



**NEXUS**  
HERITAGE

## **Dee Park, Holt Archaeological Watching Brief**



**Document No: 3138.R02**

**June 2013**

Nexus Heritage Controlled Document – Commercial-in-Confidence

|                 |                |                |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Document Number | 3138.R02       |                |
| Document Status | Draft          |                |
| Prepared by:    | Geoff Morley   | Date: 05.06.13 |
| Checked by:     | Anthony Martin | Date: 12.06.13 |
| Approved by:    | Gerry Wait     | Date: 13.06.13 |
|                 |                |                |
| Revision Record |                |                |
| Revision No.    |                |                |
|                 |                |                |

**Ms C. de Grey Homer**

1 Mayfield Court

Garden Village

Wrexham

LL11 2TN

CONTENTS:

|                                                |    |
|------------------------------------------------|----|
| SUMMARY .....                                  | 1  |
| SITE LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND ..... | 3  |
| ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ..... | 6  |
| AIMS AND OBJECTIVES.....                       | 7  |
| METHODOLOGY .....                              | 8  |
| RESULTS.....                                   | 9  |
| DISCUSSION .....                               | 15 |
| ARCHIVE .....                                  | 17 |
| SOURCES .....                                  | 18 |

## SUMMARY

### *Non-Technical Summary*

*Nexus Heritage carried out an archaeological Watching Brief on land at Dee Park, Holt, Wrexham County Borough. Planning Application Appeal Ref: APP/H6955/A/11/2151056 for the construction of “a bungalow and a single garage” at the above site was submitted to Wrexham Borough Council (WBC) whereby Mark Walters of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (archaeological advisor to WBC) requested that an Archaeological Investigation be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains. The work was carried out in accordance with the methodology set out within the Written Scheme of Investigation (Nexus Heritage January 2013) and in discussion with the Archaeological Officer, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust.*

*The archaeological investigations commissioned encountered archaeological remains of an medieval or post-medieval date probably representing peripheral settlement of the town of Holt. These Archaeological Investigations were successful in fulfilling the aims and objectives of the WSI and the Archaeological Condition.*

## INTRODUCTION

Nexus Heritage was commissioned by Ms C. de Grey Homer to conduct an archaeological watching brief during ground investigations on land at Dee Park, Holt, (Fig. 1).

This watching brief comprises the fieldwork stage of archaeological investigation. This document follows a Written Scheme of Investigation written by Nexus Heritage in January 2013 (Nexus Heritage report 3138.R01a). This document (Nexus Report 3138.R02) has been prepared with reference to the relevant provisions in Welsh Office Circular 60/96 (*Planning and the Historic Environment: Archaeology*) and in conjunction with Planning Policy Wales and in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief (2008 edition)*.

Ms C. de Grey Homer has been granted planning permission to erect a bungalow and single garage at land adjoining 11 Dee Park, Holt, Wrexham, LL13 9YS (Planning Application Appeal Ref: APP/H6955/A/11/2151056).

An archaeological planning condition was applied to the planning permission. The condition, recommended by the Clywd-Powys Archaeological Trust, advising Wrexham Borough Council, was applied to ensure that an adequate record of any archaeological features revealed by the development can be made in compliance with the relevant policy. The condition states:

