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Old Bredenbury; a community investigation

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Old Bredenbury; a community investigation

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Herefordshire Archaeology is Herefordshire Council's county archaeology service. It advises upon the conservation of archaeological and historic landscapes, maintains the county Sites and Monument Record, and carries out conservation and investigative field projects. The County Archaeologist is Dr. Keith Ray.

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Summary

This report discusses firstly the results of a detailed topographic survey and geophysical survey using a resistance meter over land associated with Manor Farm and St Richards School, Bredenbury.

The report then discusses the results of the trial excavations on a trench by trench basis and concludes with a short overview of the results.

Attached to the report are: Annex 1, an enlarged plan of the surveyed area. Annex 2, the context/unit record covering each of the trenches and finally Annex 3; a database listing the artefacts discovered and the location in which they found.

Introduction

Old Bredenbury; A Community Investigation is a project led by Bromyard and District Local History Society, with support from Herefordshire Archaeology. The project is funded through the Your Heritage Grant, Heritage Lottery Fund.

The project focuses on land that once formed part of Bredenbury Court estate and gardens, which was established through the mid 1700's to late 1800's (SMR 31140). Preserved within the landscape are earthworks relating to the church and houses of the displaced settlement, bought by the Manor in order to establish the estate parklands. Included within the landscape are the remains of past field systems, track ways and a likely farmstead. The course of the old turn pike road (the original A44) redirected when the parkland was established also survives as a substantial hollow way within the west of the survey area. Following a series of survey events that identified past field boundaries and track ways as well as platforms associated to settlement, trial excavation was planned across the site.

Excavation of the farmstead site provided evidence for a series of timber framed structures of 17th-18th century date according to the finds retrieved. The structures were arranged around a central yard with at least one access route to the west consisting of a hollow way with metalled surface at its base.

Investigations of the displaced settlement found that the majority of earthworks within the area instead related to post-medieval landscaping associated with the Manor. Within the north of this area the foundations of a post-medieval structure with stone foundations and supporting cobbled track adjacent to the south were excavated. Due to the quantity of slag excavated in association with this structure it has been suggested to represent the site of a known Blacksmiths in the area.

Underlying this structure are the foundations to a substantial medieval structure. The remains consist of a well built stone footing (approx 0.5m wide) within a construction cut. Associated finds are of mid 13th – 14th century glazed ware suggesting a relatively high status building, perhaps attributing the structure to the early medieval Manor.

For information on the project and continued investigations go to:
<http://www.bromyardhistorysociety.org.uk/>

Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the investigation were to record in detail the archaeological features of the land associated with Manor Farm and St Richard's School. The plan was drawn at a scale of 1:500 using a *Leica*, Electronic Distance Meter, Total Station.

The purpose of the survey was to map all of the visual archaeological features within an area that covers 19.3 hectares. Features relate to past field systems, hollow ways, track ways, building platforms and post-medieval landscaped features. Through the survey process features were observed in order to place them into a loose chronological sequence of events.

The second stage of the project was to carry out geophysical survey using a Resistance Meter within three separate areas. The first area was located at a possible farmstead site; the second site was located over the likely displaced medieval settlement of Bredenbury. Geophysical survey also targeted the site of a Church located within the grounds of St Richards School (The old manor of Bredenbury).

The third stage was to test the archaeology through small-scale trial excavations. Test trenches were dug within three key areas. ***Area 1: Farmstead Site, Area 2: Displaced Settlement and Area 3: Church Site.***

The final stage of the archaeological process was to discuss the overall results and identifying potential sites of interest suitable for future investigation.

Location and Geology

Located within the County Parish of Bredenbury, 3.8km east of Bromyard; the village of Bredenbury lies along the course of the A 44 at the summit of an area of highland extending to the west toward Leominster. To the south and east of the village the topography drops gently forming the western extent of the Frome Valley.



Figure 1: Location of Bredenbury within the county of Herefordshire © Herefordshire Council.

The underlying geology is built-up of the Devonian; St Maughans Formation. This consists of red-brown blocky mudstone with beds of sandstone and conglomerate and inclusions of cornstone¹.

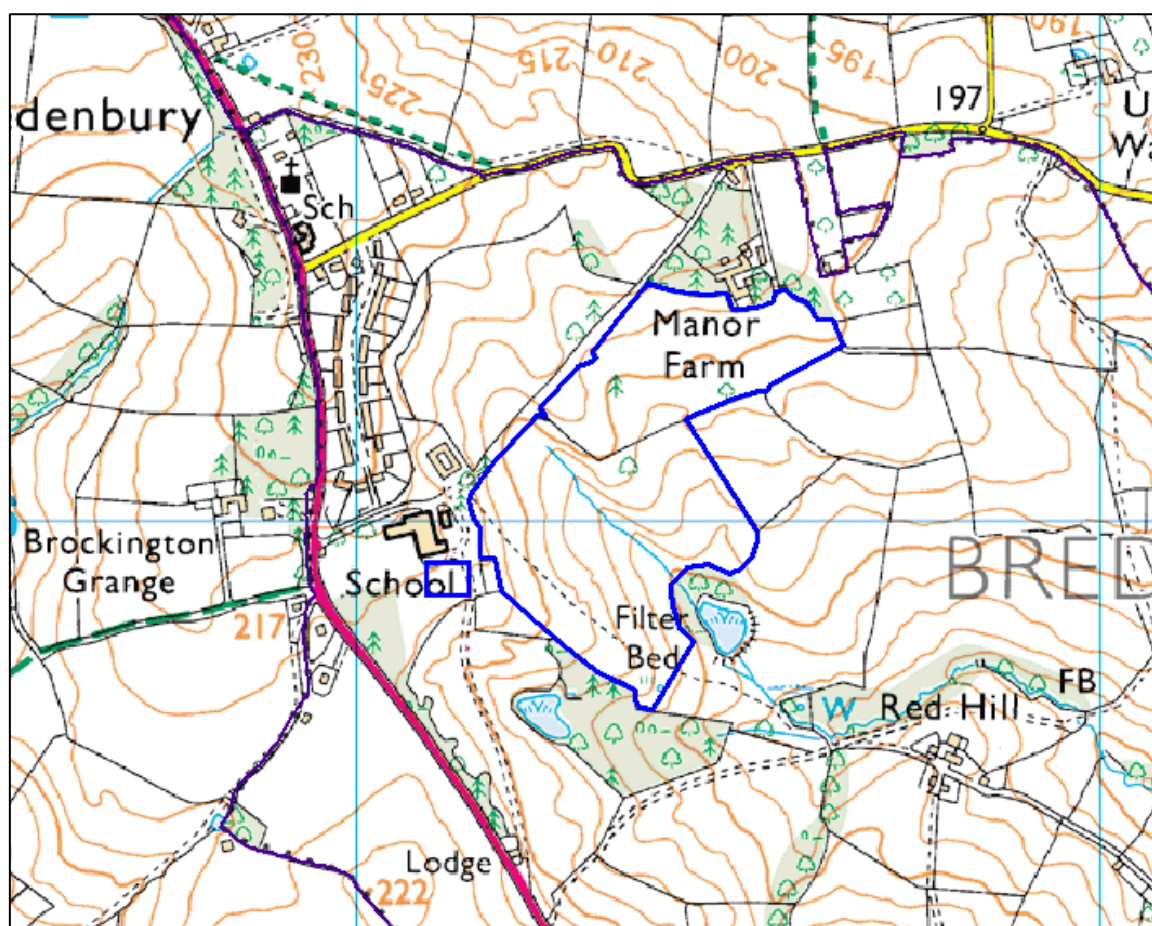


Figure 2: Scale 1:25 000 extract highlighting the location of the area of investigation. (OS crown copyright 100024100 & Herefordshire Archaeology)

¹ British Geological Survey, 1:50 000 Series, England and Wales Sheet 198, HEREFORD, Solid and Drift Geology © Crown copyright 1989.

Field Observations and Survey

The core survey area was centred within the fields to the south and southwest of Manor Farm. The primary aim of the survey was to identify any visual earthworks that would indicate past land use such as settlement, agriculture and past routes of communication.

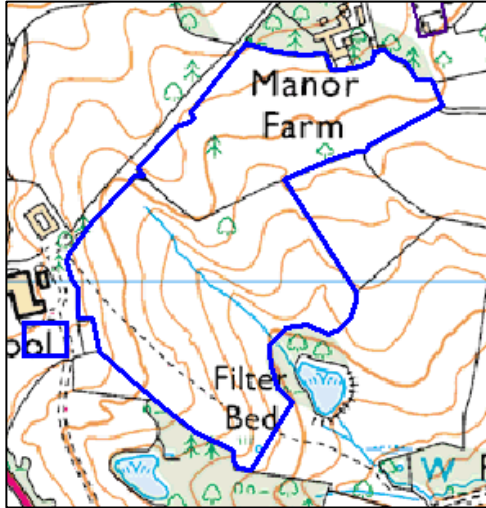


Figure 3: Scale 1:25 000 extract highlighting the location of the area of investigation. (OS crown copyright 100024100 & Herefordshire Archaeology)

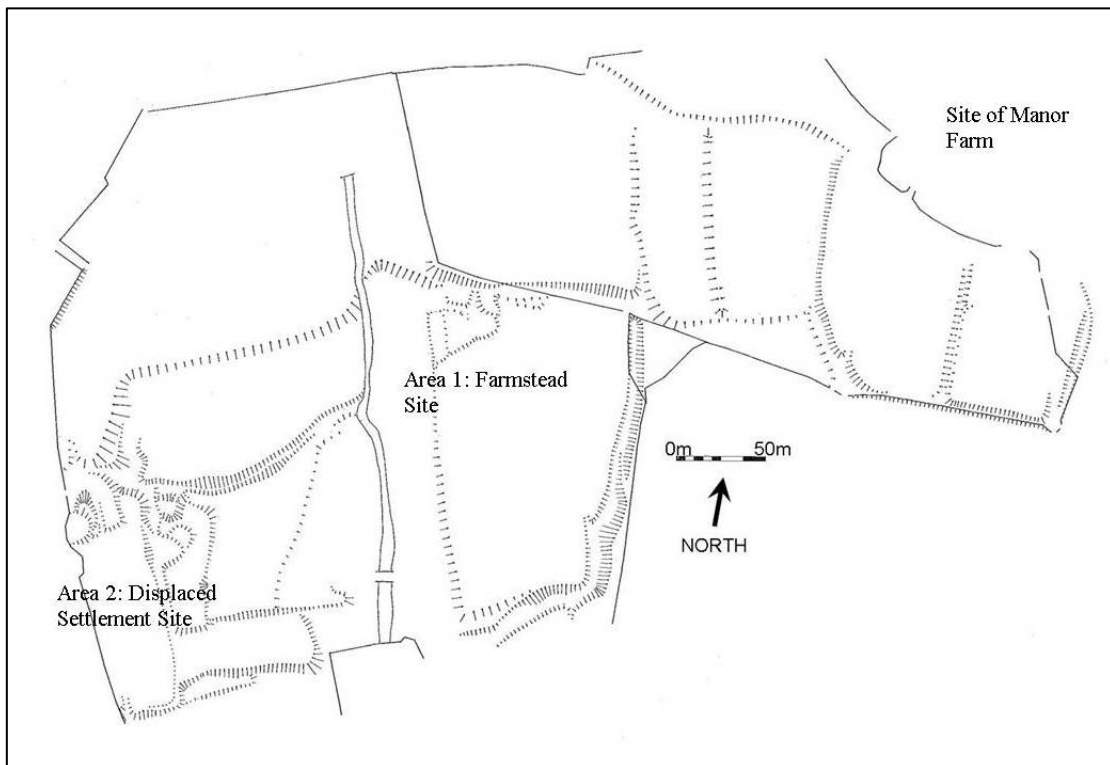


Figure 4: Results of the survey planned at scale 1:500 © Herefordshire Archaeology

The survey highlighted a complex network of track ways and relict field's across the landscape, many of which pre-date the creation of the First Edition Ordnance Survey (1890's). Located amongst the earthworks are two areas indicative of settlement. **Area 1: Farmstead Site** is so called due to the compact nature of platforms surrounding a possible courtyard with supporting track visible as a hollow.

