



Land adjacent to 'The Court House' Longtown HEREFORDSHIRE

(NGR SO 3227 2895)

Archaeological Watching Brief



June 2007

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Cover picture

JCB preparing to erect electricity pole

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Report and Site Work
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Archaeological Watching Brief

1. Summary

The purpose of the project was to monitor the erection of an electricity pole within the site of a Scheduled Monument at Longtown, Herefordshire.

A post hole measuring 0.45m by 1.7m was excavated to a depth of 1.6m. No archaeological deposits were encountered.

Heavily fractured bedrock was present at a depth of 1.3m.

2. Introduction

Archaeological Investigations Ltd. was commissioned by Central Networks to carry out archaeological monitoring during the excavation for and erection of an electricity pole on land adjacent to The Court House, Longtown, Herefordshire (fig. 1)

The site lies on pasture land within a Scheduled Area (National Monument Number 28886) (fig. 2). Under Section 2 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 permission was granted by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport to excavate within the Scheduled Area.

The solid geology beneath the site consists of the Breconian and Dittonian strata of the Old Red Sandstone of the Lower Devonian.

The fieldwork took place on 21st May 2007.

3. Historical Background (fig. 3)

Longtown lies in the ancient parish of Clodock. It was once known as Ewias Lacy after the de Lacy family who held it and thus differentiated it from Ewias Harold four miles to the east.

The first castle at Longtown was probably built at the end of the 11th century by Roger de Lacy. This would have been a wooden 'motte and bailey' castle favoured by the Normans in the early years after the Conquest for their ease and speed of construction. It was presumably this wooden castle that was taken by the Welsh army led by Howell, Prince of North Wales in 1146. It is thought that Hugh de Lacy probably started work on the stone castle not long before his murder in 1186. The remnants of the castle still stand today (SMR 1036). The Pipe Rolls of 1187 refer to two castles, *Castelli de Ewias et Novi Castelli*, identified as Pont-Hendre and Longtown respectively.

Hugh had been assassinated on the orders of Henry II, who suspected him of plotting to found an independent kingdom in de Lacy's extensive Irish holdings and it was four years before Hugh's son, Walter, gained possession of his inheritance on Henry's death. Walter had his own problems with Royalty, forfeiting his lands under both Richard I (between 1194-1198) and John (between 1210-1214).

The work of laying out the new town to the south of the castle seems to have started in 1198 soon after Walter had regained his lands for the first time. It would appear that the high point of Longtown's history coincided with the second re-instatement of Walter in 1214 and his appointment as Sheriff of Herefordshire in 1216. Ewias Lacy passed out of the control of the de Lacy family in 1230 on the death of Walter's son Gilbert and his widow's subsequent marriage to John fitz Geoffrey. By 1310 the settlement consisted of 100 burgesses which, assuming an average of five occupants per plot, would give a population of 500 before counting in the castle garrison and non-burgesses.

It would seem that the 14th century Black Death hurried the decline of this once sizeable town. In the middle of the 16th century come the first references to initially '*Longa Villa*' and later, by Leland, of '*Longton of Ewys*'. The village continued to decline but was still

prosperous enough to re-roof the chapel (SMR 2362) in 1640. Although there is no documentary evidence that the castle played any part in the Civil War, the discovery of a cannon ball by the keep in 1865 and others nearby suggests that military activity may have taken place at about that time. Watkins reports that a local tradition has the castle being slighted by cannon fire during the Civil War, which may explain the finds of the shot. Longtown still held an annual fair in September and a May Fair right up until the 1890s as a last echo of its borough status, but for the past 100 years even these have been neglected.

As far as is known, no previous archaeological work has taken place on the site of the current works.

4. Aims and Objectives

The main aim of the project was to enable archaeological features to be identified in the area affected by the proposal.

The main objectives of the work were to;

- Identify the date and nature of any archaeological features discovered.
- Assess survival, quality, condition and relative significance of any archaeological features, deposits and structures within the excavated area.
- Produce a true record of the features.
- Deposit the site archive within a suitable repository.

5. Method

A single post hole was excavated by JCB using a 0.45m wide toothed bucket. The hole was 1.7m in width and 1.6m in depth.

Photographs were taken of the post hole using 35mm black and white, and colour film.

A context record was produced, and registers maintained for photographs, drawings and context records.

A 1:20 scale drawing of the section was produced and the position of the post hole was recorded by measuring from features present on the OS grid.

6. Results (figs. 4 & 5)

Excavation of the post hole did not reveal any archaeological evidence.