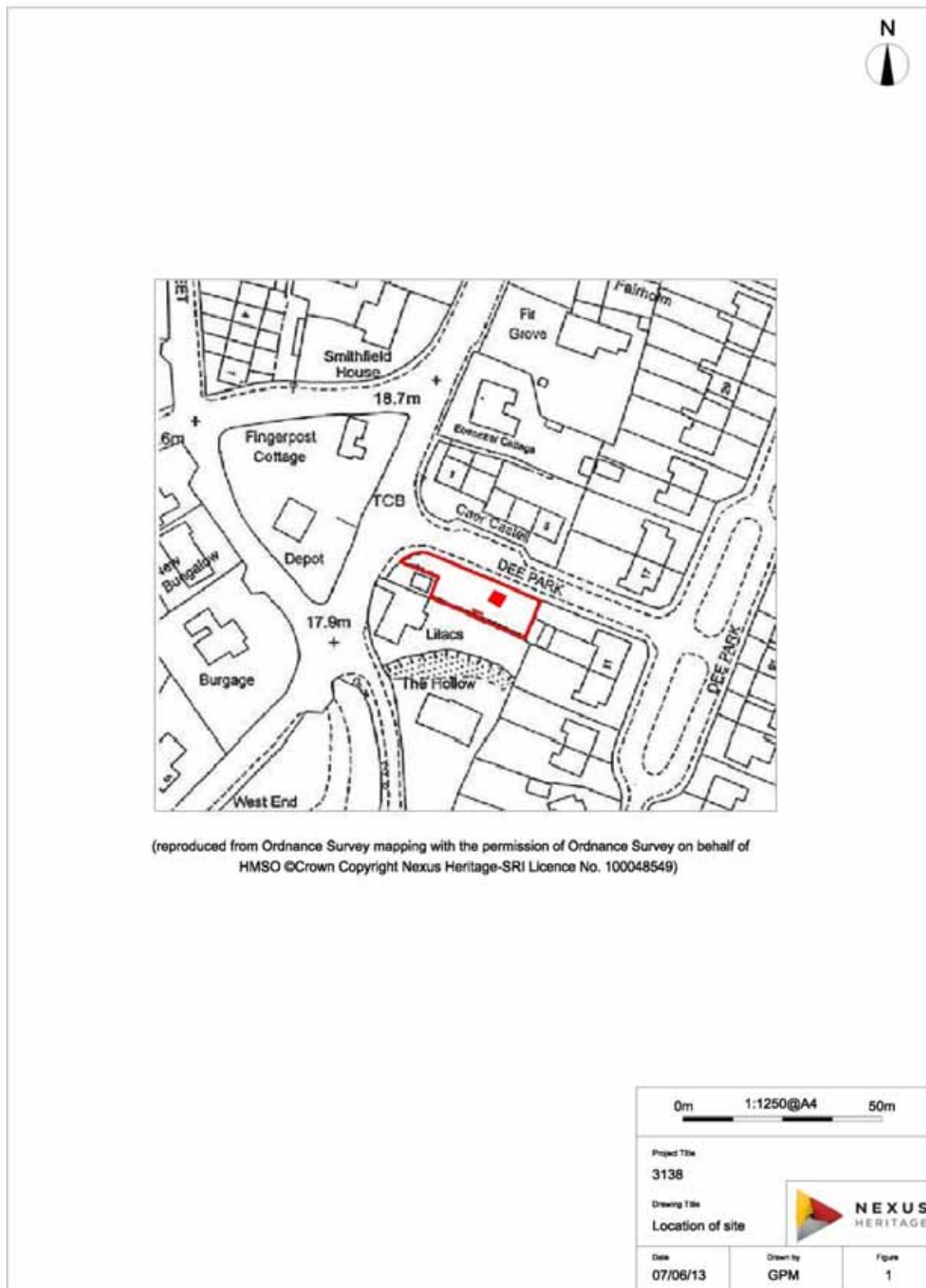
*Condition 2: No development shall take place within the appeal site until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the local planning authority.*

The principal archaeological interest at the site is an infilled ditch running roughly north-east to south-west probably of late or post-medieval date and possibly related to the layout of the medieval planned settlement of Holt. This ditch was discovered in 2010 during archaeological evaluative works undertaken to inform the planning application for the proposed bungalow and garage. No dating evidence was discovered for the ditch during the evaluative works and liaison with Mr M. Walters (Development Control Archaeologist of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust- advisor to Wrexham Borough Council) determined that the spirit and intent of Condition 2 would be addressed by means of a programme of archaeological work in the form of a watching brief in order to provide an opportunity to identify and observe archaeological features at the site and recover dating evidence from the ditch.