Area 2: Displaced Settlement Site is so called due to the arrangement of platforms and likely associated gardens and fields along a north-south alignment at the summit of a hill with a natural source of water to the east and the major London to Aberystwyth directly west. Documentary evidence supports the notion of a displaced settlement prior to the establishment of the Bredenbury Manor Parkland in the late 1700's to 1800's.

Area 3: Church Site was an area located within the grounds of St Richards School to the northwest of the core area of investigation. Investigations within this area aimed to identify the site of the original church of Bredenbury, demolished and re-built away from the site in order to improve views and create the landscape park associated with Bredenbury Manor. The survey covered the terraced garden/lawn fronting the School to the south.

The General Landscape and the preservation of field systems.

The establishment of Bredenbury Manor Park between 1777 and 1831 has contributed greatly to the preservation of features relating to the earlier use of the land. During the investigation it was possible to map the original subdivision of the landscape as surviving banks, lynchets, terraces and tracks marked the boundaries of individual field plots, some of which are likely to date to at least the later medieval period.

Some of the most extensive and best preserved field systems are located within the west of the survey area (see *figure 5*) occupying the east facing slope of the small valley that runs down slope to the southeast. Due to the steep descent of the east-facing slope a series of terraces/lynchets were formed to create level areas suitable for ploughing. The terrace/lynchets stand between 0.5m and 2m high. The terraces/lynchets demarcate at least four sub-rectangular fields. Each terrace varies in size from 0.5 acres to 1.3 acres. The smallest plot within the south of the survey area measures 0.1 acre, perhaps relating to a small garden.

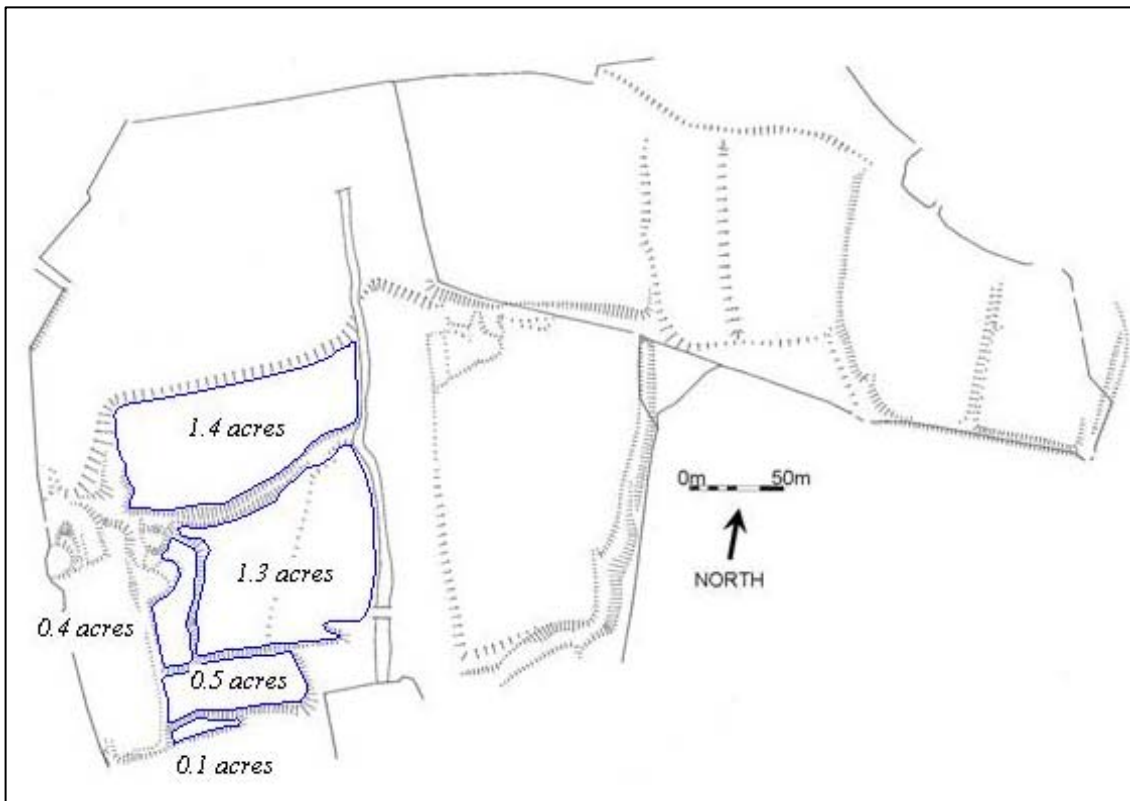


Figure 5: *Terraced fields within the west of the survey area © Herefordshire Archaeology.*

Each of the field plots were accessed either from the north-south aligned terraced track to the west or by the east-west aligned hollow way to the north. Both tracks converge to the northwest and subsequently link with the original London to Aberystwyth road to the west.

The topography to the east consists of gentle south-east facing slopes. As a result the deliberate construction of terrace/lynchet field plots was unnecessary. Instead field divisions are marked by subtle south and west facing lynchets likely formed through the natural displacement of soils along a hedgerow or fence line during successive ploughing activity. The largest of the lynchets stands 1m high and is located within the south-east of the survey area. The lowest stands no more than 0.3m high.

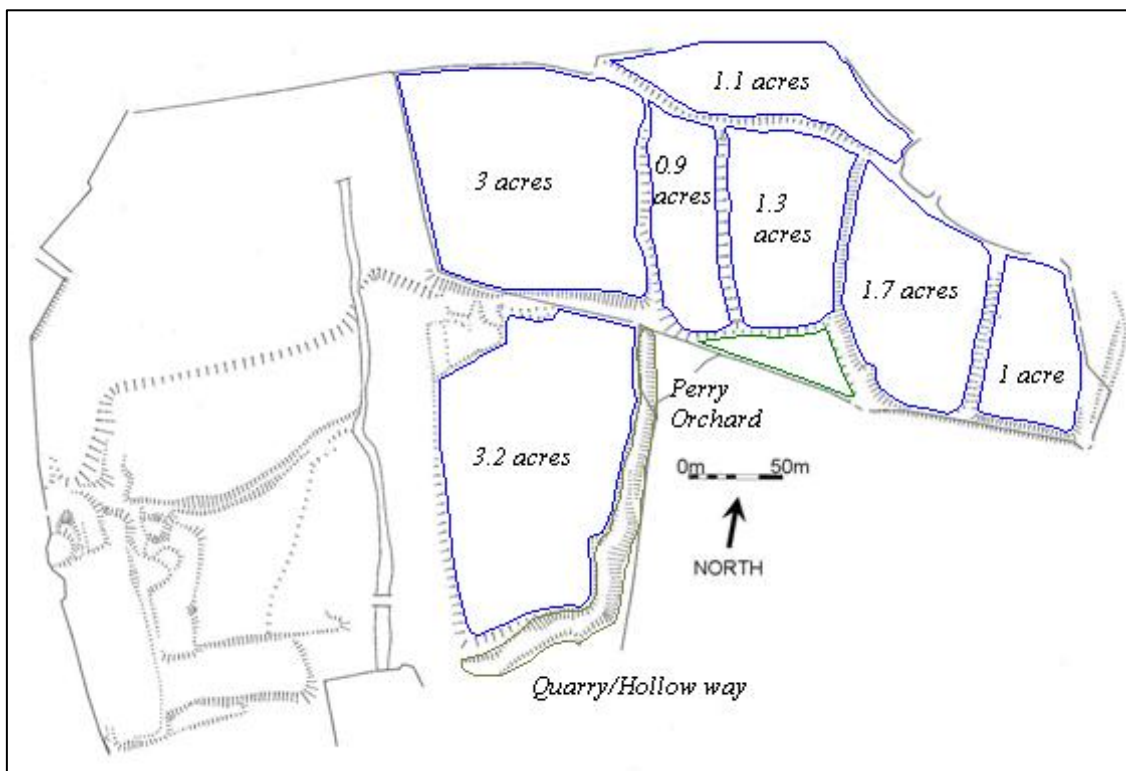


Figure 6: Preserved field system within the east of the survey area. Orchard site highlighted in green whereas the old quarry/hollow way is highlighted in brown. © Herefordshire Archaeology.

The largest of the fields covers an area of 3.2 acres though originally it may have been subdivided. The northwest corner of the field is occupied by **Area 1: Farmstead site**. The western edge of the field is marked by a lynchet standing roughly 1m high, to the south and east the edges of the field are marked by a substantial hollow way formed partially through past mineral extraction. The quarry/hollow way measures approximately 10m wide maximum and up to 4m deep. To the southwest the hollow peters out at the base of the north-south aligned valley. To the north the hollow way links with an east-west aligned track that serves as access for each of the fields as well as links with the Perry Orchard site and Farmstead Site.

The east-west aligned track (surviving both as a hollow way and terrace) leads to Manor Farm and Upper Wacton to the east; whereas to the west it links with the south-flowing brook. It is not clear whether the track continued beyond the brook due to erosion caused by the brook. It is probable that the hollow way can be attributed to the herding of cattle for watering at this location. This would account for the substantial width and depth of the hollow way at this location (20m wide x 6m deep). The location of the hollow way,

being within the northwest corner of the large 3.2 acre field would also allow for the controlled herding of cattle away from any sown crops.

All of the surveyed fields have preserved ridge and furrow included within them. Those surveyed within the east are on a north-south aligned with the exception of two where ploughing was on an east-west alignment. Within the field system located along the east-facing slopes of the valley, ridge and furrow is present on an east-west alignment where each furrow is separated by approximately 3m.

Area 1: Farmstead Site

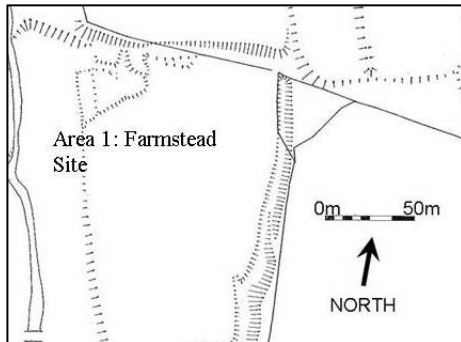


Figure 7: Location of Farmstead site in relation to the entire survey area (see top left corner). © Herefordshire Archaeology