Context Number	Depth from surface	Description
100	0 – 0.2m	Mid brown silt loam topsoil.
101	0.2 – 1.3m	Light/mid brown silty clay subsoil. Apparently undisturbed.
102	1.3 – 1.6m	Natural geology. Fractured sedimentary bedrock.

7. Conclusion

No evidence for archaeological activity was found during the excavation of the post hole. Only natural deposits were encountered. There is a distinct possibility that Medieval deposits are present in the area, but due to the limited excavation area none were found on this occasion.

8. Bibliography

Grahame, R., 2002, *Great House, Longtown, Herefordshire: An Archaeological Watching Brief*, Hereford Archaeology Series 336

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Thorn, F. and Thorn, C. (eds.), 1983, *Domesday Book of Herefordshire*, Phillimore

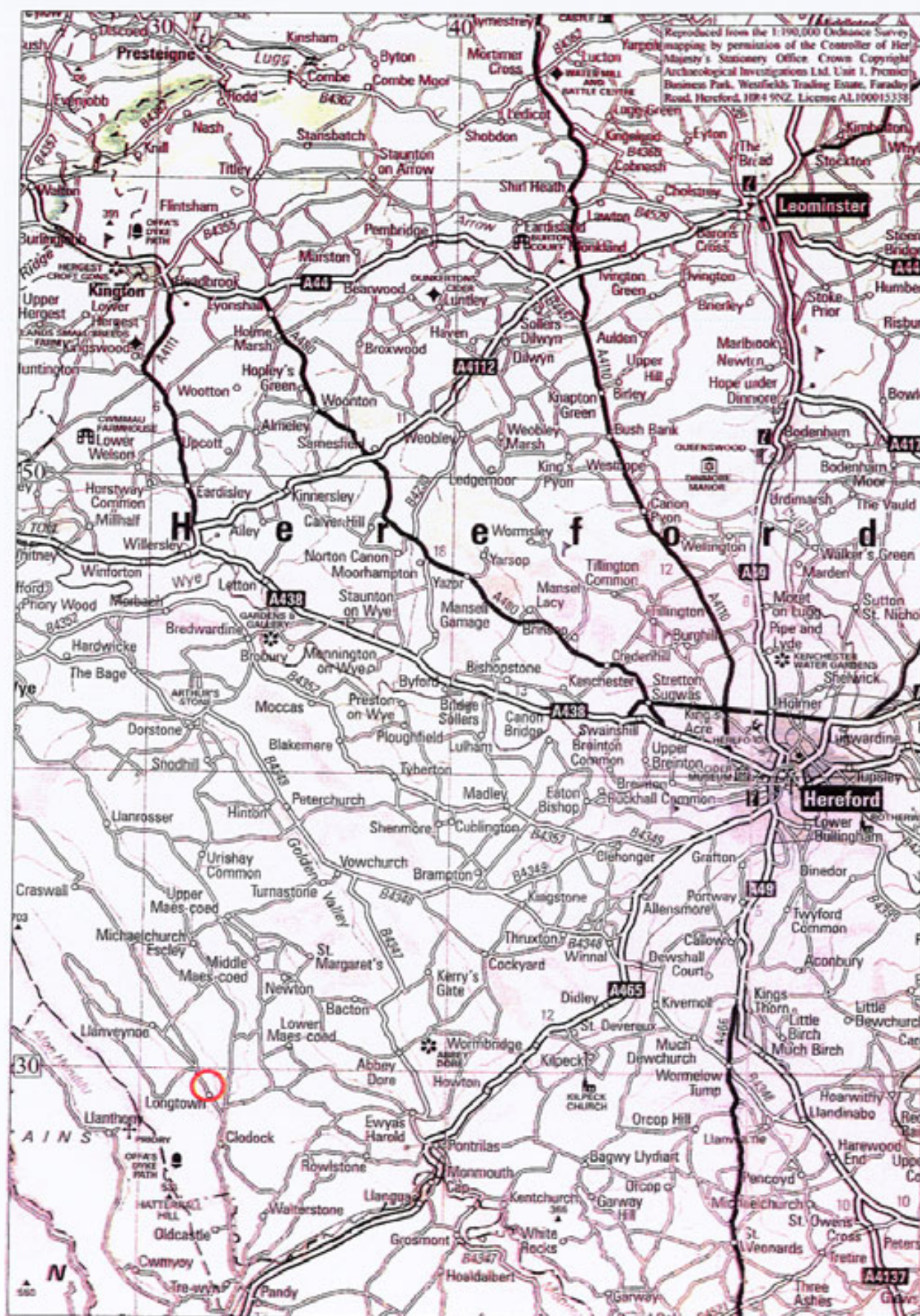
Williams, D. N., 1997, *Green Cottage, Longtown, Herefordshire: An Archaeological Watching Brief*, Hereford Archaeology Series 336

