

WATCHING BRIEF  
AT  
NUNNERY FARM,  
WESTWOOD PARK,  
DROITWICH SPA,  
WORCESTERSHIRE

Tom Vaughan and Tim Cornah

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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Project 3583  
Report 1795  
WSM 42453



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## Archaeological watching brief at Nunnery Farm, Westwood Park, Droitwich Spa Worcestershire

**Tom Vaughan and Tim Cornah**

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### Background information

<i>Client</i>	Central Networks
<i>Site address</i>	Nunnery Farm, Westwood Park, Doverdale, Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire
<i>National Grid reference</i>	SO 8760 6407
<i>Historic Environment Record (HER) reference</i>	WSM 42453
<i>Planning authority</i>	Wychavon District Council
<i>reference</i>	n/a
<i>Brief</i>	HEAS 2010a
<i>Project design</i>	HEAS 2010b
<i>Project parameters</i>	IfA 2008
<i>Previous archaeological work on the site</i>	

There has been no previous archaeological work undertaken on site.

### Archaeological and historical background

In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, during the reign of Henry II, an abbey was founded at Westwood by Osbert Fitzhugh and his mother Eustacia de Say. It was initially run according to the Fontevrault order and occupied by both monks and nuns, although in 1374 it became a nunnery under the Benedictine rule. Although the exact location is unknown, it is thought to lie below the existing kitchen garden to the west of the current house (VCH II, 148 and 151; WSM 27231 and 35972). In 1536-7 the nunnery was closed during the Reformation. The land was bought by Sir John Pakington whose descendents had the red brick and red sandstone hunting lodge constructed circa 1600 and the surrounding land imparked with plantations and lakes in 1618. Modifications and alterations to the building were undertaken in the following centuries, most particularly in the later 17<sup>th</sup> century after the Civil War, when distinctive wings were erected at each corner which projected at 45° to the main building (VCH III, 234-7; WSM 02574 and 12962). In the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century the house was converted into flats.

The house has been designated as a Grade I Listed Building (English Heritage Listed Buildings Online, LB 148144), along with the associated Droitwich Lodge and gateway (LB 148136 and 148137), Middle Lodge (LB 18141), Ombersley Lodge and gateway (LB 148142 and 148143) which are all Grade II. The surrounding park is a Registered Park and Garden (PG 1896; WSM 35176).

An oblique aerial illustration of Westwood Park c 1708 (VCH III, between pages 234 and 235) reveals the site to have been within a large L-shaped formal orchard with north-west to south-east aligned lines of trees to the north-east of the house. The current track, although not apparent in c 1708, appears to form the north-east continuation of a path which led out of a formal walled garden on this side of the house. The Ordnance Survey maps of 1884-5 and 1903 indicate the site to lie along the north-west edge of a larger field, which contains numerous trees, although not at this end. The site now lies within the Secret Garden, '...a narrow enclosure heavily planted with conifers and bisected with a straight path leading to a stone bench seat looking back to the house' (WSM 21263), which was laid out between 1903 and 1927. There is at present no indication of the path on the ground.

Archaeological investigations at Hampton Lovett Industrial Estate, c 0.5km to the east of the site, have revealed evidence of Late Iron Age to Roman settlement activity (WSM 29657 and 36282; Miller, Griffin and Pearson, 2004) and medieval ridge and furrow (WSM 36280 and 36281). There is conjectured to have been a medieval village located close to Westwood House, which was subsequently deserted (WSM 32574). An undated cropmark has been identified within the fields to the south-east of the house, at approximately NGR SO 8765 6390 (Miller 2002, 1). Archaeological monitoring of the route of a water main pipeline and associated works across fields to the south-east of the house did not reveal significant archaeological remains (WSM 23378, 23379, 23380, 23381 and 31605; Miller 2002). Fieldwalking surveys of these fields had a similarly negative result (WSM 24191 and 34315). The site of this putative medieval settlement is therefore not considered to be on the east or south sides of the house and the nature of the cropmark is as yet undetermined.

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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.

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## **Methods**

General specification for fieldwork	CAS 1995
Sources consulted	HER Sources cited by the HER 1 <sup>st</sup> edition OS map 1884-5, 25":1 mile 1903 OS map 25":1 mile 1927 OS map 25":1 mile
Date of fieldwork	30 September 2010
Dimensions of excavated trench observed	length 30m width 0.40m depth 1.20m

### *Access to or visibility of deposits*

Observation of the excavated area was undertaken during and after machine excavation of a trench for an electric cable. A toothless bucket was used so it was possible to distinguish stratigraphic changes through the trench during excavation. The narrow width coupled with the depth of the trench meant that recording was undertaken from the surface. Observation of the sections was possible but not always easy.

