

Archaeological watching brief at Sodington Hall, Mamble, Worcestershire



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Archaeological watching brief at Sodington Hall, Mamble, Worcestershire

Graham Arnold (project leader)

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Sodington Hall, Mamble, Worcestershire (NGR SO 6934 7100). It was undertaken on behalf of Mr P Gibson, whose clients intended the demolition of an outbuilding and the construction a new building in its place.

Sodington Hall is a nineteenth century brick building built on the site of an earlier structure demolished in 1807. It is surrounded by the moat associated with the earlier house. A brick kiln, possibly Roman in date, was recorded during the demolition.

Planning permission for the development was granted by Malvern Hills District Council subject to conditions including a programme of archaeological works. Sodington Hall is a scheduled ancient monument and consent for the works was obtained from English Heritage. It was established that the outbuilding should be recorded prior to demolition and a watching brief be undertaken on associated groundworks.

The building recording element was not carried out as the building was demolished prior to any archaeological involvement. The architect and contractor did however draw elevations of the building and take photographs of the building from a number of angles. The building comprised a single storey brick building with a pitched roof of plain tiles and low pitched extension to the east.

The groundworks revealed part of the structure of a brick-built cellar or cold room and a well that had been disturbed by the footings of the outbuilding. Two further brick footings were revealed to the north of the footings, during the renewal of drainage, which had been also been cut by a ceramic and concrete drain. The form of the bricks indicates a 19th Century date and it is thought that these structures relate to earlier phases of the post 1807 building. The findings correspond with an earlier watching brief on the modern extension to the west of the outbuilding, in which red brick footings dating to the 19th – 20th Century were recorded together with an earlier well.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Sodington Hall, Mamble, Worcestershire (NGR SO 6934 7100). It was commissioned by Mr P Gibson, whose clients intended demolition and rebuilding of a single storey outbuilding, for which a planning permission was granted by Malvern Hills District Council (14/01045/LBC). Permission was granted subject to conditions including a watching brief and historic building recording to level 1 standard.

The proposed development site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM31951) and consent for the works was granted by English Heritage on 25th March 2015 (RefS00100003). Listed Building Consent was also granted as part of the planning application.

The project conforms to the generality of briefs prepared by Worcestershire County Council for archaeological watching briefs and historic building recording. A project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (WA 2015).

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance: Archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014), and the *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010).

The event reference for this project, given by the HER is WSM 67024.

2 Aims

The aims and scope of the watching brief were to locate archaeological deposits and determine, if present, their extent, state of preservation, date, type, vulnerability and documentation.

Historic building recording is described as 'a programme of work intended to establish the character, history, dating, form and archaeological development of a specified building' (*Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures*, ClfA 2014a).

A level 1 record is essentially a basic visual record supplemented by the minimum of information needed to identify the building's location, age and type.

2.1 Personnel

The project was undertaken by Graham Arnold (BA (hons.) and Andrew Walsh (BSc; MSc; ACIfA; FSA Scot); who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2009 and 2013 respectively and have been practicing archaeology since 2002 and 2004 respectively. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers (BSc (hons), MSc). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc (hons.); PG Cert; MCIfA).

2.2 Documentary research

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

2.3 List of sources consulted

Documentary sources

Published and grey literature sources are listed in the bibliography.

2.4 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2014).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 18 June 2015 and 10 July 2015. The site reference number and site code is WSM 47024.

Three trenches, amounting to just over 100m² in area, were excavated. All groundworks in the Scheduled Monument were monitored to comply with the Scheduled Monument consent. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

The groundworks of the construction team were monitored. Groundworks were carried out using a 360° tracked excavator and under archaeological supervision. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected to determine their nature. No significant deposits were observed to have any significant artefactual material or environmental potential for sampling. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012a).

2.5 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.

2.6 Building Recording

The building recording element of the project did not take place, as the building was demolished prior to an archaeological survey. A number of photos of the building were taken by the client prior to the buildings demolition, which are appended to this document. Elevations of the building had also been drawn by the architect prior to demolition.

