800	401
Middle Iron Age	400	101
Late Iron Age	100 BC	42 AD
Roman 1st century AD	43	100
2nd century	101	200
3rd century	201	300
4th century	301	400
Roman 5th century	401	410
Post roman	411	849
Pre conquest	850	1065
Late 11th century	1066	1100
12th century	1101	1200
13th century	1201	1300
14th century	1301	1400
15th century	1401	1500
16th century	1501	1600

17th century	1601	1700
18th century	1701	1800
19th century	1801	1900
20th century	1901	2000
21st century	2001	

2. Not all evaluations of small excavation assemblages have specialist reports on all classes of objects. An identification (eg clay pipe) and a quantification is not a specialist report. A short discussion or a more detailed record identifying types and dates is a specialist report. This field is designed to point researchers to reports where they will find out more than merely the presence or absence of material of a particular type and date.

3. This field should be used with care. It is designed to point researchers to reports where they will be able to locate the most important assemblages for any given material for any given date.