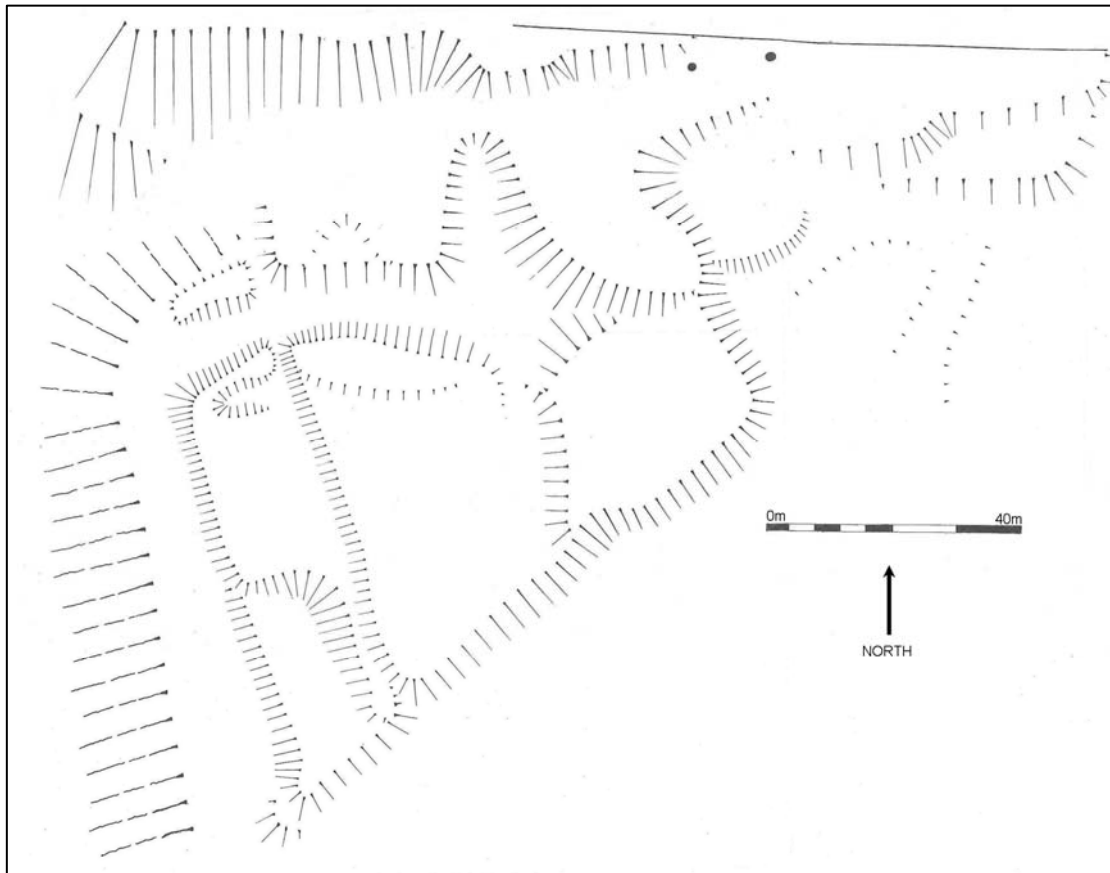


Figure 8: Survey results of Farmstead Site indicating the layout of platforms and garden terraces surrounding a central yard with supporting track to the north and west. © Herefordshire Archaeology.

Located within the northwest corner of an earlier medieval field system are the earthwork remains indicative of a small farmstead site. To the south and east the site stands up to 1.50m above the surrounding field as a terrace formed by connecting platforms of various sizes. The largest of the platforms lies roughly central to the area in question measuring approximately 20m wide east-west by 40m north-south.

To the west the platform drops to form two narrow, roughly rectangular platforms that may represent the site of a structure overlooking the brook and trackway to the west or simply small gardens.

Central to the complex is a hollowed area with a linear hollow feature extending to the west and north. These have been interpreted as representing Holloways linking to a central courtyard within the possible farmstead site.

Within the northwest corner of Area 1, a substantial Holloway extends down slope to give access to the brook. There are no clear topographic features to suggest the hollow continues beyond the brook. At its widest point the Holloway measures almost 20m and with a depth of up to 8m. Due to the scale of the Holloway and the unlikelihood that it continued beyond the brook, the hollow may have been formed through the channelling of livestock for the purpose of watering. This would support the fact that the hollow is external to the large field to the south, an attempt to channel the livestock away from areas of agriculture.

Area 2: Displaced Settlement Site

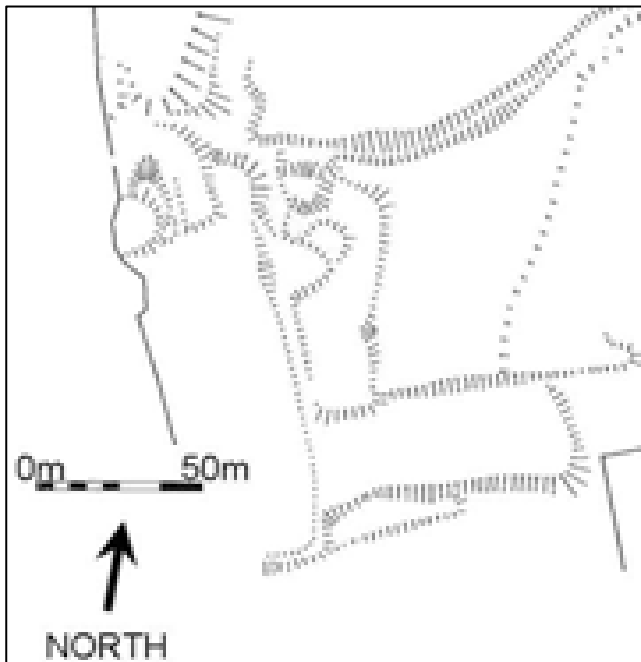


Figure 9: surveyed area within the west of the park indicating platforms and tracks likely relating to the earlier village/smallholdings. © Herefordshire Archaeology.

It is thought that the earthworks within the west of the survey area represent the portion of Bredenbury village displaced during the late 1700's to make way for the estate parkland. The earthworks associated to the settlement lie at the summit of the east-facing slope that over looks the south flowing brook.

The likely sites for past structures survive as a series of raised platforms supported by a small network of levelled tracks and holloways. The platforms are either rectangular or roughly oval in plan and stand between, 30cm and 1.50m high. The largest platform measures approximately 8m north-south by 5m east-west.

The northern extent of the settlement site is marked by a substantial north-south aligned terrace formed as part of the landscaped park. As a result this has truncated any earlier platform and trackway features relating to settlement.

The settlement/smallholding site is supported from the east and west by a substantial hollow way that links with the original course of the A44 main road to Bromyard. The connection between both stretches of hollow way is difficult to determine due to a likely quarry dug in order to extract the underlying clay soils. To the east the hollow way runs sinuously down slope linking with the south-flowing brook. It is probable the track linked with tracks identified to the west, within Area 1; however due to the erosion of the west-facing bank this can only be implied.

Area 3: Church Site

Within the grounds of St Richards School located on the south lawn is the site of the church demolished in 1875 following the enlargement of Bredenbury Manor in 1873 by the new owner Henry Barneby. The reason being to presumably improve the views to the south and to prevent access to the Estate lands.

With the exception of two graves that remain on the site no evidence for the presence of a church remains, with the exception of a terraced area, although this is likely to have been built up through landscaping activity.

Geophysical Survey

Following the results of the detailed survey the three areas **Area 1**, **Area 2** and **Area 3** were the focus of geophysical survey. The results of the geophysical survey would potentially identify whether any buried features were present and aid in the decision for locating test trenches during further excavation.

A resistance meter RM15 was employed during the survey. A resistivity survey measures water resistance within the soil by passing a low current through the soil and measuring the resistance in Ohms. Above areas of bedrock, buried walls, floors etc you would expect to encounter reading of high resistance compared to that free draining soils, buried ditches, pits etc.

The results are then extracted and produced in numerous forms for extrapolation.

Unfortunately the results of the survey were poor, due to the long dry period during the March and May 2010. As a result the ground was dry and only indicated high levels of resistance. As such the results did not indicate the presence of buried features.

Trial Excavation

Following the results of the field survey a number of areas were highlighted as presenting the potential for buried archaeological deposits relating to the past occupation and land use in Bredenbury. Three key areas were identified;

Area 1: Farmstead Site is located close to the centre of the survey area and straddles a gentle south-facing slope with small valley/re-entrant to the west. The area is represented by an area of raised platforms surrounding a central hollow/courtyard with supporting access route to the west and north.

Area 2: Displaced Settlement is an area on the western fringe of the survey area upon the summit of the east-facing slope that makes up the small south flowing valley/re-entrant. The results of the detailed survey and walkover identified a substantial number of platforms and terraced fields/gardens with interconnecting track ways either terraced or eroded into the east-facing slopes of the small north-south aligned valley/re-entrant. To the west of this area of potential settlement survives the remains of the original London to Aberystwyth road visible as a hollow over 15m wide at the top and up to 6m wide at its base; it measures up to 4m deep.

Area 3: Church Site is an area within the grounds of St Richard's School where prior to the restructuring of Bredenbury Manor in the 1800's the Church of Bredenbury stood. Following the results of the detailed survey and geophysical survey the location for the site of the Church was identified and two test pits were located in order to identify

Within **Area 1** a total of 6 trenches were excavated ranging in size from 1m² to 12m x 3m in total.

Within **Area 2** a total of 9 trenches were excavated ranging in size from 1m² to 8m x 3m in total.

Within **Area 3** a total of 2 trenches were excavated ranging in size from 1m² to 1m x 2m in total.

Area 1: Farmstead Site

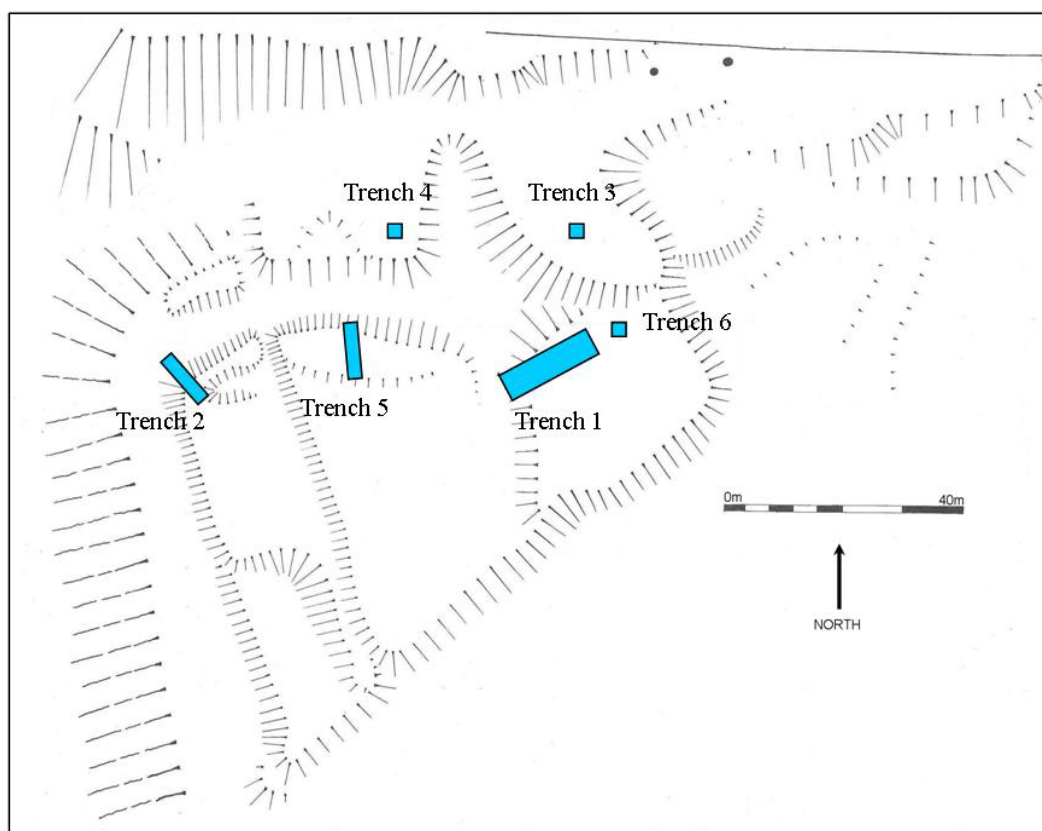


Figure 10: Area 1: Farmstead Site and trench locations © Herefordshire Archaeology

Trench 1

The trench was located along the south-east platform of the farmstead site and measured 2m wide, 10m long and aligned east east-north to west west-south. The decision to locate the trench at this position was dictated by the geophysical survey completed by Headland Archaeology using a Gradiometer. The results indicated a roughly circular anomaly to the east and to the west a north-south aligned feature, possibly relating to drainage or a foundation cut.

