

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING  
BRIEF  
AT  
SODINGTON HALL, MAMBLE,  
WORCESTERSHIRE

Elizabeth A. Curran

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

December 2008

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Worcestershire County Council

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Project 3294  
Report 1656  
WSM 40530



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## Archaeological watching brief at Sodington Hall, Mamble, Worcestershire

**Elizabeth A. Curran**

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### Background information

<i>Client</i>	Mr J. Bygott-Webb, via his agent Gibson Associates
<i>Site address</i>	Sodington Hall, Mamble, Worcestershire
<i>National Grid reference</i>	SO 6933 7100
<i>Sites and Monuments Record reference</i>	WSM 40530
<i>Planning authority reference</i>	Malvern Hills District Council 07/0782
<i>Brief</i>	HEAS 2008a
<i>Project design</i>	HEAS 2008b
<i>Project parameters</i>	IFA 2001

### Introduction

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Sodington Hall, Mamble Worcestershire, on behalf of Mr J Bygott-Webb, of groundworks associated with the construction of a two-storey extension on the east elevation and a single storey extension on the north elevation. Archaeological monitoring was carried out in line with a Brief issued by the Planning Archaeologist for Worcestershire County Council, following the granting of planning application for the extensions (MH/07/0782). The Brief highlighted that the development lies within a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM31951) and is recorded on the County Historic Environment Record (WSM00759) as a site of archaeological significance. A programme of archaeological work was required to mitigate the impact of the development and Scheduled Monument Consent for the works was granted by the Department of Culture Media and Sport (HSD/9/2/10525 17th September 2008). The project aimed to determine if any significant archaeological deposits were present and if so to indicate their extent, state of preservation, date, type, vulnerability and documentation.

### *Previous archaeological work on the site*

There has been no previous archaeological work undertaken on site. However a brick kiln of possible Roman date is recorded as having been discovered during demolition of the original hall in 1807.

### *Archaeological and historical background*

Mamble is situated close to the northern county boundary with Shropshire, and is overlooked by the Malvern Hills and Wenlock Edge in south Shropshire. 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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).

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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.

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## Aims

The aim of the watching brief was to observe and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible. In particular, the aim was to determine whether deposits survived which related either to the former Sodington Hall burnt down in 1807 or the Roman brick kiln discovered during its demolition. The fieldwork was restricted to areas of ground disturbance associated with development (ground breaking and preparation, foundations, services etc) following the progress of the construction team.

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## Methods

General specification for fieldwork	CAS 1995	
Sources consulted	Worcestershire Sites and Monuments Record	
Dates of fieldwork	3 <sup>rd</sup> November to 7 <sup>th</sup> November 2008	
Dimensions of excavated areas observed	Trench 1	length 23.50m width 0.70m depth 1.00m
	Trench 2	length 16.20m width 0.60m depth 1.00m
	Trench 3	length 1.22m width 0.60m depth 1.00m
	Trench 4	length 4.70m width 0.60m depth 1.00m
	Trench 5	length 2.10m width 0.60m depth 1.00m
	Trench 6	length 6.00m width 0.60m

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Trench 7	depth 1.00m length 2.50m width 0.60m
Trench 8	depth 1.00m length 3.80m width 0.60m depth 1.00m

#### *Access to or visibility of structures/deposits*

Observation of the excavated areas was undertaken during machine excavation. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits, though any less clear may have not been identified. Access to, and recording of, the well was limited for safety reasons and observations were restricted to those made from the top.

#### *Statement of confidence*

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved although detailed recording of the well was not possible for reasons of safety. However as the well is to be preserved *in situ*, this was not considered to be detrimental to the aims of the watching brief.

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## **Discussion**

With the exception of Trench 2, a shallow trench for a central heating oil pipe, all trenches were dug as foundations for the new extensions. The materials found within the majority of the trenches relate to the demolition of Sodington Hall's south easterly two-storey extension demolished within the last 50 years (*pers. comm.* J Bygott-Webb).

Trench 1 was dug to a depth of 1m below the existing ground level, revealing a full soil sequence. The uppermost layer comprised an unbonded red brick surface (101). Beneath this a mid blackish brown silty loam topsoil (103) was recorded as 0.30m deep. Below the topsoil the observed subsoil did not contain any archaeological features or deposits. The subsoil overlay and sealed the natural matrix (105), which comprised of very compact and cohesive greyish yellow clay. In this trench the natural matrix lay at about 0.30m below the ground surface.