2.7 Statement of confidence in the methods and results

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the watching brief element of the project have been achieved. However, the outbuilding had been demolished prior to any archaeological building recording element, one of the archaeological conditions, being undertaken. Elevations of the building had been drawn by the architect prior to the demolition and the structure was recorded photographically from a number of angles both internally and externally by the building contractor prior to demolition.

3 The application site

3.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context

A HER search was undertaken prior to the site visit. Sodington Hall and medieval Moat (WSM00759, SM31951) are listed in the HER.

Mamble is situated close to the northern county boundary with Shropshire. The solid geology in the area is listed as the Halesowen Formation – Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone with no superficial deposits recorded in the area (BGS 2015).

Sodington Hall is located half a mile to the south east of the village, built on the site of a previous house pulled down in 1807.

The present-day building (WSM 40638) dates to the early nineteenth century, with late nineteenth and mid-twentieth century alterations.

Pevsner's description of the brick building, says it is "three bays and storeys, hipped roof (with a central doorway with open pediment on fluted pilasters;" (Pevsner 2007, 489).

The house is surrounded by a large rectangular moat (WSM00759), which at one time had four drawbridges. The surviving earthworks and buried remains of the moated site were scheduled in 1999 (SAM 31951). Northwest of Sodington Hall is an early nineteenth century brick moat bridge (WSM 40639) with an elliptical arch.

Sodington Hall has a long and complex history, the earliest reference to Sodington is found in the 10th century charter in the boundaries of Lindridge, as the principle manor in the parish of Mamble (VCH Worc III, 443), and the residence of Ralph Mortimer (VCH Worc I, 311). Sodington was later the property of Sir Walter de Sodington Blount and inhabited by the Blounts family from the 14th century (Nash 1781). Nash, writing late in the 18th century, recounts that during the Civil War the Blounts refused to make Cromwell's soldiers arms at their forge and as a result the Parliamentarians burnt down the house. He goes on to mention that: 'The house at Sodington has the appearance of formerly having been a place of some strength' (Nash, 1781, 159).

The remains of the building Nash commented on was demolished in 1807 and records held at the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record show that during the demolition a brick kiln, still stacked with bricks, was discovered. Although the record is unclear it is believed the remains were Roman, indicating the site may have Roman origins. However the location of this find is not clear, although it is possibly close to the current building (WSM 08173).

The Historic Environment Record indicates that Sodington Hall lies within an agricultural landscape, within a 500m radius of the site is a Deserted Medieval Village and a system of ridge and furrow (WSM00758). However the holloways and earthworks identified to the south are poorly preserved and make no certain pattern.

No prehistoric records are held in the HER within the immediate vicinity of the site, although various Neolithic finds, including a flint blade and knapped flint scrapers, were found within the parish of Mamble (WSM39564). There were no associated artefacts and no occupational remains are noted so the nature of the Prehistoric activity in the area is not known.

The recent two storey extension to the south east of the current property was monitored in 2008 (WA 2008). A brick lined well of late eighteenth-early nineteenth century date together with 19th-20th Century red brick footings of a building were recorded during the works.

3.2 Current land-use

The site was an existing outbuilding of Sodington Hall, lying within the moated area of Sodington Hall, a Grade II listed building and within a Scheduled Monument.

From the photographs supplied, the recently demolished outhouse appears to have been a single storey brick construction with modern breeze block additions and a pitched roof of plain tiles with a low pitched extension to the east.

4 Structural analysis

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

4.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

A light yellowish brown weathered sandstone, with patches of compact cohesive mottled clay were discovered from 0.30m below ground level. These had been truncated in places by footings of the existing building (203), cellar backfill and modern overburden backfilling the moat (303) and building up the ground level (301).

4.1.2 Phase 2: 19/20th Century Structural deposits

Part of a well (102) was visible in the north of the footprint of the building and brick walls of a cellar (103) were evident, backfilled with modern material (Plates 3 and 4). These had been cut previously by the modern footings of the existing outbuilding. Two bricks walls were also recorded in the section of Trench 2 (203), although these had been cut through previously to install a drain (Plate 5). No dating material was recovered from the structures and the bricks measured 9" x 4 1/2" x 3", suggesting a late 19th – 20th Century date, similar to those found in the watching brief of 2008.