Appendix 1 – Site Archive

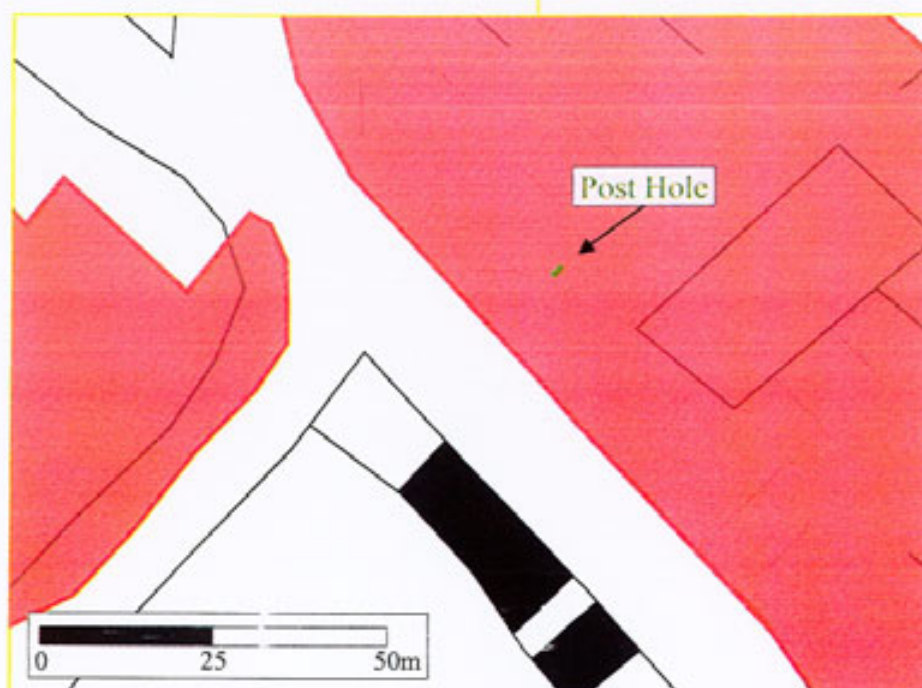
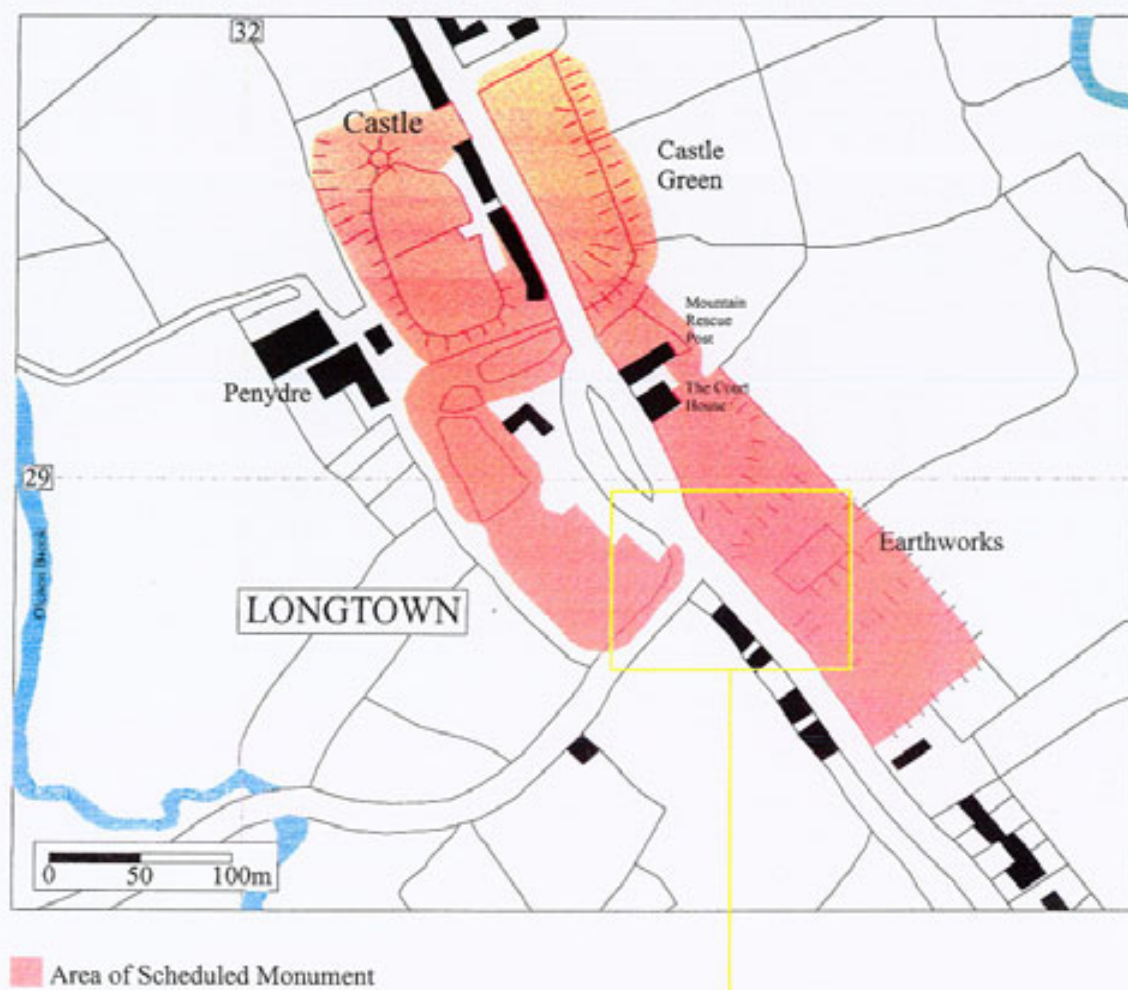
The site archive will be held at Hereford Museum. Accession number **HFD-MG-2007-59**.