### *Statement of confidence*

Access to, and visibility of, deposits allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

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**Deposit description**

Context	Type	Description	Depth (below ground level)
100	Topsoil	Sandy silt, mid to light yellowish brown, loose with occasional rounded stones up to about 0.06m in size. Some root disturbance was noticed in this deposit.	0.00-0.34m
101	Subsoil	Sandy silt with some clay, light yellow, moderately compact with frequent rounded stones up to about 0.08m in size. Stones were more frequent at east end of the trench. Some root disturbance was noticed.	0.28-0.55m
102	Natural	Clay, dark red, compact. Occasional to rare rounded stones were noticed and some manganese.	0.40-1.20m+

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**Artefactual analysis**

All of the finds recovered were from the topsoil, 100. They included two pottery sherds of pottery and one fragment of roof tile. The tile is 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century in date, although generally post-medieval in appearance. Of the pottery, one is 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century porcelain, while the other is late 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century flower pot. This assemblage is indicative of general discard and will not be retained (pers comm Angus Crawford).

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**Discussion and conclusions**

A full sequence of topsoil, subsoil and natural (100, 101 and 102) was observed along the full length of the trench, with the exception of the west end, where no clear subsoil was defined. This was considered to be due to root activity associated with the adjacent hedge.

No significant archaeological deposits, layers, structures or horizons were identified. The few finds recovered were post-medieval and modern and were determined to be residual.

The site of the nunnery which predated the existing house, and the possible medieval settlement, appear not to have lain on this side of the house. Similarly there was no evidence for the ridge and furrow. This latter would have indicated that the site lay within an area of agricultural open fields which is characteristic of the landscape immediately surrounding villages in the medieval period.

The lack of significant archaeological deposits does appear to confirm what is suggested by the cartographic and illustrative sources, that the site has remained undeveloped to the present day, albeit planted with trees within the larger landscape of Westwood Park which was created in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Similarly the traditional theory that the nunnery was located within the kitchen garden to the north-west of the house remains valid.

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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.

*A watching brief was undertaken on behalf of Central Networks at Nunnery Farm, Westwood Park, Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire (NGR SO 8760 6407; HER ref. WSM 42453). A full sequence of topsoil, subsoil and natural was observed within the single excavated trench. No significant archaeological deposits, layers, structures or horizons were identified. The few finds recovered were post-medieval and modern and were determined to be residual. There was no evidence for the nunnery which predated the existing house, nor for the putative deserted medieval village. The lack of significant archaeological deposits does appear to confirm what is suggested by the cartographic and illustrative sources, that the site has remained undeveloped to the present day, albeit planted with trees within the larger landscape of Westwood Park which was created in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Similarly the traditional theory that the nunnery was located within the kitchen garden to the north-west of the house remains valid.*

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## Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Philip Newton (Engineer, Central Networks) and Mike Glyde (Historic Environment Planning Officer, Worcestershire County Council).

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## Bibliography

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VCH III, Page, W (ed), 1913, *Victoria History of the County of Worcestershire*, **III**