A brick footing (102) was also recorded in Trench 1 comprising bricks with a depth of 90mm (3 ½ inches), which dates their construction to the late nineteenth, or early twentieth century (*pers. comm.* S Robson-Glyde). It is likely that the bricks from these walls were used, following demolition to make the red brick floor (101). During the current development the bricks were removed and saved for reuse in the new extension.

Trench 2 was excavated through made ground and consisted of redeposited soils containing brick, metal and building rubble, and probably related to the backfill of the moat.

Further evidence for the redevelopment of Sodington Hall was revealed in Trenches 3 and 4, where the footing of a red brick wall (303) was located 0.30m below the concrete floor (301) of the garage. The wall was removed to create a gable end to the north elevation of the garage. Context 302, recorded 0.10m below the concrete, was probably the demolition debris used to level the site before the concrete floor was poured within the garage. Trench 4 contained similar deposits with the natural matrix recorded at 0.50m below ground surface.

Trenches 6, 7 and 8 were excavated to a depth of 1m, adjacent to the outbuildings at Sodington Hall. Deposits 602 and 702 were sealed by the concrete floor and consisted primarily of redeposited soils and contained varying proportions of brick, rubble, concrete, and assorted refuse. Similar to 302, it is likely this deposit related to the demolition of the two-storey extension. Within trench 6 a

previous soil horizon (603) was recorded 0.15m below the ground surface, similar to deposit 304. This overlay deposit 604, similar to that recorded in trench 2 and comprised of friable silty clay containing rare metal, brick and ceramic drain fragments. In Trench 7 the natural matrix lay 0.60m below the ground surface.

Located at the site of Trench 8, and 0.07m below the concrete floor (801), made ground was observed to 0.25m depth, revealing the natural matrix below. The natural matrix was greyish yellow silty clay. Trench 8 was dug to a depth of 1m below the existing ground level.

To the west of Trench 8 a brick lined well, approximately 1m in diameter was uncovered below the red brick floor (101). For reasons of safety, access to the well for recording was limited to bricks closest to the ground surface. Those bricks were measured as 0.22m long and 0.07m wide and appeared to be unbonded. Further measurements were not possible due to their overlapping. From the dimensions of the bricks the date of their construction is the late eighteenth-early nineteenth century and it is likely therefore that it is contemporary with the earlier nineteenth century Sodington Hall. The client intends to incorporate the well into the new extension.

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## Conclusions

The majority of the site has been subject to alterations from the late nineteenth and twentieth century and this is reflected in the recorded deposits. Apart from brick footings and demolition rubble dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, a red brick well was the single feature uncovered. The dimensions of the bricks date to it to the late eighteenth-early nineteenth century; therefore the well is likely to be contemporary with the earliest nineteenth century building of Sodington Hall.

The deposit within Trench 2 probably related to the back fill of the moat. Due to the shallow depth of this trench no deposits or features associated with a moat were revealed and no waterlogged deposits were observed.

No significant archaeological features, deposits or artefacts of prehistoric, Roman or medieval date were identified during the watching brief. Nevertheless, the possibility remains that archaeological material or remains survive in areas adjacent to the site.

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## Publication summary

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service 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.

*The project aimed to determine if any significant archaeological deposits were present and if so to indicate their extent, state of preservation, date, type, vulnerability and documentation. The site lies within an area of significant archaeological potential that has been occupied from the medieval period and possibly earlier and that development at Sodington Hall, Mamble had the potential to impact upon Medieval or later below-ground deposits.*

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on behalf of Mr J. Bygott-Webb at Sodington Hall, Mamble, Worcestershire (NGR SO 6933 7100; SMR ref WSM40530), of groundworks associated with the construction of a two-storey extension on the east elevation and a single storey extension on the north elevation. Archaeological monitoring was carried out in line with a Brief issued by the Planning Archaeologist for Worcestershire County Council (MH/07/0782), which highlighted that the development lies within a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM31951) and is recorded on the County Historic Environment Record (WSM00759) as a site of archaeological significance. A programme of archaeological work was required to mitigate the impact of the*

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### **Acknowledgements**

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Mr J. Bygott-Webb, Paul Gibson (Gibson Associates), Mike Glyde, (Historic Environment Planning Advisor Worcestershire County Council). Emma Hancox (HER Officer, Worcestershire County Council).

