Archaeological evaluation of land adjacent to Stone House, Staunton on Arrow, Herefordshire







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Archaeological evaluation at land adjacent to Stone House, Staunton on Arrow, Herefordshire

Elspeth Iliff

With contributions by Rob Hedge

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at land adjacent to Stone House, Staunton on Arrow, Herefordshire (NGR 337077 260080). It was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of their client Mr Abson, who intends to construct a residential development. A planning application has been approved by Herefordshire County Council (reference P174051/F) subject to conditions including a programme of archaeological works.

The proposed development site is located within the village of Staunton on Arrow and sits less than 100m east of a medieval motte. Two 30m long trenches were excavated across the site, positioned to sample the principal areas of the development.

Overall, there were limited archaeological features and it is suggested that the land was previously agricultural in use at least throughout the medieval period and likely also into the early post-medieval period. A possible field boundary ditch and a small gully are thought to be the product of agriculture and a pit containing late 16th to 17th century pottery may be related to the use of the land as an orchard.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at land adjacent to Stone House, Staunton on Arrow, Herefordshire (NGR 337077 260080; Figure 1). It was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, on behalf of their client, Mr Abson, who intends to construct a residential development for which a planning application has been approved by Herefordshire County Council (reference P174051/F).

The proposed development site was considered to include potential heritage assets the significance of which may be affected by the application. A desk-based assessment (DBA) was undertaken prior to the evaluation (CgMs 2017). The DBA revealed a variety of heritage assets in the wider area but nothing is recorded within the site. Consultation between CgMs Consulting and Julian Cotton, Archaeological Advisor for Herefordshire Council, established the requirement for an archaeological evaluation to provide a reasonable sample of the principal areas of development.

The project conforms to a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2018), and a brief issued by Herefordshire Archaeology (Herefordshire Council 2018). A trench plan was presented by CgMs Consulting which was approved by Julian Cotton.

The project conforms to *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014a); and *Standards for archaeological projects in Herefordshire: issue 1* (Herefordshire Archaeology 2004).

2 Aims

The aim of the project is to:

 Gather information and prepare a report which, beyond reasonable doubt, will inform decision making.

The objectives of the project are to:

- Determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits:
- Identify their location, nature, date and preservation;
- Assess their significance;
- Assess the likely impact of the proposed development.

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was led by Peter Lovett (BSc (hons)) who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2012 and has been practicing archaeology since 2004, assisted by Elspeth Iliff (BA (hons.); MSc; PCIfA). The report was prepared by Elspeth Iliff. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers; MSc; MCIfA). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc (hons.); PG Cert; MCIfA), Laura Templeton (BA; PG Cert; MCIfA). Robert Hedge (MA Cantab, PCIfA) contributed the finds report.

3.2 Documentary research

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) was undertaken by CgMs Consulting on behalf of their client (CgMs 2018). This document provides detailed research and background information on the project and, therefore, only a brief summary of this is presented below (Section 4.1).

The DBA included a search of the Herefordshire Historic Environment Record (HER), analysing a search area of 1km radius from the boundary of the site. The Historic England Archive (HEA), the

National Heritage List for England (NHLE) and the Herefordshire Record Office were also consulted. This provided access to records of archaeological sites, monuments and findspots within the search area, as well as readily available archaeological and historical information from related documentary and cartographic sources. Ordnance Survey early and modern mapping were used and a site visit was conducted in October 2017.

3.3 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2018).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 28th and 29th March 2018. The Worcestershire Archaeology project number is P5304.

Two trenches amounting to just over $91m^2$ in area, were excavated over the site area of $c.3000m^2$, representing a sample of just over 3%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2. The trenches were located to target the principal areas of disturbance under the development.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under archaeological supervision using a wheeled excavator, employing a toothless bucket. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

3.4 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.

3.5 Artefact methodology, by Rob Hedge

The finds work reported here conforms with the following guidance: for findswork by ClfA (2014), for pottery analysis by PCRG/SGRP/MPRG (2016), for archive creation by AAF (2011), and for museum deposition by SMA (1993).