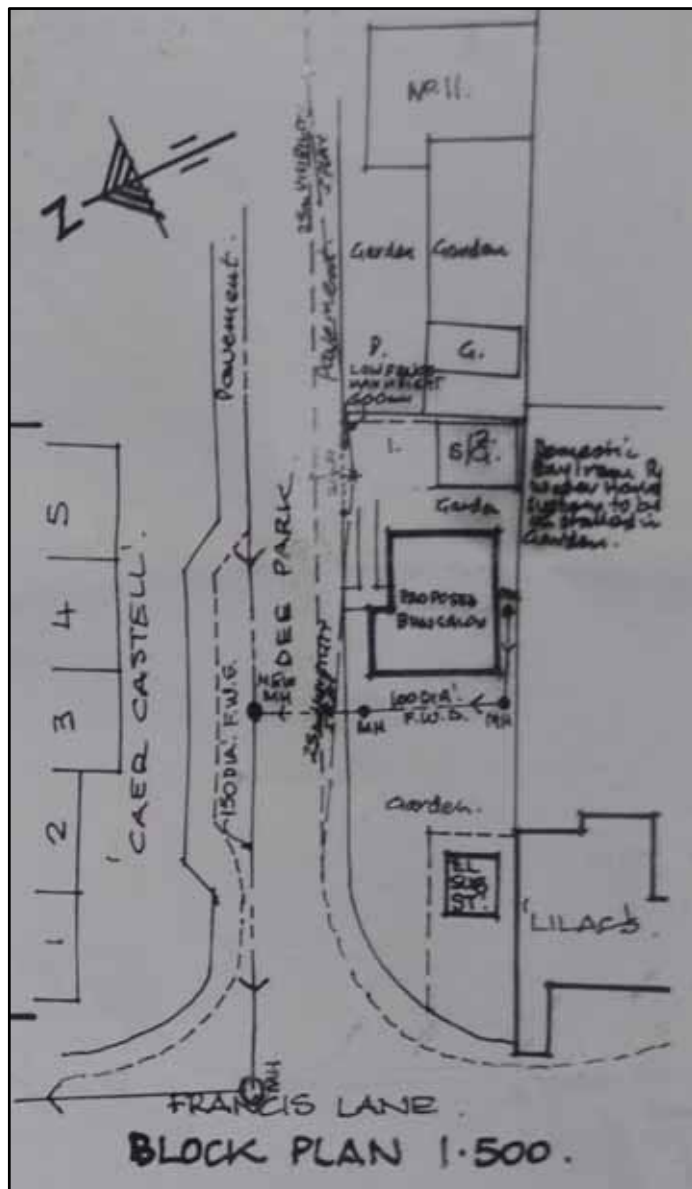
The investigations took place on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> April 2013.

## SITE LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

The location of the site at Holt (centred at NGR SJ 340915 353562) is shown in Figure 1. The site is characterised as open land within the built environment of Holt.



The archaeological works were required to be carried out on the groundworks associated with the excavations for the foundation trenches for the new bungalow the location of which is shown in Figure 2.



The detail of the footprint of the new bungalow can be seen on Figure 3. The foundation trenchers were excavated along the alignments of the exterior walls. The new garage is to be

constructed on a slab, the ground preparation works for which would not impact to the depths at which archaeological remains would be present