4.1.3 Phase 3: modern deposits

The area was covered with a modern overburden with frequent brick, ceramic building material and other refuse within the footprint of the building. The existing concrete footing had heavily disturbed the ground. In the area to the east the ground had been built up with a series of dumped, imported, grey, type 1 gravels, charcoal and ash, that also contained modern hardcore to create a flat terrace (301) (Plate 6) . A number of modern services including drainage runs were recorded in the area.

5 Synthesis

A series of brick footings and a well were recorded during the watching brief. These had been cut by the footings of the demolished outbuilding and are thought to represent either earlier outbuildings or a former extension to the house. The form of the bricks indicate a 19th Century date and it is thought that they relate to earlier phases of the post 1807 building. These findings correspond to the earlier watching brief on the modern extension to the west of the outbuilding, in which red brick footings dating to the 19th – 20th Century were recorded together with an earlier well.

No evidence of the earlier manor house, pre-dating the 1807 construction of the current building of Sodington Hall was found and no features relating to earlier occupation of the site were revealed.

6 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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7 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Mr P Gibson, Mr Nicholas Hill (agent) and Aisling Nash (Historic Environment Advisor, Worcestershire County Council).

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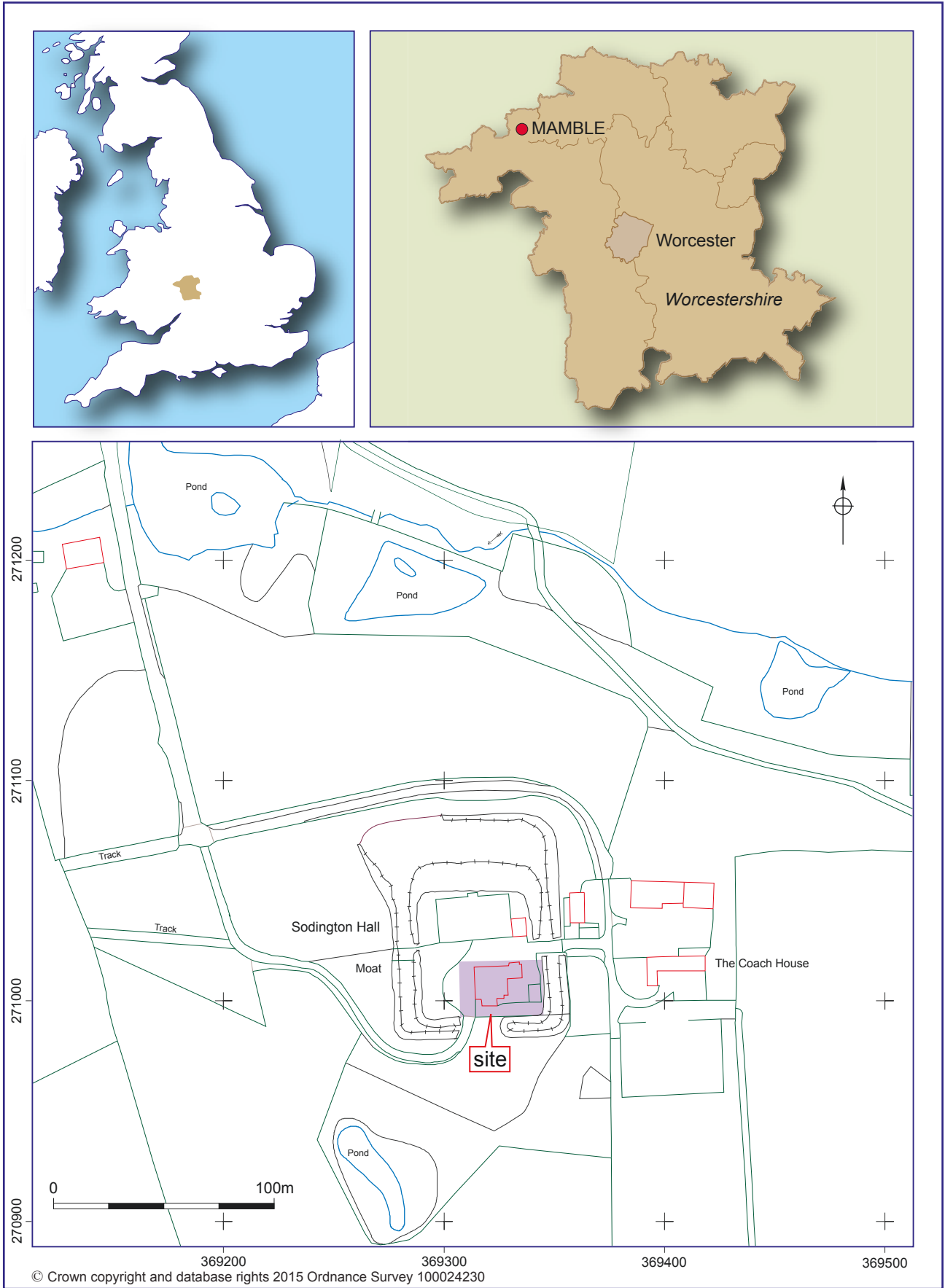
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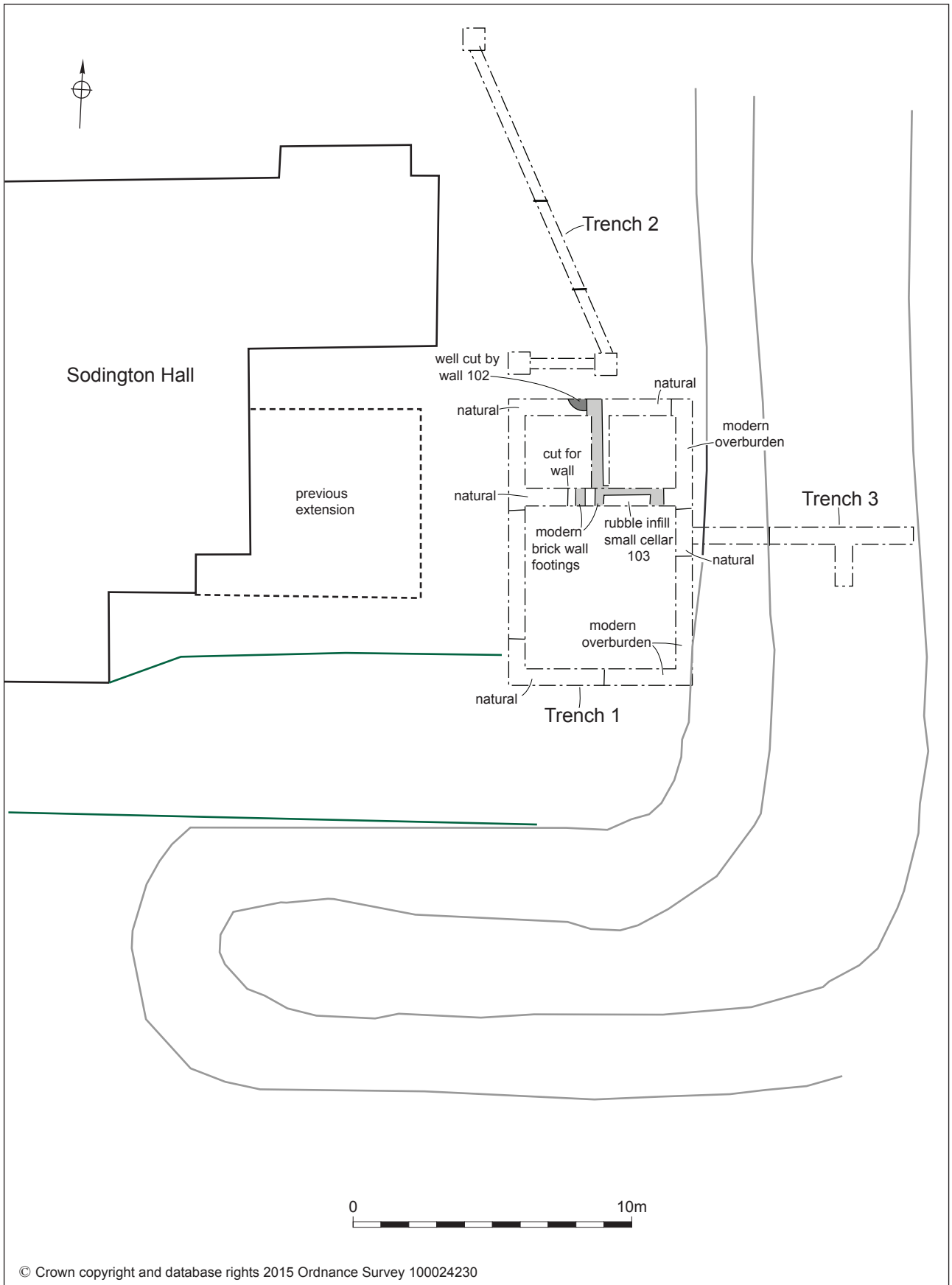
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Figures