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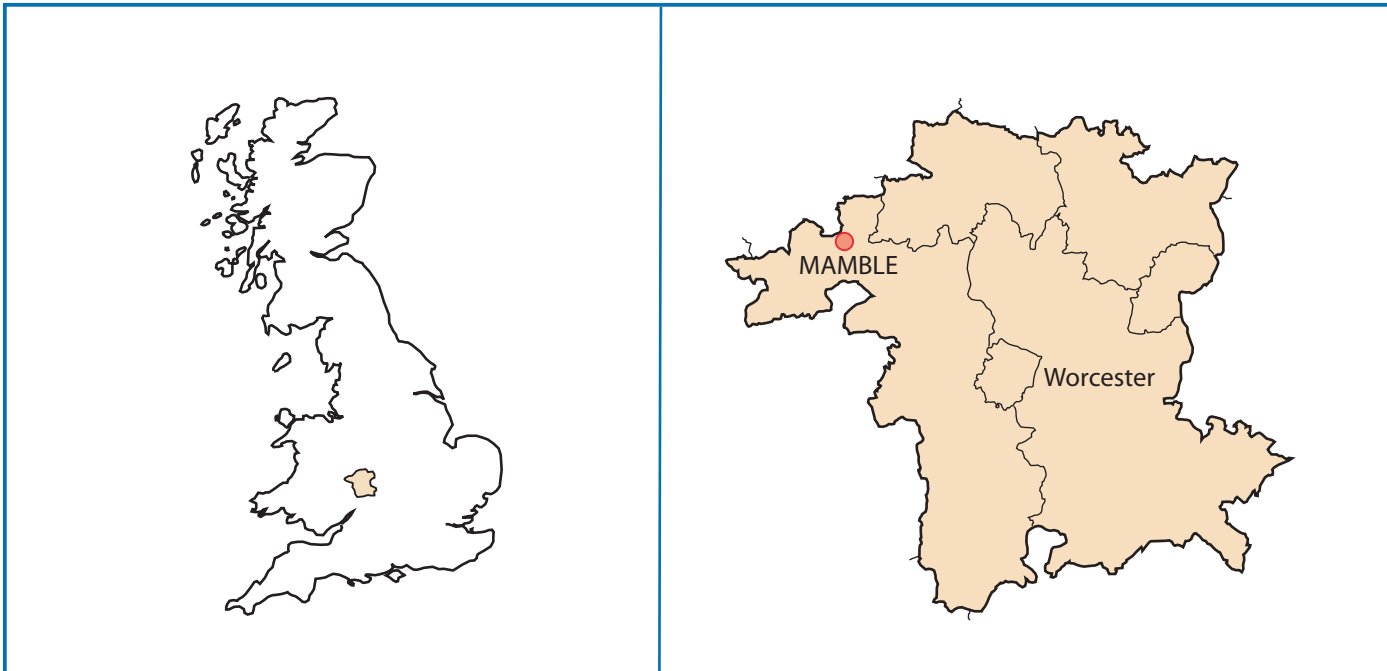
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## **Figures**