The archive is comprised of;

- 1 Context register
- 3 Context sheets
- 1 Sketch drawing of section
- 2 Photographic registers
- 1 Set of black and white photographs and negatives
- 1 Set of colour photographs and negatives
- 1 Copy of this report



Site Location Map



Location of post hole

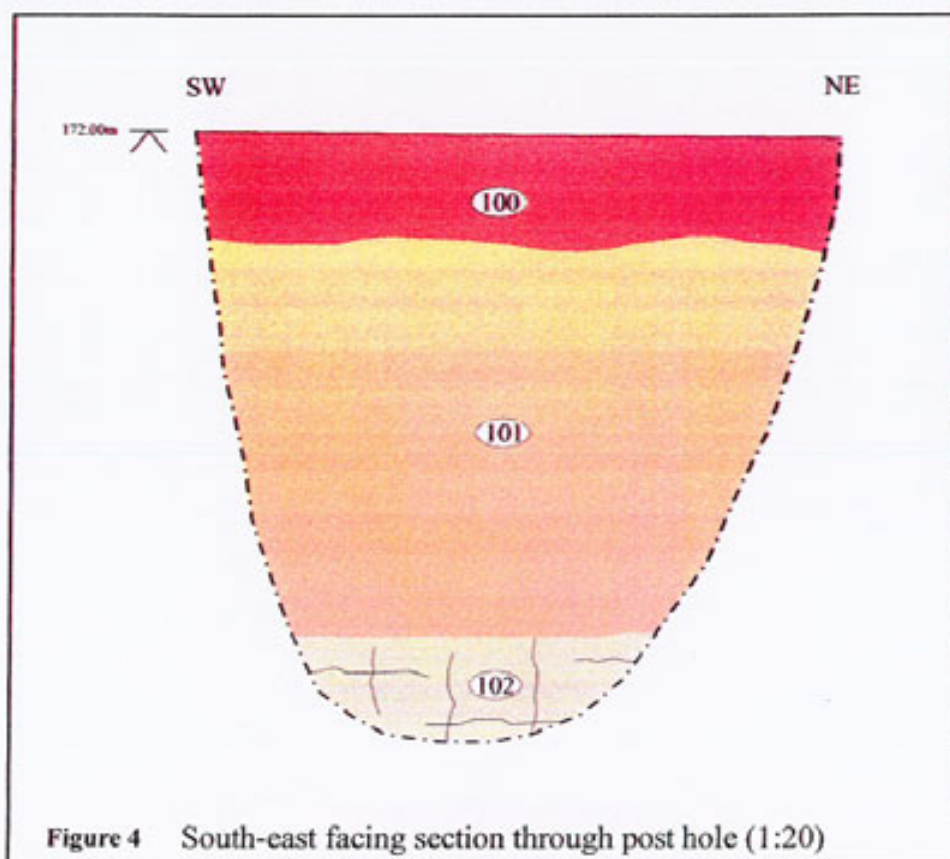


Figure 5 Posthole (Camera pointing north-east)