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## Figures



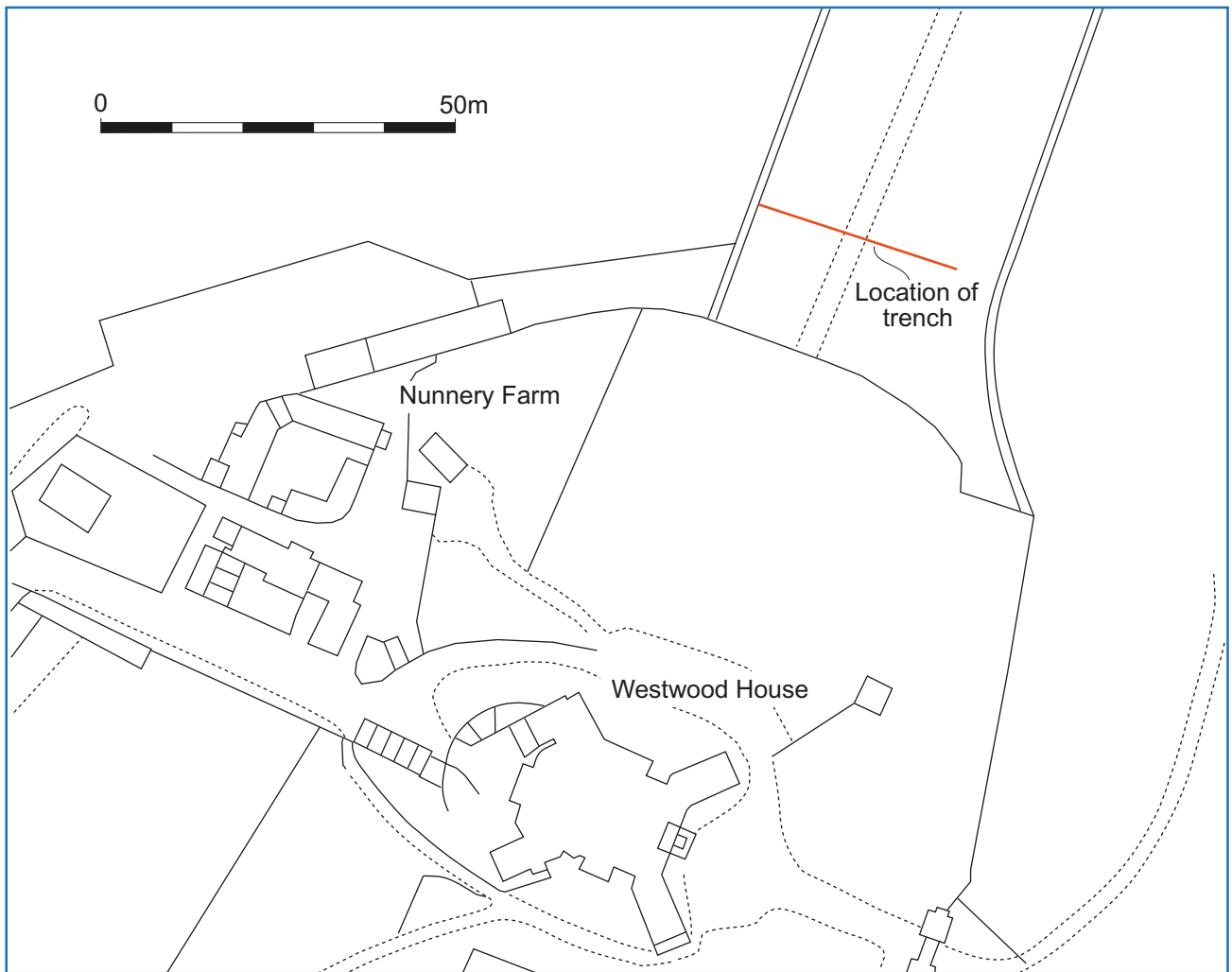




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Location of the site

Figure 1



*Figure 2: Location of trench*



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## Plates

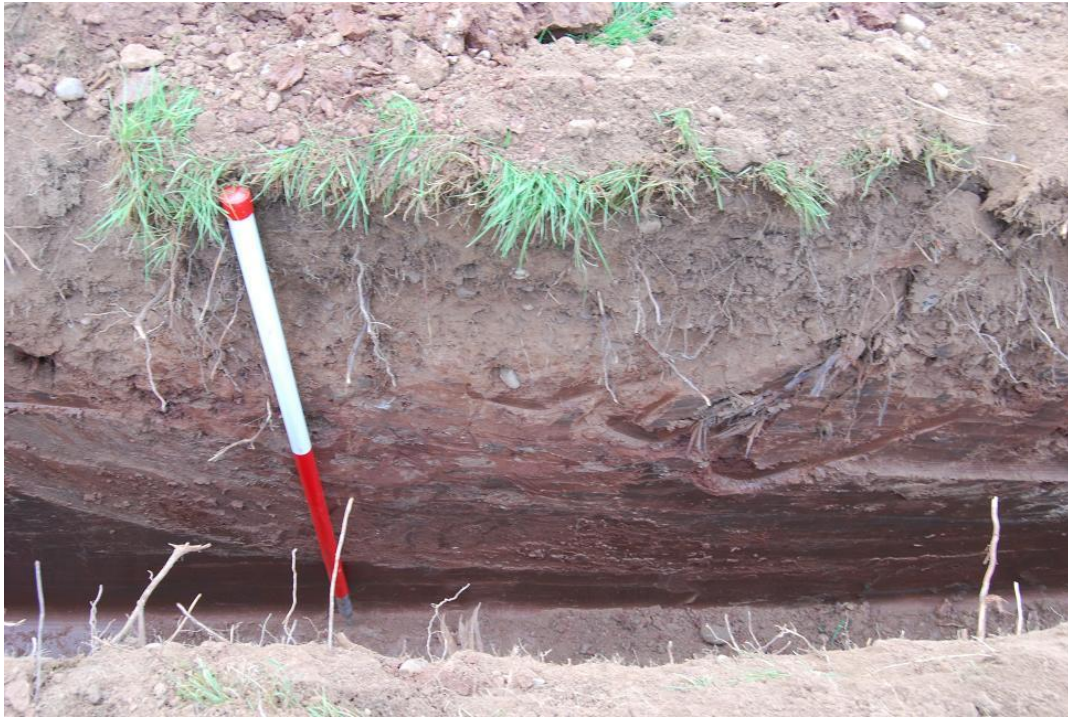


*Plate 1, general view of site prior to excavation*



*Plate 2, general west view of trench*





*Plate 3, sample south section of the trench toward the middle*



*Plate 4, general east view of trench*



*Plate 5, sample south section of trench at the east end*



## **Appendix 1 Technical information**

### **The archive**

The archive consists of:

- |    |                               |
|----|-------------------------------|
| 1  | Fieldwork progress report AS2 |
| 1  | Photographic record AS3       |
| 11 | digital photographs           |
| 1  | Trench record sheet AS41      |
| 1  | Computer disk                 |

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

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