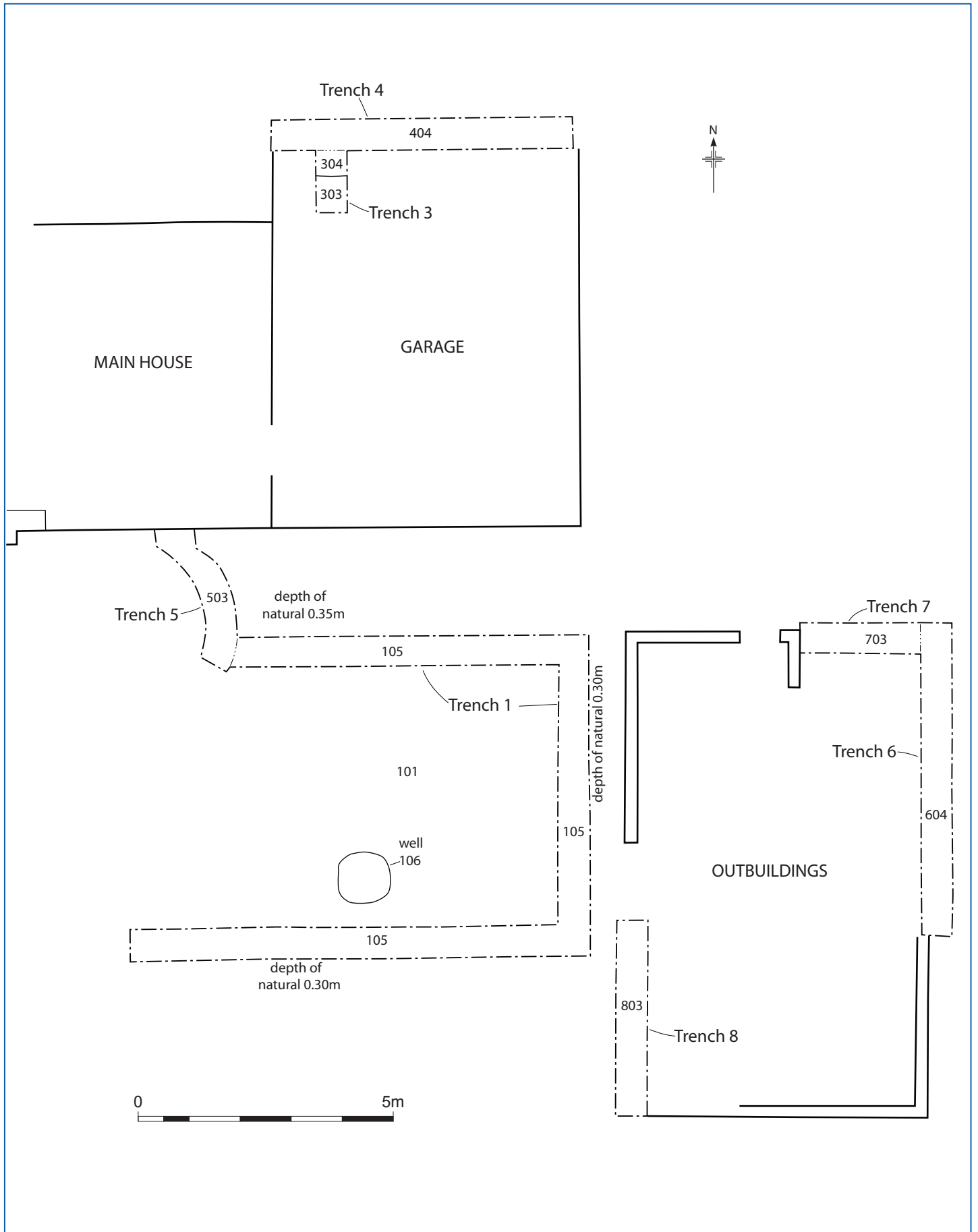
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Location of the site

Figure 1



Plan of trenches

Figure 2

## Plates



*Plate 1: The site from the east.*

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*Plate 2: Trench 1, looking east.*



*Plate 3: North facing section of Trench 1.*

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*Plate 4: South facing section of Trench 1.*



*Plate 5: Trench 2, looking east.*

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*Plate 6: Trench 2, looking west.*



*Plate 7: Trench 3, looking south.*

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*Plate 8: Trench 4, looking east.*



*Plate 9: Trench 5, looking northwest.*

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*Plate 10: East facing section of Trench 6.*



*Plate 11: Trench 7, looking west.*



*Plate 12: Trench 8, looking south.*



*Plate 13 Brick built well 106*

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## **Appendix 1 Technical information**

### **The archive**

The archive consists of:

- 5 Fieldwork progress records AS2
- 46 Digital photographs
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 8 Trench Record Sheet
- 2 Scale drawings

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

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

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## Appendix 2 Deposit descriptions