Location of the site

Figure 1



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Trench plan

Figure 2

Plates



Plate 1 The footings of the previous building looking southeast



Plate 2 The concrete footings in the northeast corner being broken out during groundworks on Trench 1.



Plate 3 Backfilled brick cellar within the footprint of Trench 1



Plate 4 Backfilled brick cellar within the footprint of Trench 1



Plate 5 Brick wall footing in Trench 2 drainage replacement, previously cut by drain. View west.



Plate 6 Soak away trench 3. View northwest.

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Site area:

Maximum dimensions: Length: 10.30m Width: 6.60m Depth: 1.00m

Orientation: N-S

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Modern Overburden	Medium orange/brown fine soft sandy silt with frequent root action and worm sorting. Contains occasional medium flecks of charcoal, rare tile and rare clay pipe. Cut by one modern water pipe trench.	0 – 0.45m
101	Natural	Light yellowish brown sandy clay with patches of soft sandstone. Contains occasional silt channels and patches of grey silty material.	0.30m +
102	Brick lined well	Brick lined well, infilled and cut by wall 103. Early 19 th Century well, contemporary with House. Partially exposed in section.	0.20 – 0.70m +
103	Brick walls	Series of N-S and E-W aligned 19 th /20 th Century walls in NE quadrant of the extension footing trenches. Part may be a backfilled cellar or cold room. Cut by modern footings to North and East and up to 1m in depth. Original 19 th Century extension of house	0.20m – 1.00m+

Trench 2

Site area:

Maximum dimensions: Length: 12.00m Width: 0.40m Depth: 1.00m

Orientation: N-S

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
200	Road surface / hardstanding	Tarmacadam road / yard surface	0 – 0.08m
201	Hardcore	Modern brick and tile hard core rubble to level area for tarmac.	0.08 – 0.30m
202	Made Ground	Loose dark brown silty clay and brick, tile, large stone rubble with concrete and ceramic pipe at base. Backfill of modern soil pipe. Cut by modern BT cable and other services.	0.30 – 1.00m
203	Brick wall	Brick wall footing with concrete mortar, cut by existing service trench.	0.70m – 1.00m +

Trench 3

Site area:

Maximum dimensions: Length: 8.50m (E-W) + 1.50m (N-S) Width: 0.40-0.60m Depth: 0.80m

Orientation: N-S

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
300	Turf grass	Modern turf matt over gravelly hardcore	0 – 0.10m
301	Made ground	Dark brownish grey loose silt, type 1 gravels, hardcore, charcoal and ash.	0.05 – 0.30m
302	Natural	Compact cohesive mottled yellow and grey clay with occasional modern cbm and ash, charcoal in the upper portion	0.30 – 1.00m
303	Modern backfill	Modern truncation or modern backfill of moat including concrete breeze blocks, bricks, ash and coal. 4.0m wide.	0.05m – 0.80m

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive (site code: WSM 67024)

The archive consists of:

- 3 Field progress reports AS2
- 2 Photographic records AS3
- 72 Digital photographs
- 3 Trench record sheets AS41
- 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

Appendix 3. Photographic record of the demolished outbuilding