3.5.1 Artefact recovery policy

Recovery of artefacts was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012).

3.5.2 Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were examined. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* date was produced for each stratified context. The date was used for determining the broad date of phases defined for the site. All information was recorded on Microsoft Access database.

The pottery and ceramic building material was examined under x20 magnification and referenced as appropriate by fabric type and form according to fabric reference series developed by Vince (1985), and by Ratkai (2014).

3.5.3 Discard policy

Artefacts from topsoil and subsoil and unstratified contexts will normally be noted but not retained, unless they are of intrinsic interest (eg worked flint or flint debitage, featured pottery sherds, and other potential 'registered artefacts'). All artefacts will be collected from stratified excavated contexts, except for large assemblages of post-medieval or modern material, unless there is some special reason to retain such as local production. Such material may be noted and not retained, or, if appropriate, a representative sample may be collected and retained. Discard of finds from post-

medieval and earlier deposits will only be instituted with agreement of the local museum/museum collection policy.

3.6 Environmental archaeology methodology

3.6.1 Sampling policy

Sampling was followed according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). However, no deposits were identified which were considered to be suitable for environmental sampling.

3.7 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.

4 The application site

4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context

The site is located within the central part of the village of Staunton on Arrow, approximately 26km north-west of Hereford on a south to south-east facing slope dropping from c. 122.86m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) to 119.80m AOD. The underlying geology is mapped as Raglan Mudstone Formation with superficial deposits of Diamicton (BGS 2018).

As noted above, an archaeological desk-based assessment was undertaken by CgMs Consulting (CgMs 2017). The archaeological and historical background for the site presented in that document is summarised below:

No designated archaeological assets were recorded on the site itself but a scheduled motte (NHLE 1005383) is recorded approximately 75m west of the site, and the route of the North Herefordshire Rowe Ditch, an early medieval defensive dyke (NHLE 1005382), is located approximately 865m to the east of the site.

A low to moderate potential for prehistoric remains was identified for the site. This was based on the survival of a number of prehistoric features in the wider area, including a series of three possibly prehistoric rectangular enclosures (HER 10419), a number of possible prehistoric ring ditches (HER 43960, 53368, 22861, 10418), late Neolithic/early Bronze Age 'Beaker' type pottery found at a possible periodic riverside settlement along with a later prehistoric enclosure (HER 30129), and a number of findspots of flint tools (HER 2548, 21794). A low to moderate potential was also identified for Roman remains based on a number of rectilinear enclosures (HER 52120, 1041, 30129), findspots including pottery and a bronze artefact, and a Romano-British statue of Mercury of dubious and unconformable origin (HER 2383). The site's close proximity to the medieval motte (HER 341), the site of a probable medieval church (HER 9122), and its mention in the Domesday Survey of 1086 AD have suggested a moderate to high potential for Saxon and/or medieval activity. Evidence of post-medieval to modern activity suggests that the site has been used for agricultural practices including pasture and orchards since the 19th century, and therefore a low potential for significant archaeological remains of a post-medieval/modern date was identified.

4.2 Current land-use

The development site covers one slightly irregular field that is currently grassed and in use for pasture.

5 Results

5.1 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figures 2-5. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

Natural deposits were encountered in both trenches at between 0.44m and 0.53m below the ground surface. The geology of the site was predominantly a firm, mid orangey pink silty clay with frequent subangular cobbles and boulders (Plate 2).

5.1.2 Phase 2: Medieval to Late Medieval deposits

A number of features dating to the medieval period were excavated in Trench 1. Towards the north-west end of the trench was a steep sided, flat based ditch [112] dated to the 12th to 14th century from two sherds of pottery recovered from the fill (Plate 3). It was aligned north-east to south-west and measured 0.55m in depth and 1.04m wide. The function of this ditch is not clear, but it is possible that it was used as a field boundary or formed part of a small agricultural enclosure.