The topsoil [001] consisted of red brown silt/clay mix of moderate compaction and lay 20-30cm thick. The primary horizons below the topsoil consisted of a compact light red-brown largely clay with silty concentrations [002]. This horizon, likely to represent a past plough soil lay on natural fragmentary grey sandstone bedrock [003]. The majority of archaeological features were cut into or overlay contexts [002] and [003].

Underlying the topsoil [001] and covering the deposit [002] two spreads of mixed clay and silt deposits with small, scattered sandstone fragments were identified within the west of the trench [009] and [010]. They represent simple deposits of material and don't necessarily relate to structural activity.

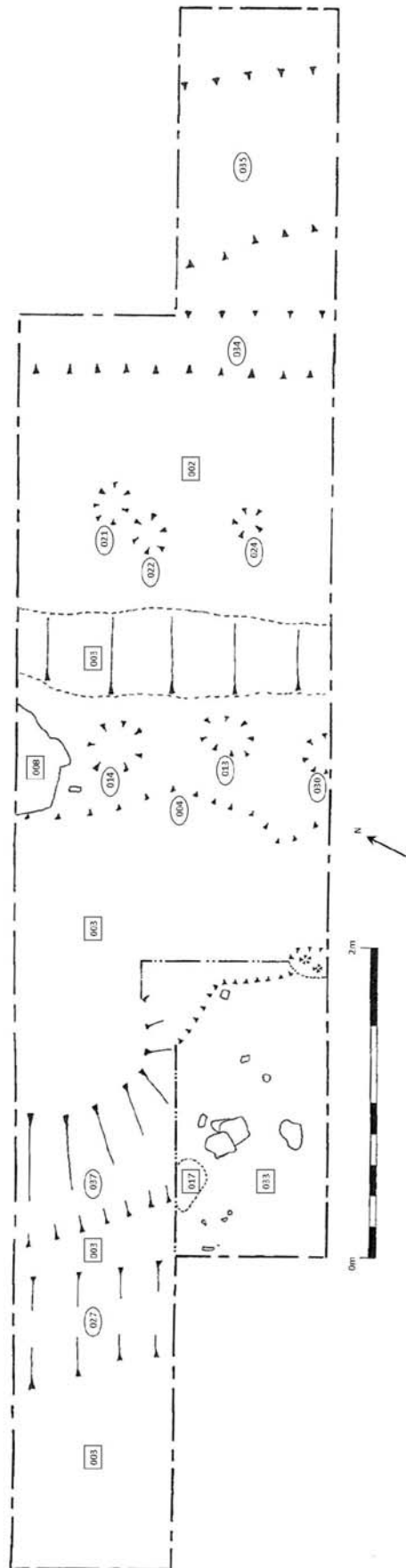


Figure 11: Plan of Trench 1 at the end of excavation indicating the features investigated. © Herefordshire Archaeology.

Located roughly central to the trench and on a north south alignment was a feature attributed to the construction of building of some sort. On the removal of [001] the location of the feature was first identified by the presence of two large grey sandstone slabs [008], the largest protruded from the north section and measured 20cm x 60cm and 7cm thick. The two slabs were partially sunken into an underlying fill [005] of construction trench cut (004). The stone slabs, possibly deployed as post-pads also overlay the fill of two post holes cut into fill [005]; these being [006] within cut (014) and [007] within cut (013). The posthole fills consisted of dark brown, silty clay of very loose compaction and lay at a depth of 13cm from the surface. The posthole (013) measured c.40cm long north-south by 25cm east-west, it measured 12cm deep. Posthole (014) measured 35cm diameter and was dug 7cm deep into fill [005].

The north-south aligned cut (004) measured approximately 80cm wide and cut to a depth of 15cm into the underlying fragmented grey sandstone bedrock [003]. The series of features may represent three phases in building construction on the site. The lack of stone and brick suggests the structure was built of timber. The first stages of construction are represented by cut (004) and fill [005] where the slot would have supported a foundation beam for a building. The second stage is represented by the two posthole cuts (013) and (014), when timber uprights were used rather than a timber beam foundation. This was final superseded by the stone slabs [008] (likely post pads) that would have supported timber uprights off the ground.



Figure 12: Foundation cut (004) indicating the later postholes (013) and (014) cut into fill [005]. (looking north toward post pad [008]) © Herefordshire Archaeology.

Supporting artefacts indicate that the structure and activity within the area was no earlier than the 17th century.

Within the east of Trench 1 a dark brown largely silty moderately compact deposit was excavated [011]. The layer/fill was rich with post-medieval pottery fragments. After further excavation the horizon covered an area 2.40m east-west by 2m north-south and lay to a depth of 21cm from the surface. The deposit filled two parallel ditches (034) east and (035) west. The west ditch was the largest at 1.10m wide where as the eastern most measured 40cm wide. Both lay on a north-south alignment. The purpose of the two ditches was unknown and may represent drainage.

Within the west of the trench two further ditches were uncovered. The western most (027) was U-shaped in profile, 18cm deep and 60cm wide. It had a primary fill of gritty, silty clay with degraded sandstone inclusions [032]. It was overlaid by a secondary fill [028] consisting of a grey brown silt/clay mix with occasional charcoal inclusions. The second ditch, V-shaped in profile lay to the east and measured a depth of 30cm and width of 80cm. It had a primary fill [036] of dull red brown clay/silt with charcoal inclusion and was overlain by fill [028] which also filled ditch cut (027). Both ditches were cut into the underlying bed rock [003]. The base of the ditches were clear of finds and so dating their construction is difficult, finds within the upper fill [028] were of post-medieval date between the 17th and 18th century.



Figure 13: Within the foreground are the V-shape ditch (037) and the parallel ditch (027) beyond. The photograph was taken looking west. © Bromyard and District Local History Society.

Further features interpreted as postholes were excavated throughout the trench with the largest concentration being within the east where it could be deduced that postholes (021), (022) and (024) were associated with one another due to their roughly north-south alignment. If this is the case they may be associated with the three stage feature within cut (004).

Trench 2

Within the west of **Area 1** a trench measuring 3m long north-west to south-east and 1m wide was located running from the summit of a platform, down its northern edge and partially across a hollow interpreted as an east-west aligned track associated to a central courtyard. The objective of the trench sighting was to determine the use of the platform as well as the form of the hollow.



Figure 14: Trench 2 located over the northern edge of a platform, the course of the Holloway is in the foreground running left to right. © Bromyard and District Local History Society.

Topsoil [101] measured a thickness of 13-15cm and sealed a silt/hill wash deposit [102] that lay within the hollow in the north of the trench as well as partially covering the platforms northern edge [103]. The silty deposit measured approximately 10cm deep within the base of the hollow.

Underlying the silt deposit at the base of the hollow a layer of stone was recorded and interpreted as representing part of a metalled surface [107] that served as access into the centre of the farmstead site from the west.

Beneath the metalled surface and extending south to seal the platform edge and summit was a layer of orange brown slightly silty clay [103] of moderate compaction and inclusions of charcoal. This deposit in turn sealed the clay core of the platform [104]. The clay was a polished orange-brown with occasional charcoal inclusions. At the summit of the platform within the southwest corner of the trench the clay subsoil had been cut by a posthole [106]. It was conical in shape ending in a narrow point at a depth of 20cm. It measured 40cm diameter and was filled by [105] soft silty clay sand mix. No finds were identified to suggest a date for the feature.

The platform and hollow did not appear to have been formed through deliberate action but rather through the gradual erosion of the ground due to the presence of a track which gradually wore a hollow into an earlier likely medieval field lynchet/terrace.

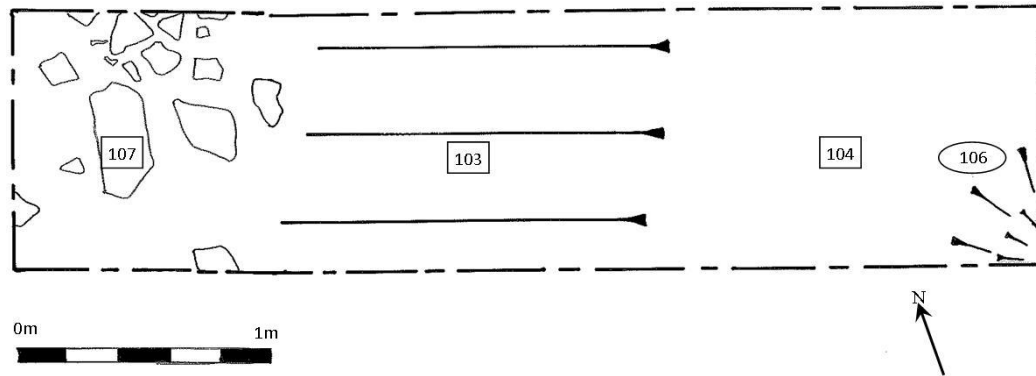


Figure 15: 1:20 Scale plan of Trench 2 at the end of excavation. © Herefordshire Archaeology.



Figure 16: View from the summit of the platform within Trench 2, looking north toward the stone surface [107] that line the base of the Holloway. © Herefordshire Archaeology.

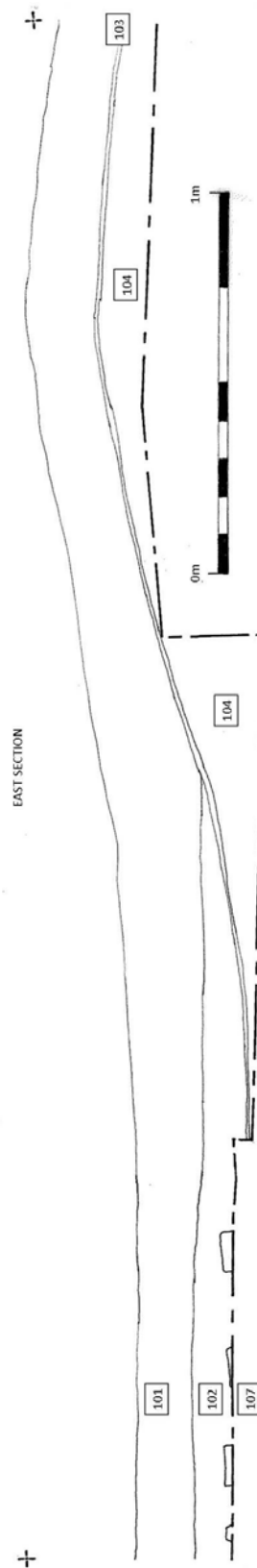


Figure 17: 1:10 Scale plan of the east section of Trench 2, indicating the break of slope from the platform into the holloway. © Herefordshire Archaeology.

Trench 3

The 1m square trench was located upon the southern edge of a broad mound within the north east corner of the possible post-medieval farmstead site. The intention behind its location was to determine whether there was any evidence to suggest that the broad mound was formed as a result of the collapsing or demolition of a building, perhaps the main house of the farmstead complex.

The topsoil/turf layer [150] measured a depth of 5cm, sealing the underlying soil interpreted as post-medieval plough soil [151]. The plough soil consisting of red brown compact clay with occasional charcoal flecking measured 40cm thick and overlay natural subsoil's [152] of dark red brown very compact clay with patches of degraded sandstone. Having excavated a *sondage* within the southeast corner of the trench to a further depth of 30cm it was determined no further archaeology would be encountered.

Trench 4

The 1m square trench was located upon a subtle platform within the north of the farmstead site overlooking the proposed central courtyard and east-west aligned hollow track. Due to the level nature of the platform, excavation sought to examine the evidence for its use such as structural, storage or garden.

The topsoil/turf layer [153] seals horizon [154] a homogenous deposit of compact clay clear of inclusions. The deposit measures 15cm thick before the under lying deposit [154] of very compact natural subsoil consisting of clay with inclusions of degraded sandstone is met. The trench was not excavated further.