**Trench 1**

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
101	Floor	Redbrick paved floor bonded with soil. Brick possibly from former southern extension to Sodington Hall.	0.00-0.10m
102	Wall	Redbrick wall with mid light grey-cream mortar. Footings from former extension. Depth of bricks was 9cm. Below 101. Cuts 103, 104 and 105.	0.10-0.50m
103	Topsoil	Mid-dark blackish brown silty loam with frequent root action and worm sorting. Moderately compact and moderately cohesive. Contains frequent small – medium sub angular and sub rounded gravels. Overlies 104.	0.10-0.30m
104	Subsoil	Mid brownish yellow clayey sand. Moderately compact and moderately cohesive. Contain occasional medium sub angular pebbles. Below 103.	0.30m-0.50
105	Natural	Mid light greyish yellow silty clay, Marl. Rare medium - large sub angular lumps of stones. Below 104.	0.30-1m+
106	Well	Below 101. Redbrick well. Bricks are 0.22m long, 0.07m wide. Possible some bricks cut to size. 1m diameter. 8m deep. Contained at least 1m of water.	0.10-8m+

**Trench 2**

Orientation: NE-NW

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
201	Made ground	Mid-dark brown friable silty clay with frequent root action and worm sorting. Heavily disturbed. Contains metal, brick and ceramic drain fragments.	0.00-0.45m

**Trench 3**

Orientation: NE-NW

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
301	Floor	Concrete floor of garage.	0.00-0.10m
302	Made ground	Below 301. Redbrick rubble and mortar fragments. Presumably debris from wall 303 that was removed to create gable end on north elevation of garage. Rubble used to level site before floor poured.	0.10-0.20m
303	Wall	Redbrick wall with mid light grey-cream mortar. Footings from previous outer wall, prior to gable extension.	0.30-1m+
304	Previous soil horizon?	Mid dark brownish black clayey loam, occasional small-medium sub round and sub angular pebbles. Below 302.	0.30-1m

**Trench 4**

Orientation: W-E

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
401	Concrete	As 301.	0.00-0.10m
402	Made ground	Below 401. Redbrick rubble and mortar fragments. Presumably debris from wall 303 that was removed to create gable end on north elevation of garage. Rubble used to level site before floor poured. As 302?	0.10-0.30m
403	Previous soil horizon?	Mid dark brownish black clayey loam, occasional small-medium sub round and sub angular pebbles. Below 402. As 304?	0.30-0.50m
404	Natural	Below 403. Mid greyish yellow silty clay. Occasional medium sub angular pebbles.	0.50-1m+

**Trench 5**

Orientation: N-S

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
501	Wall	Redbrick footings for exterior wall of northeasterly extension.	0.00-1m
502	Floor	Exterior concrete floor. Above 503.	0.00-0.06m

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
503	Made ground	Mid dark greyish yellow silty clay, contains metal, brick and ceramic drain fragments. Area heavily disturbed by service pipes and drains.	0.06-1m+

**Trench 6**

Orientation: N-S

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
601	Concrete	Concrete floor of outbuilding. Above 602.	0.00-0.07
602	Made ground	Below 401. Redbrick rubble and mortar fragments. Presumably debris from previous demolition on site. Rubble used to level site before floor poured. Similar to 302?	0.07-0.0.15
603	Previous soil horizon?	Mid dark brownish black clayey loam, occasional small-medium sub round and sub angular pebbles. Below 602. As 304?	0.15-0.35
604	Made ground	Mid-dark brown friable silty clay with frequent root action and worm sorting. Heavily disturbed. Contains rare metal, brick and ceramic drain fragments. Occasional medium sub angular and sub round pebbles. Similar to 201, possibly once site of moat	0.35-1m+

**Trench 7**

Orientation: E-W

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
701	Concrete	Concrete floor of outbuilding. As 601. Above 702.	0.00-0.07
702	Made ground	Below 701. Redbrick rubble and mortar fragments. Presumably debris from previous demolition on site. Area heavily disturbed by service pipes and drains.	0.07-0.0.60m
703	Natural	Mid light greyish yellow silty clay, Marl. Rare medium - large sub angular lumps of stones. Below 702.	0.60-1m+

**Trench 8**

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Orientation: N-S

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
801	Concrete	Concrete floor of outbuilding. As 601 and 701.	0.00-0.07m
802	Made ground	Below 801. Redbrick rubble and mortar fragments. Presumably debris from previous demolition on site.	0.07-0.32m
803	Natural	Mid light greyish yellow silty clay, Marl. Rare medium - large sub angular lumps of stones. Below 802.	0.32-1m+

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