This ditch was cut by a pit [110] dating to the late 16th to 17th century, containing a number of alternately redeposited natural and sandy silt fills likely representing repeated use and gradual infilling of the feature. This pit is 0.56m in depth and is cut by a later modern posthole [104]. It is dated to the post medieval period by two sherds of pottery found in fill (108) and may therefore have been dug during the time when the site was an orchard.

A small gully [114] was excavated running parallel to ditch [112], just under 2m to the south-east (Plate 4). This gully is 0.32m in depth and 1.02m wide, and contains one fill from which a single sherd of 11th to 14th century pottery was recovered. This feature is interpreted as a possible field boundary, and is possibly contemporary with ditch [112].

5.1.3 Phase 2: Modern deposits

The site is covered by a soft, dark, silty loam topsoil under grass. A modern posthole [104] was excavated towards the north-west end of Trench 1, cutting two features of medieval date, a ditch [112] and a pit [110] (Plate 3). This feature contained a loose, dark fill much like the topsoil, and was observed in section to be cutting through the topsoil.

5.1.4 Phase 3: Undated deposits

A straight sided gully [118] was recorded near the south-east end of Trench 1. This feature is 0.3m deep and 0.16m wide and is oriented north-west to south-east. No finds were recovered from this gully but it is interpreted as being possibly modern in date.

Trench 1 also contained a smaller gully [116], which is 0.06m deep and 0.25m wide. The gully's depth and slightly irregular form made it difficult to determine its original function. It is considered possible that it was a natural feature, possibly formed by rooting.

Trench 2 contained a fairly large, undated ditch [205], which is aligned north-east to south-west and appeared to curve slightly (Plate 5). It is 0.62m deep and 1.2m wide and contains two fills. The lower fill (204) had the appearance of a low energy accumulation, suggesting that the ditch may have been open for some time. This ditch appears to follow the crest of the slope, which may indicate a partition of the land linked to this change in topography. Any use or function that this may relate to would likely be associated with the agricultural use of the land as little domestic material was found. While this feature was considered likely to be medieval in date, no dating evidence was uncovered.

5.2 Artefact analysis, by Rob Hedge

The artefactual assemblage recovered is summarised in Table 1.

The assemblage came from three stratified contexts and could be dated from the medieval period onwards (see Table 1). Using pottery as an index of artefact condition, this was generally fair with all sherds displaying moderate levels of abrasion. The average sherd size, at 12g, was slightly above average.

Summary artefactual evidence by period

Medieval

Three sherds of medieval pottery were recovered. Two conjoining sherds from context (111) could be readily identified as fragments of a Malvernian unglazed ware jar (Vince fabric B1; Ratkai fabric R01), of 12th to 14th century date.

One sherd from (113) similarly contains fragments of granite, but is markedly different from Malvernian products in other respects. Unglazed, with mid-brown surfaces and a grey core, it contains well-rounded granite alongside sparse <1mm clear/white quartz grains and small black iron-rich inclusions, with occasional white mica grains visible on the surfaces. The rounded granite invites comparison with fabric Q03, identified by Ratkai in early (c11th/12th) contexts at Wigmore Castle and thought to be local; however, this example contains markedly fewer inclusions. In the absence of a more precise identification, a broad 11th to 14th century date is suggested.

Early post-medieval

Context (108) yielded two sherds of oxidised pottery with traces of an olive-green glaze. In a fine fabric containing small inclusions of iron-rich sandstone and occasional voids, it is considered to be part of the widespread late 16th to 17th century Herefordshire redware tradition (Vince fabric A7d, Ratkai fabric RW12).

context	material class	material subtype	object specific type	Fabric description	fabric code (Ratkai / Vince)	count	weight(g)	start date	end date	<i>tpq</i> date range
108	ceramic	pot	early post- medieval		RW12 / A7d	2	32	157 5	170 0	late c16th – 17th
111	ceramic	pot	medieval		R01/B1	2	15	110 0	140 0	c12th – 14th
113	ceramic	pot	medieval		?	1	14	106 6	140 0	c11th - 14th
					Totals:	5	61			