Trench 5

The location of *Trench 5* was situated across the summit of a low east-west aligned rise above the edge of a platform extending south. The platform formed part of the farmstead site, marking the southern edge of the hollowed courtyard and track identified during survey. The trench measured 3m north south by 1m wide, the aim was to sample the interior of the platform for any evidence for structure or general use. Furthermore the trench extended partially down the north-face of the platform to investigate any similarities or differences to the form of the platform edge excavated in *Trench 2*.

Sealed by topsoil [180] is a layer of heterogeneous silt clay [181] of moderate compaction with inclusions of charcoal and roots. Due to the nature of the deposit it was interpreted as plough soil, sealing a horizon deposited during the post-medieval era [182] as evident from the 18th century pottery fragments retrieved. The northern extent of deposit is butted by homogenous red/orange brown compact clay with occasional charcoal inclusions [183]. This deposit formed the northern edge of the platform, it's southern extent included a spread of sub-angular stone (max. 10cm x 7cm). Due to time constraints *Trench 5* was not excavated further.

Trench 6

Trench 6 was located initially to the east of *Trench 1*, prior to it becoming extended into the latter. The location of the trench was determined from the results of a geophysical survey carried out by Headland Archaeology using a Gradiometer. The results of the survey identified an anomaly with circular ditch and firm interior measuring c.4m diameter. The intension of *Trench 6* was to test the feature looking at its interior. The latter extension (*see Trench 1*) sought to link this interior surface with the ditch and further excavations to the west.

Within the initial test trench that measured 1.5m² the topsoil consisted of a dark brown friable silt clay mix [156]. Underlying the topsoil was a layer of post-medieval plough soil/landscaped material [157] identified through the pottery fragments retrieved, the deposit consisted of a soft/loose dull red brown clay silt with inclusions of charcoal. Beneath, the soil material consisted of compact red brown clay with occasional charcoal flecking [158]. Post-medieval pottery was present; due to time constraints the context remained unexcavated.

Area 2: Displaced Settlement

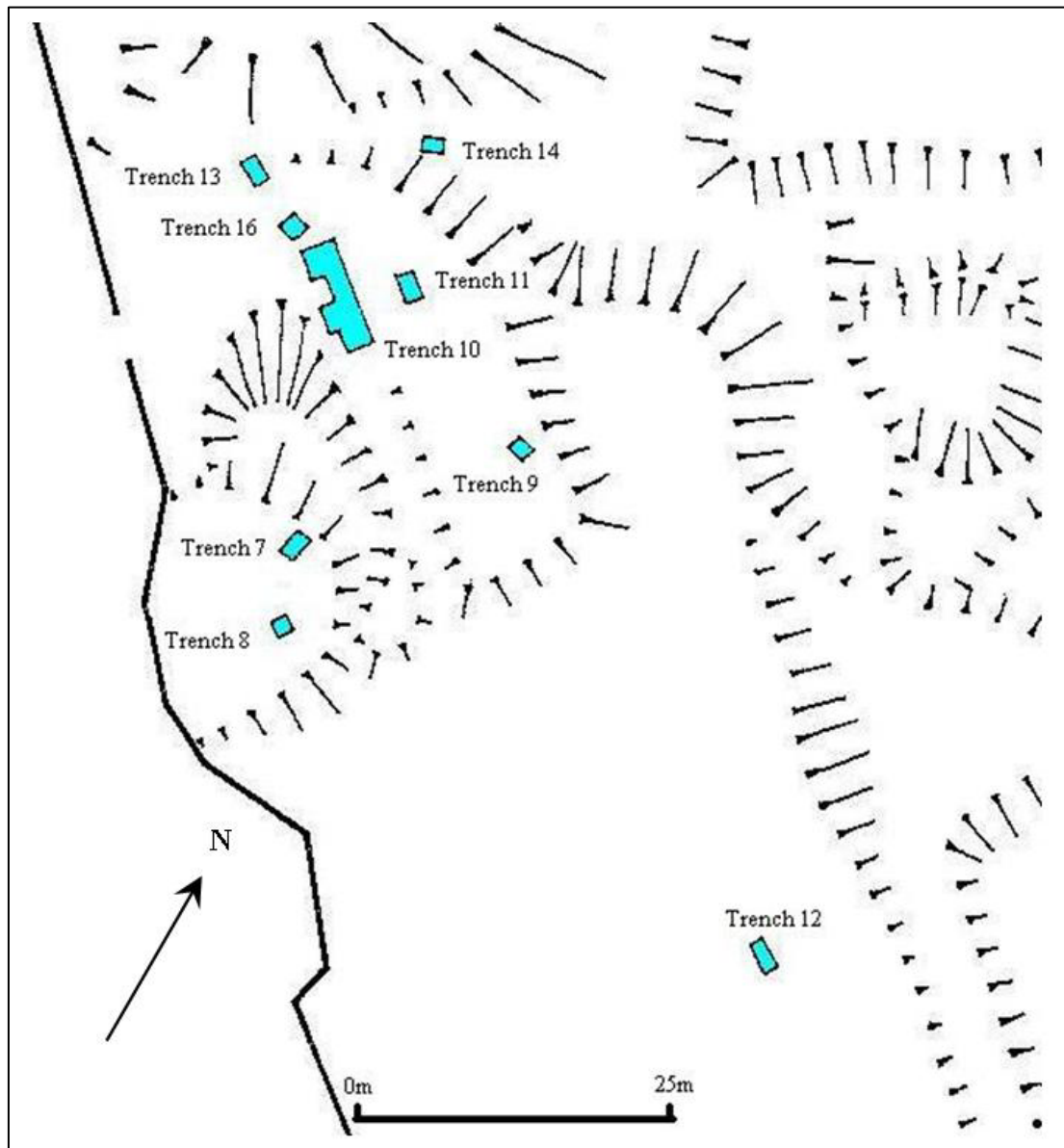


Figure 18: Trench location plan within Area 2. © Herefordshire Archaeology

Trench 7

Located upon a platform edge within the west of the survey area the trench extended 2m down slope to determine the form and construction of the platform. To the east the platform converges with a distinctive hollow suggestive of either a pond or quarry.

Underlying the topsoil [200] was a layer of red brown clay silt with inclusions of charcoal [201]. It was into this horizon that the quarry/pond was cut (204). The secondary fill consisted of heterogeneous dark brown silty clay [202] of loose soft compaction due to the waterlogged conditions of the quarry/pond. This post-medieval deposit sealed a richly filled medieval primary fill horizon [203] of dark brown sandy silt that lay at its thickest to the north-east, close to the base of the quarry/pond feature. Pottery fragments consisted of

fragmented cooking pot and finer 13th-14th century green glazed ware. Numerous theories behind the deposition of this fill have been put forward that include; the dumping of household waste into a pit/un-used quarry or the displacement of material caused through demolition/earth movement during the medieval period. The latter is less likely as construction material might have been expected to be encountered along with the pottery fragments. Unfortunately upon the summit of the platform no evidence for past activity was identified at this particular location.

Trench 8

The trench was located 2m to the south of Trench 7 sited within the interior of the platform. The aim was to identify any evidence for structure and use, as well as the form in which the platform was constructed.

Topsoil [210] was made up of grey brown friable clay with occasional root and charcoal inclusions. The underlying horizon consisted of a post-medieval red brown clay-silt [211] up to a depth of 0.50cm. Beneath the post-medieval horizon was a compact red brown [212] clay of medieval date, evident from pottery fragments retrieved. Due to time restraints this context was not fully excavated. What can be deduced is that the platform can be largely attributed to landscaping relating to the post-medieval activity associated to Bredenbury Court Parkland. Within the surface of the medieval horizon [212] was a likely post pad [213] constructed of five flat sandstone segments (maximum size of 24cm x 18cm). It maybe that this post pad is part of a sequence associated to a structure; only through further excavation can this theory be tested.

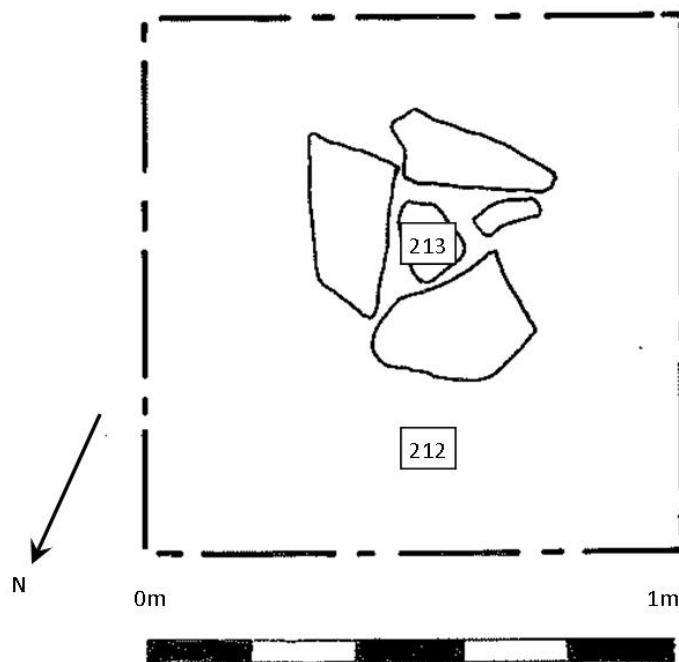


Figure 19: Scale 1:20 plan of Trench 8 at the end of excavation. © Herefordshire Archaeology.

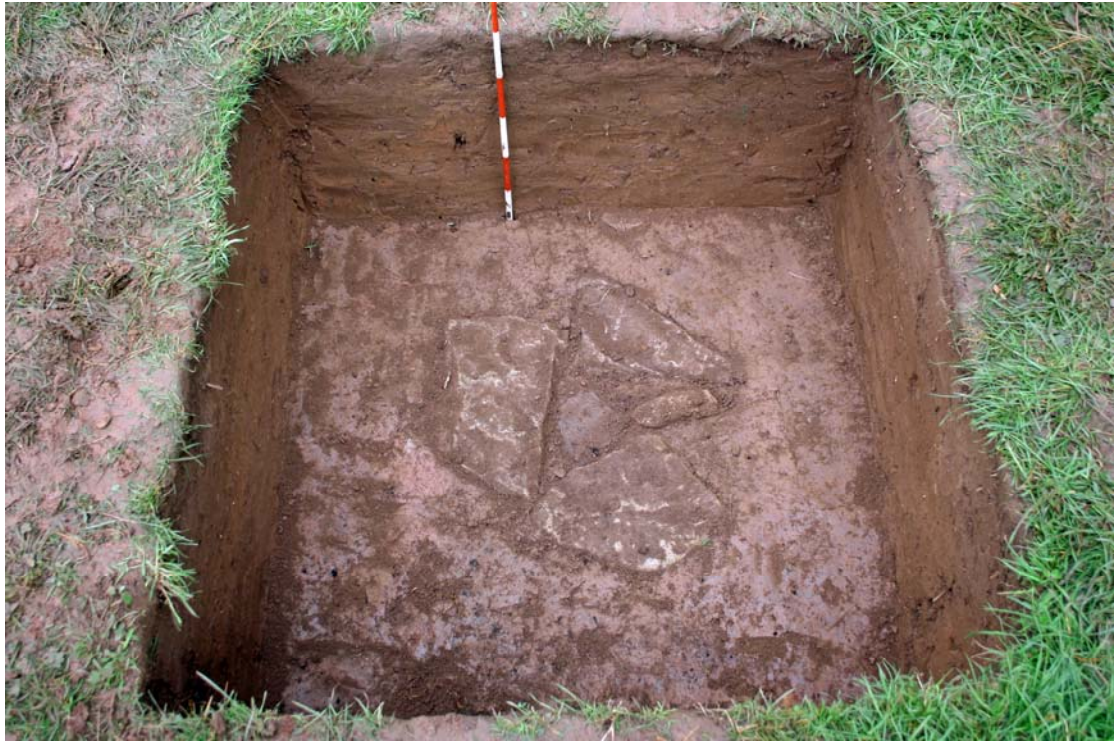


Figure 20: The base of Trench 9 indicating the potential post pad [213] set into clay surface [212]. © Bromyard and District Local History Society.