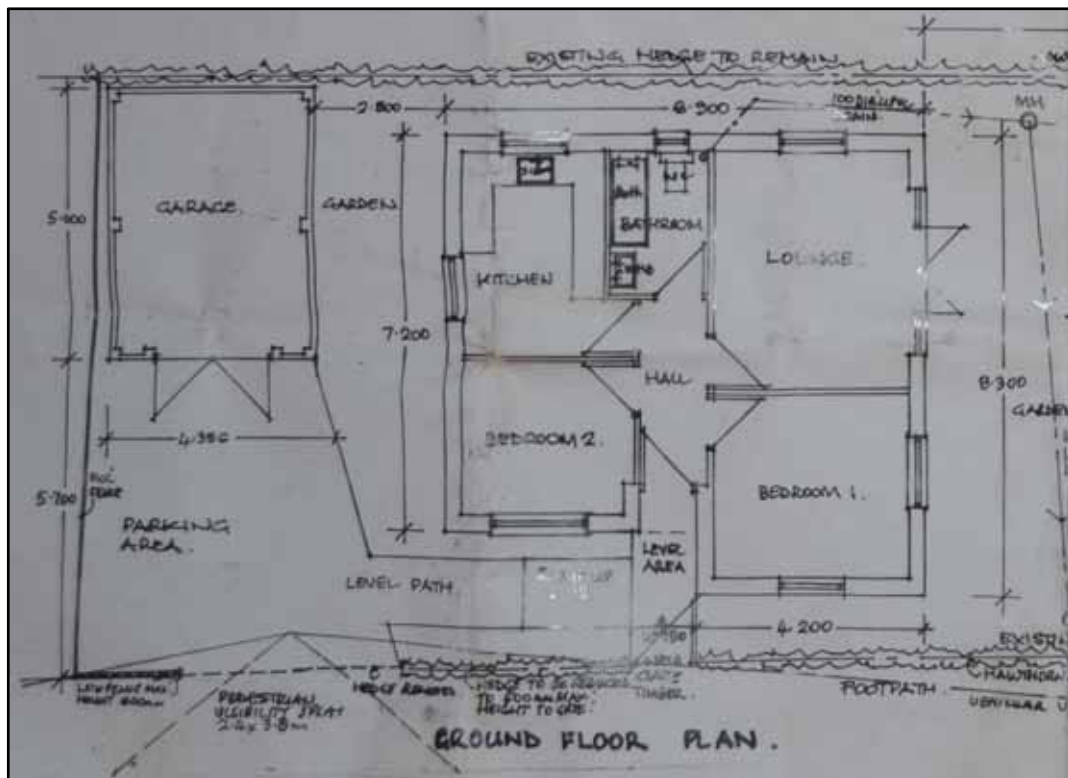


Figure 3: Details of the new construction

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Until the archaeological evaluation undertaken in 2010 (Moles Archaeology 2010) no formal archaeological assessment of the site had been undertaken. Information from the Regional Historic Environment Record maintained by CPAT indicated that the site is located in an area of high archaeological sensitivity within the medieval historic core of Holt.

In the wider landscape the archaeological potential of the site can be gauged in the light of various archaeological and historic information. Four Bronze Age Urns containing cremated remains, were excavated in close proximity to the river Dee near the site of a Roman kilns (see below). Other prehistoric sites in the vicinity include a possible ring-ditch to the south-west of Holt located by aerial photography, which due to its form; also has the possibility of being Bronze Age. During the Roman period a military-run ceramics production site was located just north-west of the later medieval settlement of Holt. The site was characterised by a walled area of around 8ha containing accommodation, workshops and bath-houses. This is possibly the ancient settlement of *Bovium* providing for Chester's ceramic needs, both military and possibly civilian.

The earliest record of a settlement at Holt dates to the reign of Edward I when he granted the lordship of Bromfield and Yale to John de Warenne, the Earl of Surrey in 1282, (Lilley *et al*, 2005, citing Pratt). It is to be assumed that a castle would be built soon after this point, but a castle is not recorded until the year 1315. At this time the settlement at Holt is recorded as Castle Lyon. According to a Royal confirmation of 1563 a Borough Charter was issued for Holt in 1285. In 1315 Holt is recorded as having 152 Burgesses in residence, making it one of the largest towns in North Wales, larger than Conwy and Aberystwyth. The town appears to have declined during this later period, possibly as a result of the strife between England and Wales, until in 1620 only 65 freeholders and Burgesses were left.

St Chad's Church, was originally constructed in the 13th century, and was rebuilt in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. The bridge, dating to 1338, and the ferry which preceded it were probably one of the main reasons why Holt had a castle imposed on it, being one of the few bridging places on the River Dee. The bridge had a fortified tower and drawbridge on it which still existed until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The town also had a quay near the bridge for small boats from Chester, (Lilley *et al*, 2005).

Very little of archaeological note is in the immediate vicinity of the site, it is possible, according to Lilley *et al*, (2005) that the main medieval settlement of Holt was a distance to the north with the present market cross forming the southernmost extremity of the medieval settlement.