Table 1: Summary of context dating based on artefacts

5.3 Synthesis

The pottery assemblage is typical of medieval and early post-medieval assemblages from the area, and pertains to domestic activity within the area during the 12th to 14th century, and again during the 16th to 17th century. Due the small size of the assemblage, the mechanism by which the pottery was introduced into the site area cannot be confidently established.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Further analysis and reporting

The following recommendations are made with regard to further work on the artefacts considered as part of this report.

 The material should be included in any full analysis if further works are undertaken on the site.

5.4.2 Discard and retention

As the material is stratified, medieval, and from an area in which few intrusive archaeological investigations have taken place, it is recommended that the assemblage be retained, although the final decision rests with Herefordshire Museum Service.

6 Synthesis

The evaluation has established the presence of a limited number of archaeological features within the site. The majority of these features were in the northern half of the site in Trench 1 on the flat area above the crest of the slope, with no features present on the face of the slope. These features indicate some low level medieval to early post-medieval use of the site. Very little domestic evidence was recovered, suggesting that these features were agricultural in origin.

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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8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Richard Smalley (CgMs Consulting Ltd) and Julian Cotton (Archaeological Advisor, Herefordshire Council).

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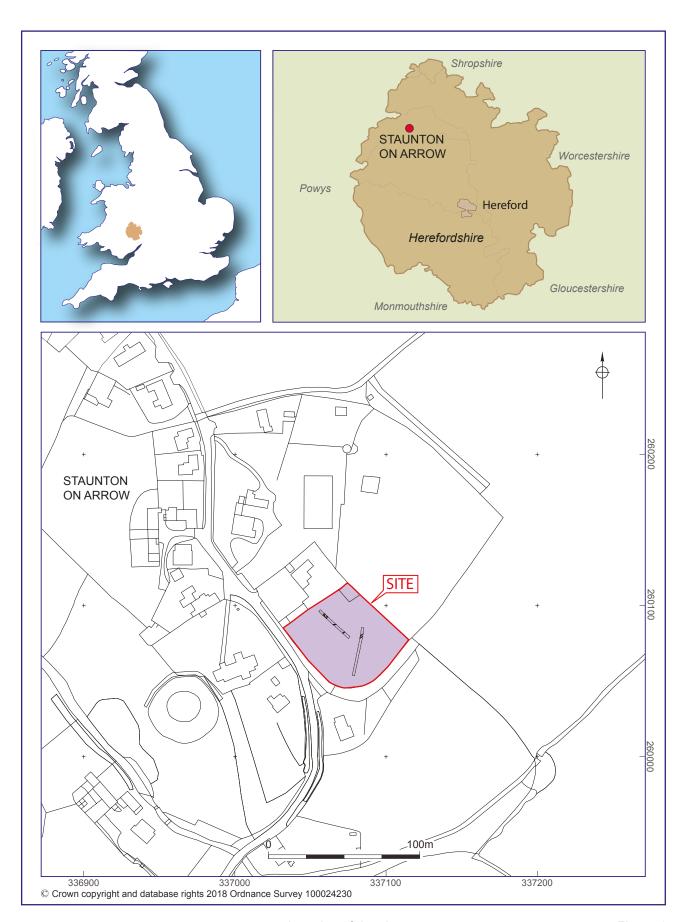
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Worcestershire Archaeology	Worcestershire County Council