Trench 9

The trial trench measured 1m² and located upon the interior of a substantial platform overlooking the north-south aligned terraced track to the east. The objective behind the test pit was to determine the form of the platform and to test the potential depth of the underlying archaeology.

The topsoil [215] consisted of a grey brown clay silt mix of moderate compaction. It lay 20-25cm deep. The underlying horizon [216] consisted of dark brown compact clay with charcoal, root and stone inclusions. The deposit measures 60-65cm thick and from the finds retrieved indicate a date of 17th – 18th century. The deposit has been attributed to post-medieval landscaping associated to Bredenbury Court Parkland.

Beneath the horizon was a deposit likely to represent medieval activity [217]. The horizon consisted of red brown compact clay with charcoal and sub-angular stone inclusions. Due to depth of the excavation, the medieval horizon [217] was not fully investigated.

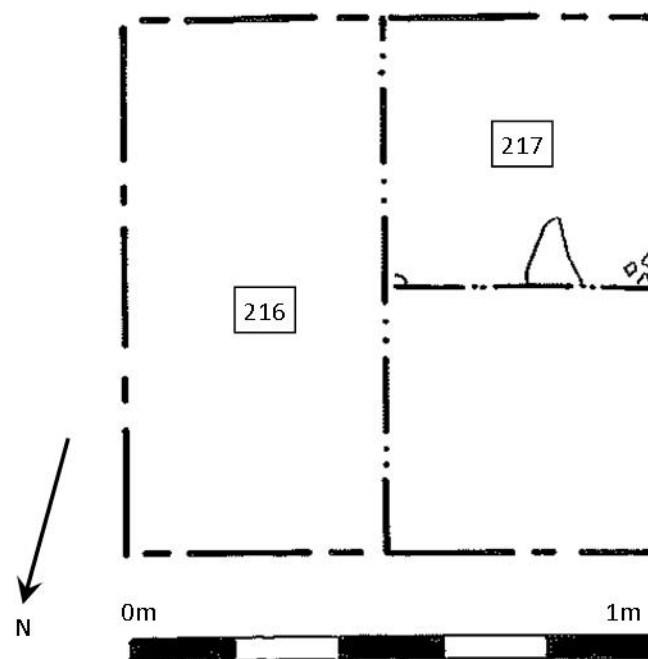


Figure 21: Scale 1:20 plan of Trench 9 at the end of excavation. © Herefordshire Archaeology.

Trench 10

The site of Trench 10 was determined by the nature of the topography. It was located roughly central to a large platform where by to the north ran an east-west aligned hollow interpreted as one of the main routes of access for the small holding settlement suggest to be within the area.

The topsoil [220] consisted of a dark brown moderately compact silt/clay mix that lay to a depth of 5-8cm. Features of archaeological significance lay directly beneath this layer of topsoil. The largest deposit consisted of red brown clay silt [221] which lay to the north of and appeared closely associated with a roughly built east-west aligned wall foundation [224] of post-medieval date. The wall foundation was built using a mixture of rounded and angular stone of sandstone and conglomerate. As the wall extended toward the western edge of the trench it becomes truncated, presumably due to the deliberate removal of material.



Figure 22: Stone surface/track [222], the foundations of the wall [221] are within the right of the photograph. Fragmented cobble surface [230] is located within the left of the photograph
© Chris Atkinson

Parallel to the wall along it's southern edge was a stone built path formed through the standing on end of mudstone, sandstone and conglomerate flat stones [222]. The stones were set on side lying lengthways on a roughly north-south alignment with the exception of a number of larger stones being placed in an east-west alignment to mark the southern edge of the track. The track/surface steps down 4-8cm to the south onto a fragmented cobble surface [230]. All of the above features appear to have been contemporary and related to post-medieval activity at the site. Due to the discovery of fragments of slag it is probable that the remains mark the site of a blacksmiths known to have been present at the site during the 17th and 18th centuries.

Underlying the post-medieval wall [223] and the possible garden soil/plough soil [221] were features clearly medieval in date from the associated finds of 13th to 14th century pottery. Aligned on a north-south axis and measuring

approximately 50cm wide was the foundation course of a well built stone wall [224] using angular mudstone and sandstone fragments.

The wall was constructed within a foundation trench (226) cut into the medieval subsoil [227] which consisted of red/orange brown silty clay with charcoal inclusions and of moderate compaction. The fill [225] of the foundation trench (226) consisted of grey brown very silty clay with substantial stone inclusions. The stone, both angular and sub-angular was of a fashion suitable for construction; however the presence of the stone material in the foundation cut appears to suggest it was not needed and would serve the purpose of providing added support to the wall [224].



Figure 23: Medieval wall foundation [224], the rubble layer in the foreground, left of the wall is the fill [225] within construction trench (226). © Chris Atkinson

Pottery fragments of 13th-14th century green-glazed ware from within the foundation cut and surrounding area suggests that the building was relatively high status. The foundations may represent the original manor building of Bredenbury.

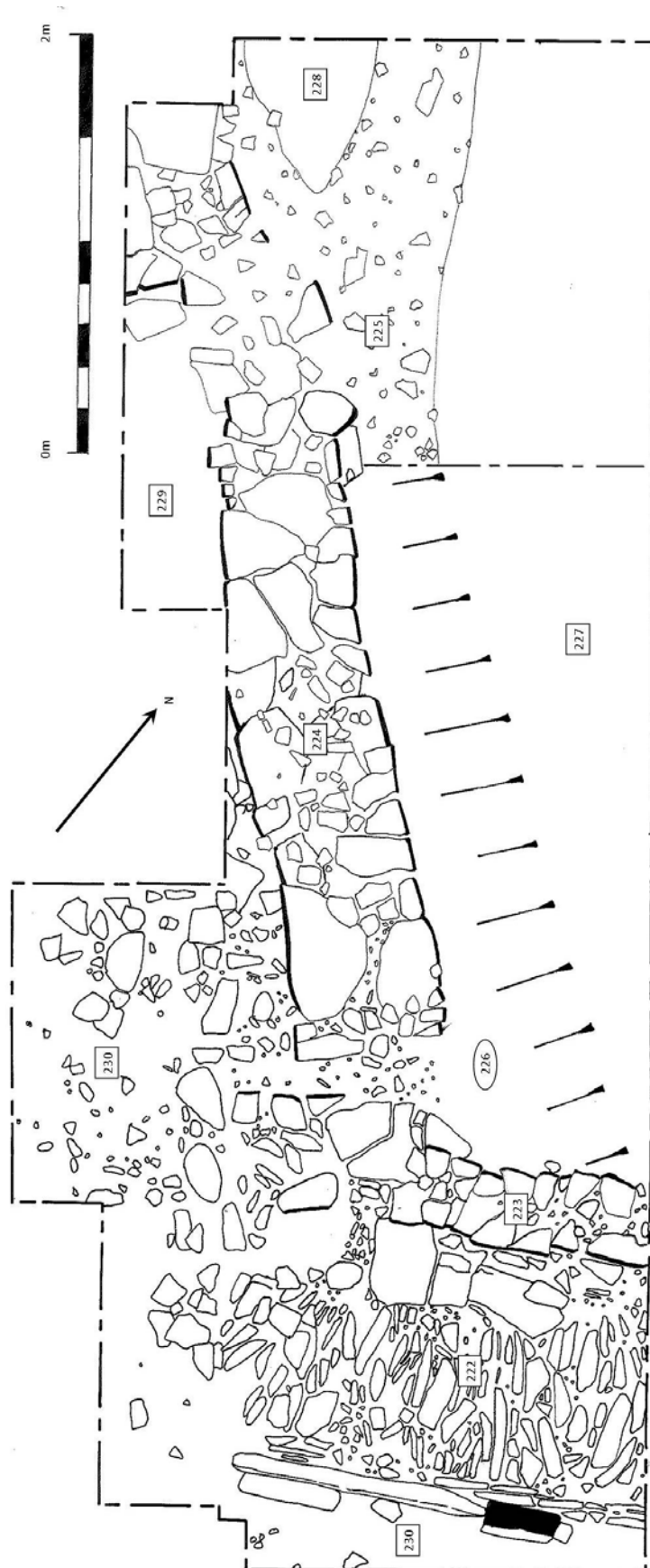


Figure 24: Scale 1:20 plan of Trench 10 at the end of excavation, highlighting both the course of the smaller post medieval wall and that of the larger medieval structure. © Herefordshire Archaeology.

Trench 11

Trench 11 was sited approximately 4m to the east of *Trench 10* with the aim of discovering the course of the post-medieval wall [223] and general form of the structure.

Underlying the topsoil [160] was a horizon comprising of dark brown loosely compact clay silt mix [161] with inclusions of charcoal, sandstone and brick fragments. Within the horizon were both post-medieval and medieval pottery fragments. This layer of post-medieval landscape material sealed a deposit of post-medieval [162] within the southern half of the trench. Included within the dark brown silty clay soil was a considerable deposit of red brick fragments. It can only be assumed that this is material relating to landscaping or the demolition of the potential blacksmiths within the area.

The horizon partially seals a deposit of medieval date consisting of dark brown silty clay [163] with inclusions of stone and charcoal. Cut into the deposit were two postholes that cut the underlying bedrock [168]. Posthole cut (165) contained two fragments of medieval jagg ware of 13th-14th date within its fill [164] which consisted of a dark brown clay silt of very loose damp compaction.

Due to the extent of the trench it can only be suggested that the postholes had some relation to the medieval structure identified within *Trench 10*; however without further excavation the true nature of the features cannot be established.

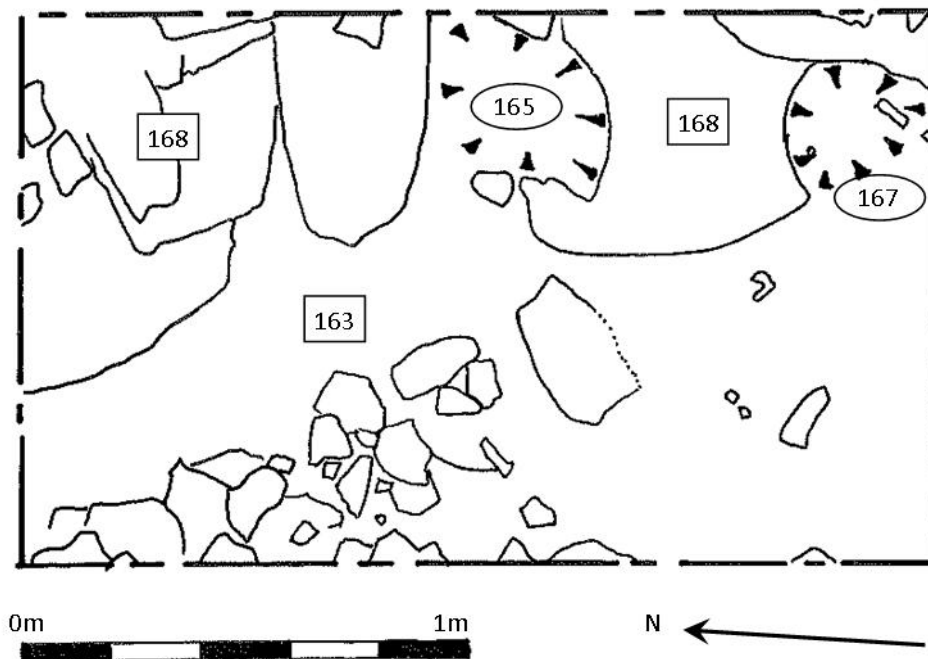


Figure 25: Scale 1:20 plan of Trench 11 at the end of excavation. © Herefordshire Archaeology.