The site occupies a street frontage area which was considered likely to contain well preserved sub-surface archaeology including evidence of former dwellings, plot boundaries, rear yard areas, light industrial activity, rubbish pits and artefacts of all periods. However, the archaeological evaluation of 2010 (Moles Archaeology, 2010), whilst it confirmed a common stratigraphic sequence across the site (comprising a topsoil, a mixed modern make up layer probably used to level off the ground in this area, a subsoil derived from the geologically lain sandstone and the and the sandstone) encountered only one feature of note - a ditch towards the eastern end of the site, which contained three postholes. The ditch itself cut through the subsoil, but was buried by the modern levelling deposit, dating it to at least pre-19<sup>th</sup> century.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The watching brief entailed a presence on site during the ground works, with the intention of identifying, investigating and recording any archaeological remains encountered during the works so far as is reasonably practicable given the conditions on site and health and safety considerations. The aims of the watching brief were:

- to allow, within the resources available, the opportunity to gain information about and record the presence/absence, nature and date of any archaeological remains on the site affected by excavations for the development, the presence and nature of which could not be established with sufficient confidence in advance of works which may disturb them.
- to provide the facility to signal to the relevant authorities, before irreversible impact to remains that an archaeological and/or historic find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are inadequate to support their treatment to an adequate and satisfactory standard.

The specific objectives of the watching brief were:

- to further investigate the infilled ditch encountered during the 2010 evaluative works and secure dating evidence for the construction, use and disuse of the ditch.
- to observe and recover any artefacts of archaeological significance
- to record the location, dimensions and nature of any deposits, features, structures or artefacts of archaeological significance
- to recover samples of any deposits considered to have potential for analysis for palaeoenvironmental data.
- where the raw data allows, to construct a model of the depositional processes and stratigraphic sequence for the relevant parts of the site.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology for the watching brief was prepared with reference to the Institute of Field Archaeologists document *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief* (2008).

Curatorial monitoring of the archaeological work on behalf of Wrexham Borough Council was carried out by Mark Walters of Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust.

The watching brief was undertaken by Kate Page-Smith and the project was managed by Anthony Martin. Before the excavations took place, the members of the archaeology team were informed of the site's archaeological and historical background through Nexus Heritage's Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief (Nexus Report 2013 No: 3138.R01a).

The overall approach to the investigation has been undertaken in accordance with the *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief* (IfA 2008). The work has been undertaken with reasonable skill, care and diligence and was kept under constant review during the project, in order to see how far it met the terms of the aims and objectives, and in order to adopt any new questions which may have arisen. The scope of this watching brief was defined and maintained as *targeted*, i.e. an archaeologist was present during all ground disturbance within the site which may have impacted on areas of archaeological interest.

The excavations were closely monitored and photographed until the natural stratigraphy was encountered. The subsurface deposits and arisings were scanned visually for artefacts.

## RESULTS

The archaeological watching brief phases revealed seven features cutting into the superficial Till geology. Above the natural, and features, lay two topsoil layers, (001) was a modern topsoil layer with mixed modern deposits within, and below this was (002) a subsoil which appeared to be derived from the natural geology.

Feature [004] was the linear feature previously discovered in 2010 measuring 0.24m in depth and 1.64m in width, which was seen to run for approximately 3.40m. The fill of this, (003), (Plates 1 and 2) was comprised of a mid to dark brown grey silty sand matrix that was probably colluvial in nature.

Within linear feature [004] lay three rectangular postholes, [005], [006] and [007] which were probably contemporary. All three postholes measured between 0.60 and 0.76m in length and 0.34 and 0.40m in width. The fill of all three postholes was the same matrix as that filling [004].



**Plate 1: Ditch [004] facing NE showing postholes in base.**



**Plate 2: Postholes [006], [007] and [007] looking northwest.**

Three sherds of post-medieval, probably 18<sup>th</sup> century, pottery was recovered from (003). The form of the ceramic container(s) from which these body sherds derive is –presumably a vessel, the shape and function remains unknown as the sherds are not rims or bases. The fabric is orange in colour and well-fired, but strips of paler fabric within the sherds possibly indicate that oxidation was not fully completed. There are some inclusions (some large) and vesicles present and the decoration takes the form of a very dark brown, metallic, plain glaze, with no patterns.



**Plate 3: Ceramic artefacts from Context 003**

Within the foundation trench for the southern elevation of the building lay three discrete

postholes, [011], [013] and [015] all these were a similar form but slightly smaller in size to those seen within the linear feature [004]. They measured between 0.44 and 0.48m in length, and 0.22 to 0.32m in width.