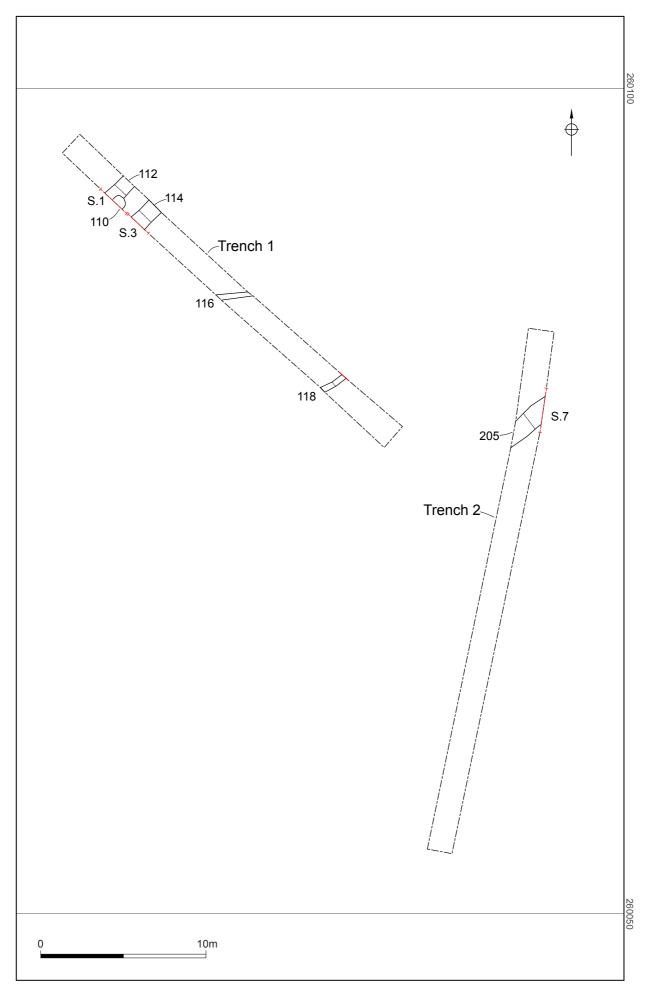
Figures		

Land adjacent to Stone House, Staunton on Arrow, Herefordshire

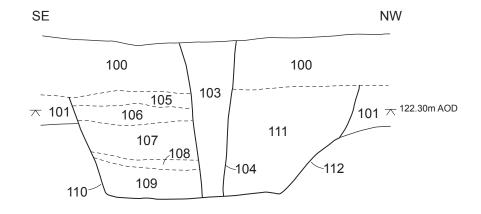


Location of the site

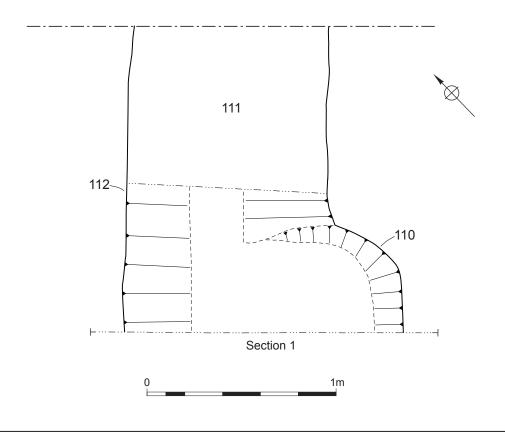
Figure 1



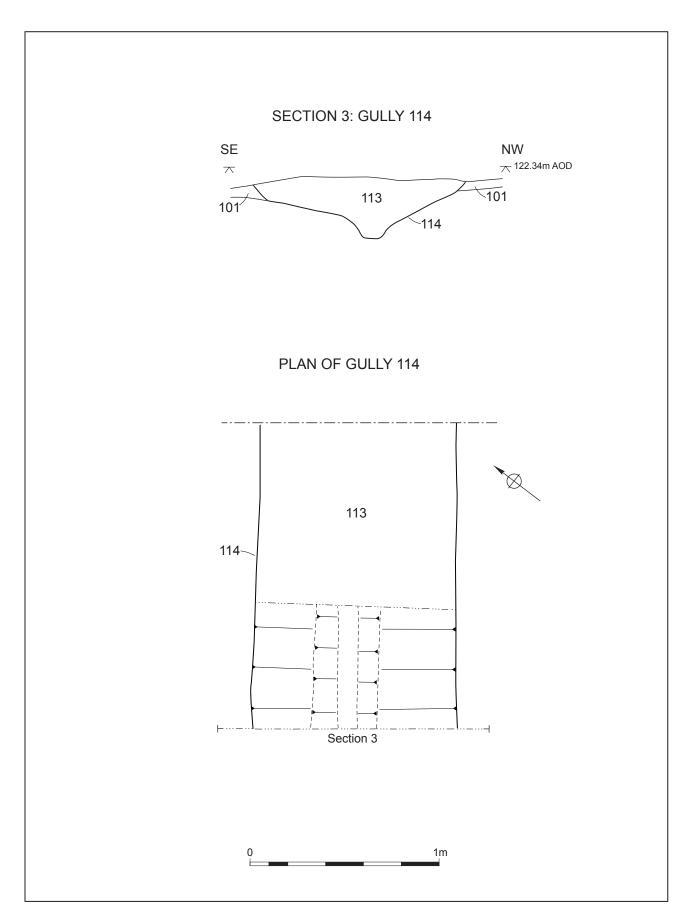