Trench 12

The sighting of the trench was dictated by a number of subtle earthworks to the south of the main concentration of trenches located within Area 2. A series of low platforms of equal shape and size divided by hollows indicate the possibility of small holdings along the eastern edge of the old course of the Bromyard to Leominster road. Trench 12 measured 2m north-south by 1m wide and was excavated to simply test and aim to interpret the earthworks. It was sighted to run from the top of the platform into the base of an east-west aligned hollow to the south.

The topsoil [190] consisted of dark brown friable silt which overlay a dull red brown clay/silt mix with charcoal inclusions [191]. The horizon was clearly post-medieval in date in regards to the artefacts of pottery and glass retrieved. The underlying horizon [192] consisted of a red brown clay/silt with charcoal inclusions of moderate compaction. Though the horizons dictate the topography there is no evidence for the follow having been formed by a cut at the depth of excavation. The deposits have been interpreted as post-medieval landscaping.

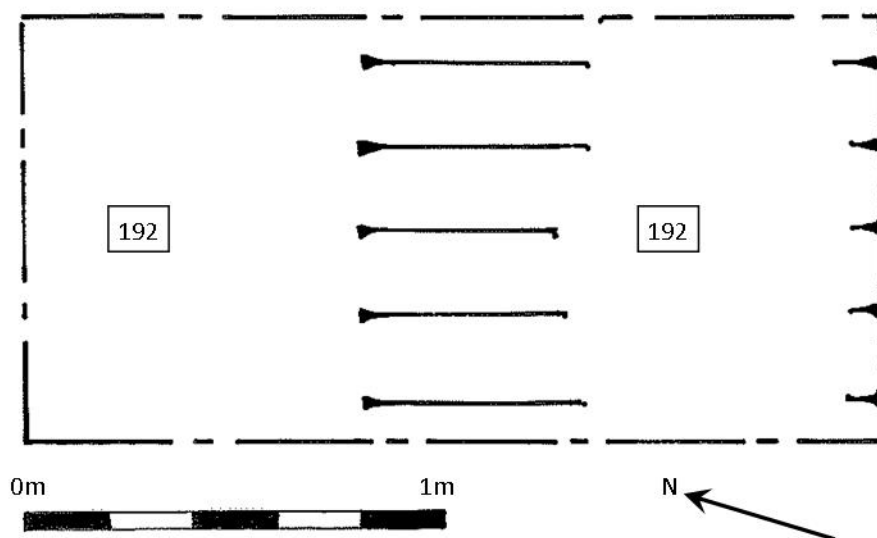


Figure 26: Scale 1:20 plan of Trench 12 at the end of excavation. © Herefordshire Archaeology.

Trench 13

Trench 13 was located to the north of *Trench 10* with the aim of discovering the continued course of the large medieval wall foundations [224] or features relating to further medieval activity within the area. The trench measured 1m square and located at the foot of the large post-medieval terrace formed during the establishment of the parkland estate.

The topsoil [300] of dark brown silty clay, measured 1cm thick and overlay a dark red brown clay/silt mix [301] of moderate compaction that measured 50cm deep. During the excavation this deposit of post-medieval plough soil a layer of compacted stone was encountered [302]. The stone, a mix of conglomerate, mudstone and sandstone appear to form a rough cobbled surface of post-medieval date. No medieval features were identified within the confines of this trench.

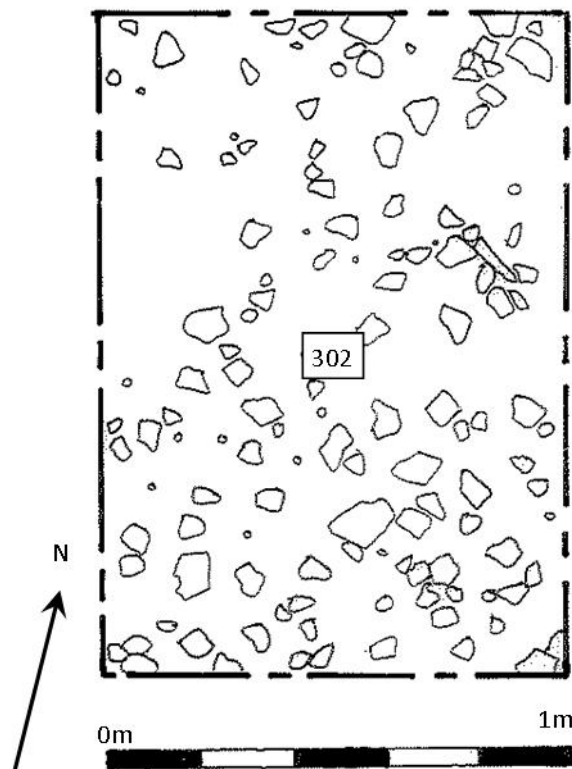


Figure 27: Scale 1:20 plan of Trench 13 at the end of excavation. © Herefordshire Archaeology.

Trench 14

The trench lay within the north east of Area 2 and located at the base of a hollow closely associated with the east-west aligned Holloway to the east that links the village site with the brook at the foot of the north-south aligned valley. The trench measured 2m east-west by 1m north-south.

The topsoil [303], dark brown silty clay measuring a thickness of up to 5cm, directly overlay [304] a horizon of small stone cobbles of mudstone, sandstone and conglomerate. This horizon had been set directly onto the exposed underlying geology of grey sandstone [305]. The stone horizon [304] may represent the firming of the ground to support a track linking with the substantial Holloway to the east. Associated finds of pottery and metal work indicate a post-medieval date for the features.

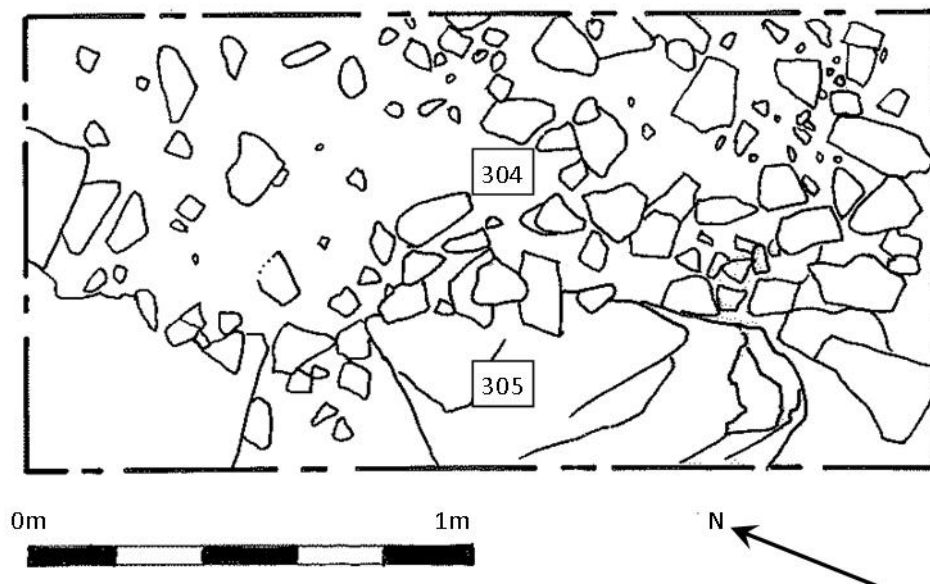


Figure 28: Scale 1:20 plan of Trench 14 at the end of excavation. © Herefordshire Archaeology.

Figure 29: Trench 14 at the end of excavation indicating the bedrock [305] and the stone, levelling deposit [304]. © Herefordshire Archaeology.



Trench 15

Trench 15 was excavated to the north of *Trench 10* with the aim of identifying the full extent of the medieval structure represented by wall foundation [224]. The trench measured 1.50m square. The topsoil [306] measured 20cm thick and consisted of dark brown silty clay of moderate compaction. This deposit lay directly over a horizon of cobbles and flat stones, possibly indicative of an area of hard standing associated to post-medieval period. Due to time constraints associated with the project the trench was not excavated further to determine its nature.

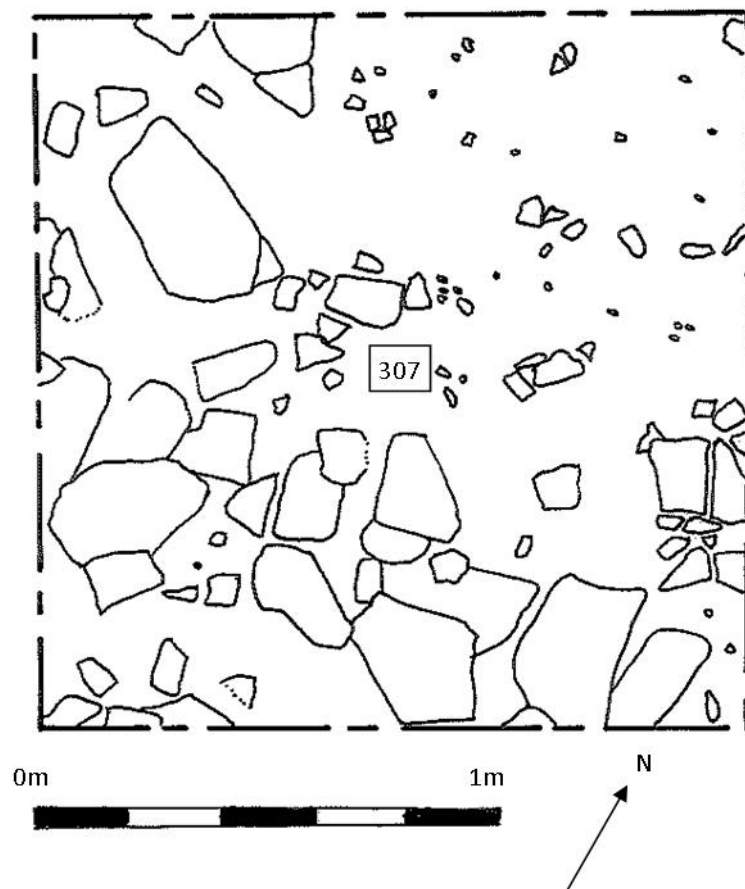


Figure 30: Scale 1:20 plan of Trench 15 at the end of excavation. © Herefordshire Archaeology.

Area 3: Church Site

The church site lies upon the southern lawn of St Richard's School, originally the manor of Bredenbury greatly enlarged by the new owner Henry Barneby in 1873. Two trenches were located over the site of the demolished church that is highlighted as a crop mark during dry periods.

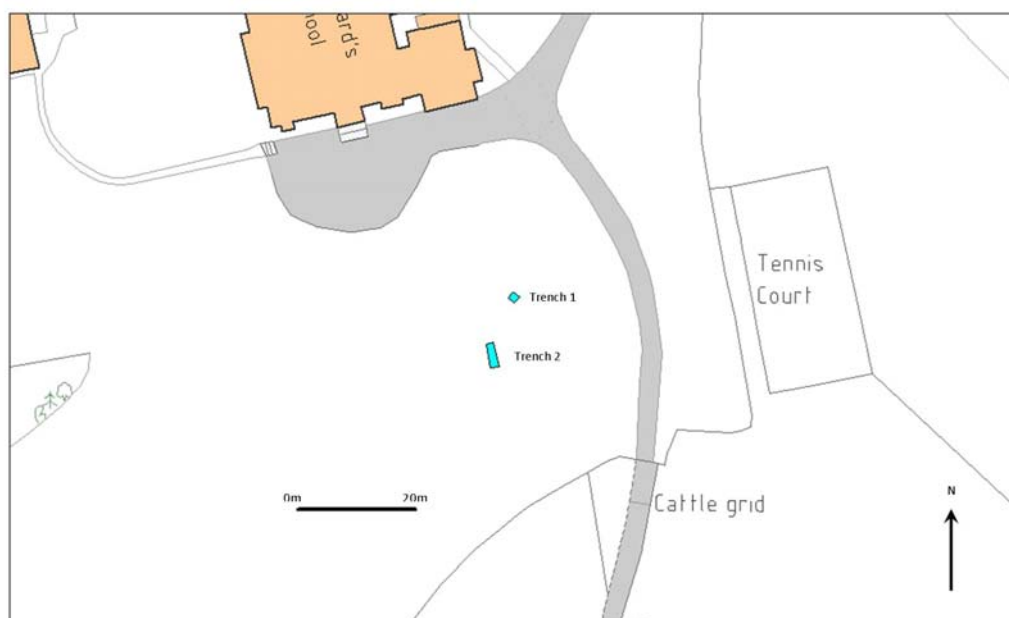


Figure 31: Location of Trench 1 and Trench 2 within the grounds of St Richard's School. (OS crown copyright 100024100 & Herefordshire Archaeology)

Trench 1

Trench 1 was located over the boundary of the churchyard, partially visible through the current turf layer. The trench measured 1m square. The aim of the excavation was to identify the form of the past churchyard boundary.