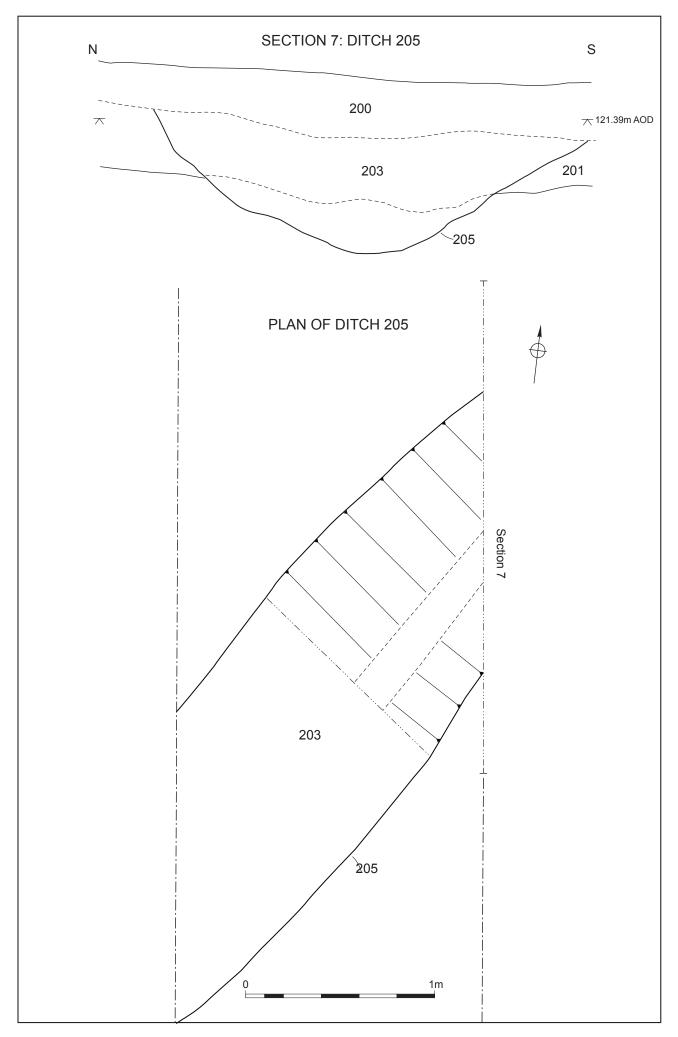
PLAN OF DITCH 112, PIT 110 AND POSTHOLE 104



Ditch 112, pit 110 and posthole 104: plan and section



Gully 114: plan and section



Ditch 205: plan and section

Figure 5

Plates



Plate 1: The site, looking north-east



Plate 2: Trench 1, facing south-east (scales 1m)



Plate 3: Pit [110], ditch [112] and posthole [104], Trench 1, facing south-west (scale 1m)



Plate 4: Gully [114], Trench 1, facing south-west (scale 1m)



Plate 5: Ditch [205], Trench 2, facing east (scale 1m)

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Main deposit descriptions

Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 32m Width: 1.5m Depth: 0.46m

Orientation: NW-SE

Context	Context type	Feature type	Description	Interpretation	Depth
100	Layer	Topsoil	Soft dark silty loam	Topsoil	0.24m
101	Layer	Subsoil	Moderately compact mid pinkish brown silty clay with frequent subangular stones.	Subsoil	0.2m
102	Layer	Natural	Firm, mid orangey pink silty clay with frequent subangular cobbles and boulders.	Natural	
103	Fill	Posthole	Loose, dark grey brown silty loam.	Fill of modern posthole [104].	0.82m
104	Cut	Posthole		Cut of modern posthole	0.82m
105	Fill	Pit	Moderately compact mid brownish pink silty clay.	Fill of pit [110]. Redeposited natural	0.08m
106	Fill	Pit	Soft mid greyish brown sandy silt.	Fill of pit [110].	0.12m
107	Fill	Pit	Moderately compact mid brownish pink silty clay.	Fill of pit [110].	0.2m
108	Fill	Pit	Soft mid greyish brown sandy silt.	Fill of pit [110].	0.05m
109	Fill	Pit	Moderately compact mid brownish pink silty clay.	Basal fill of pit [110].	0.17m
110	Cut	Pit		Cut of pit. Probably medieval, cut by posthole [104], cuts ditch [112].	0.56m
111	Fill	Ditch	Firm mid brownish grey sandy clay with moderate subangular cobbles.	Fill of ditch [112]. Contained medieval pottery.	0.55m
112	Cut	Ditch		Small medieval ditch, steep sided with flat base, cut by pit [110].	0.55m
113	Fill	Gully	Firm mid brownish grey sandy clay with moderate subangular cobbles.	Fill of gully [114]. Contained medieval pottery.	0.32m
114	Cut	Gully		Cut of small, v-shaped medieval gully. Cuts subsoil.	0.32m
115	Fill	Gully	Soft mid brownish pink silty clay.	Fill of gully [116].	0.06m

Context Context Feature Description Interpretation Depth type type Small, shallow gully. May be a natural feature/rooting. 116 Cut Gully 0.06m Fill 117 Gully Soft mid brownish pink silty Fill of gully [118]. 0.3m clay 118 Cut Gully Straight sided gully. Seems modern but no 0.3m finds.

Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 26m Width: 1.5m Depth: 0.56m

Orientation: N-S

Context	Context type	Feature type	Description	Interpretation	Depth
200	Layer	Topsoil	Soft dark silty loam	Topsoil	0.28m
201	Layer	Subsoil	Moderately compact mid pinkish brown with frequent subangular stones	Subsoil	0.25m
202	Layer	Natural	Firm mid orangey pink silty clay with frequent subangular cobbles and boulders.	Natural	
203	Fill	Ditch	Soft, mid reddish brown silty clay. Moderate subangular to subrounded cobbles and pebbles.	Upper fill of ditch [205]. Late fill of ditch, derived from surrounding top and subsoils as ditch is abandoned.	0.4m
204	Fill	Ditch	Soft light brownish pink silty clay.	Secondary fill of ditch [205]. Low energy accumulation.	0.32m
205	Cut	Ditch		Undated but probably medieval ditch running round crest of slope, probably associated with possible house platform, though no evidence of occupation discovered.	0.62m

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

- 1 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 30 Digital photographs
- 1 Drawing number catalogues AS4
- 8 Scale drawings
- 2 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:

Hereford City Museum and Art Gallery

Broad Street

Hereford

HR4 9RU

A copy of the report will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record (HER) and the National Monuments Record (NMR) as appropriate.