Topsoil [001] consisted of grey brown silty clay and lay 7cm thick. The topsoil overlay contexts [002], [003] and [004]. Deposit [002] measured 10cm deep consisting of compact reddish brown clay with charcoal inclusions attributed to the post-medieval 1875 demolition of the church. The deposit butts the [003], a curbing stone band marking the boundary of the churchyard to the north. The curb boundary is butted to the north by a layer of dark brown silty clay with charcoal, stone and root inclusions [004]. Finds of pottery and animal bone fragments were retrieved, all of which point to post-medieval activity.

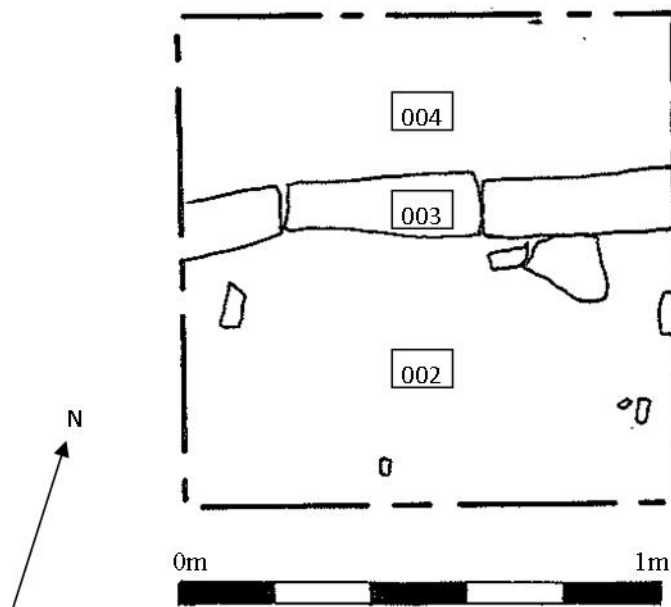


Figure 32: Scale 1:20 plan of Trench 1 (St Richard's) at the end of excavation. © Herefordshire Archaeology.

Trench 2

The trench was sighted to pick up the location of the north wall of the church in order to determine the extent to which the church had been demolished; did this include the removal of its stone foundations and floor?

The topsoil consisted of grey brown clay silt measuring a depth of 10cm [001]. This overlay dark brown/grey silt gravel with frequent stone fragment inclusions [002]. Sealed beneath at a depth of 48cm below the turf line was red brown compact clay deposit with charcoal flecking [003]. The depth of the deposit and the absence of post-medieval landscaping material indicated that the horizon represented the original churchyard layer into which the church was constructed. Roughly central to the trench on an east-west alignment the horizon of compact clay was cut (004) by the foundation trench of the church north wall. Within the fill [005] which consisted of silty clay, angular stone was recorded as representing the only remains for the church footings.

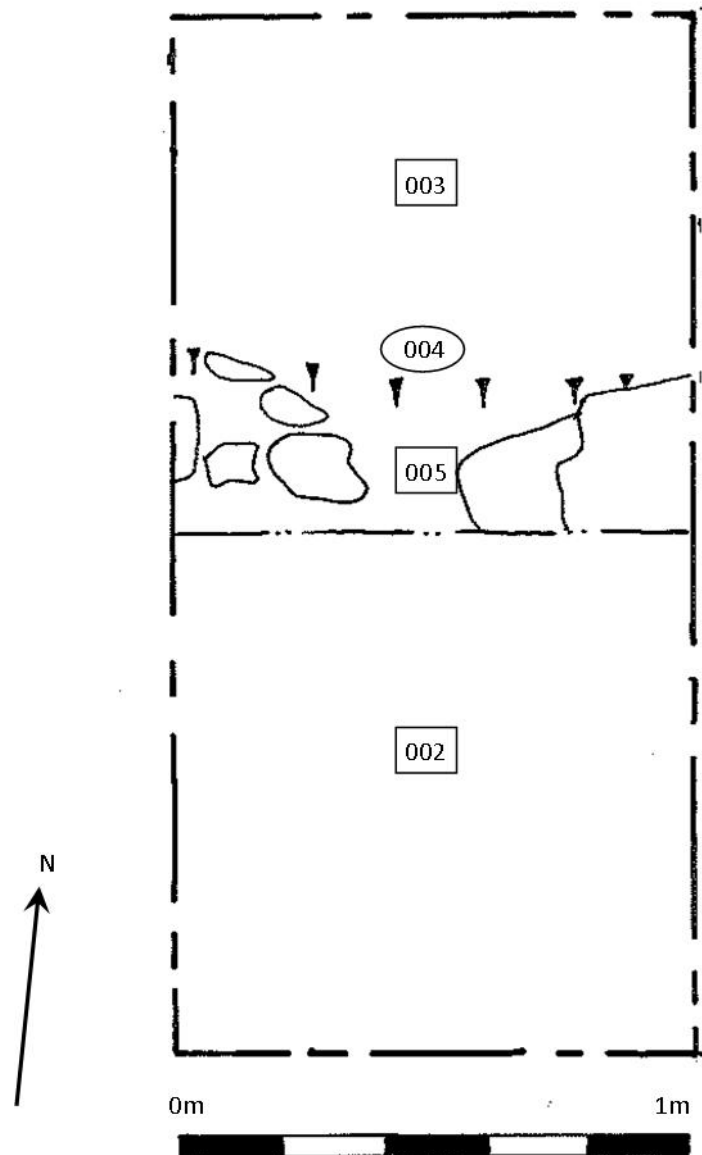


Figure 33: Scale 1:20 plan of Trench 2 (St Richard's) at the end of excavation. © Herefordshire Archaeology.

Discussion

Through the process of field walking and earthwork survey it quickly became apparent that the landscape once attributed to the Parkland of Bredenbury Manor preserved more within it than might be associated with a gentry park.

Across the parkland features usually attributed to a landscaped park were identified, these consisted primarily of carriage ways and garden terraces, most of which survive within the west of the surveyed area close to the grounds of St Richard's School, the site of Bredenbury Manor.

Despite the development of the estate and subsequent establishment of parkland from the 1870's onwards features relating to the demolished small holdings and earthworks associated to earlier field systems and trackways survive. Two key areas relating to possible smallholding sites were identified. The first lay up slope to the east of the brook that flows down a small northwest-southwest valley. The site (**Area 1**) consists of a cluster of platforms surrounding a central courtyard with access to the north and west, was determined to likely represent a farmstead due to the layout of the earthworks. Whereas, to the west, a series of platforms (**Area 2**) lining the summit of a north-south aligned ridge with access from the old road to the west and a Holloway to the north is likely to be attributed to a number of smallholdings.

Closely associated with the possible small holding sites are a number of terrace fields that traverse the east-facing slope overlooking the south flowing Brook. Due to the overall size of the fields, some of which stand with two metre high lynchets/terraces it is probable that they pre-date the post-medieval period and relate to medieval farming within the area.

With the results of the survey and the discovery of numerous sites of interest relating to the use of the landscape prior to the establishment of the parkland in the 1870's; two areas were singled out for small scale excavation. The first of these, **Area 1**, related to the possible farmstead, whereas **Area 2** was associated with the likely smallholding, village site.

Six trenches were dug across the farmstead site (**Area 1**). The excavation revealed pottery of a 17th to 19th century date, found primarily within a midden within the east of the site. The site of a structure was identified upon one of the platforms that suggested the presence of a timber built building that went through three stages of construction (*Trench 1*); each structure was built within the stance of the original and is likely to have served the purpose of a barn or storage area. This conclusion was met due to the absence of any internal floor surface and features of a domestic nature.

Excavations further confirmed the idea of a central courtyard and access route to the west. The track consisted of a hollow worn into the surface of an earlier medieval field within *Trench 2*, onto which the farmstead was constructed. The base of the hollow was set with cobble and larger stone to form a firm track.

The abandonment of the site was some time during the mid 18th century in accordance to the pottery fragments retrieved. This would link its abandonment with the establishment of the parkland. There is no evidence for the structure being burned or left to collapse which suggests it was purposely demolished and the material put to use elsewhere.

Within **Area 2** nine trenches were excavated. The aim of the trenches was to identify buried features that would support the idea of there being a village or series of small holdings at the site that pre-date the establishment of parkland.

The trenches were concentrated largely upon the summit of platforms that may mark the location of past buildings. Initial discoveries indicated that many of the platforms had been built up during the post-medieval period, some of which measuring a height of one metre. Within *Trench 10*, the largest of the trenches excavated; features relating to post-medieval settlement were uncovered. Initially thought to be the site of a farm, it soon became apparent that the site was more likely to represent that of a blacksmiths due to the discovery of slag.

Only a portion of the building had been discovered, it consisted of a roughly built stone wall [223] with a parallel, likely external cobbled path. Elsewhere within neighbouring test pits, brick fragments and further stone construction material and post holes had been discovered indicating the structure to have been built of a mix of material.

Located directly beneath the blacksmith shop within *Trench 10* were the foundations of a substantial northwest to southeast aligned wall [224] approximately half a metre thick. Initially thought to represent the footings of a large barn due to the absence of a clearly definable internal floor surface. With the of the ditch (226), in which the stone wall was constructed, a large deposit of medieval pottery was retrieved from the ditch fill [225]. The pottery was a mix of black/grey cooking ware created in the vicinity of the Malvern Hills to the south as well as finer glazed table ware all dating between the 13th and 14th centuries. Due to the considerable number of glazed pottery shards found in conjunction with the wall foundation and within test trenches surrounding the area, it is thought that the site was occupied by a relatively high status structure, perhaps linked to the original manor of Bredenbury.

Within the grounds of St Richard's School two trenches were excavated. The results of which indicated that the churchyard wall/curb that may have supported an iron railing lay very close to the current turf layer of the lawn. Within the second trench the foundation trench dug to hold the foundations of the church still remained; however the demolition of the church had been so extensive that very little stone associated with the church remained. The stone had no doubt been removed to construct the new church.

A return in the future to Area 2, in particular *Trench 10* would be advantageous to gage the full extent and purpose of the structure dated to the 13th and 14th centuries.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks should be given to the Heritage Lottery Fund, without their support the project would not have been made possible.

Further thanks must go to English Nature Trust for allowing the investigations to take place within an area of higher level stewardship.

Thank you to St Richard's School for allowing investigations to be carried out on their lawn.

On behalf of Herefordshire Archaeology, I would like to thank the Bromyard and District Local History Society, in particular Steve Palmer (Project Leader), Dai Williams and David Jones, its through their enthusiasm to explore their history and their organisation skills that the project came about and saw the involvement of not only local members of the public but also the involvement of the local primary school and St Richard's School.

To all those involved in the project including my colleagues Dai Williams and Tim Hoverd, thank you.

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