**Plate 4: Postholes [011], [013] and [015] looking northwest.**

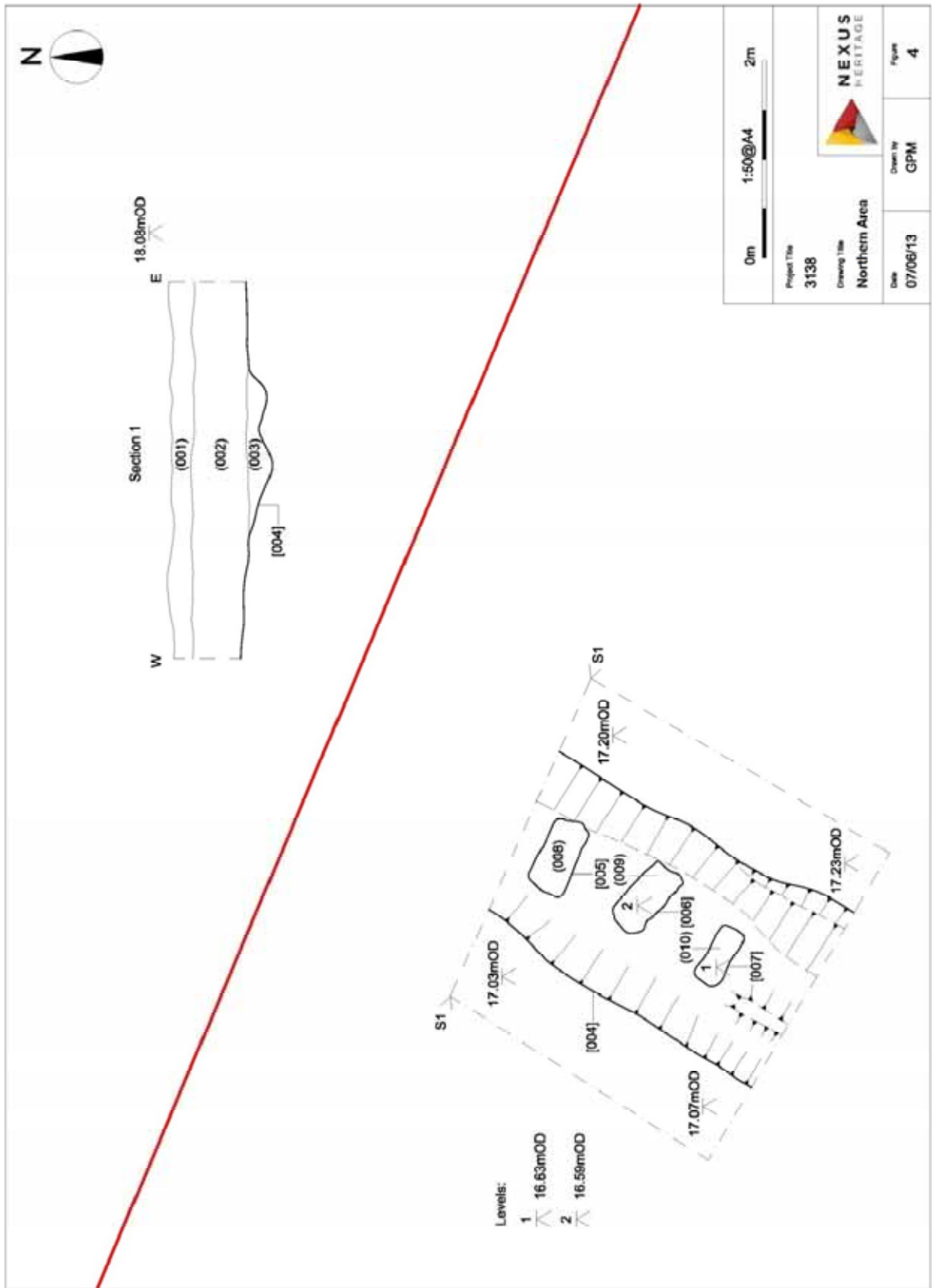


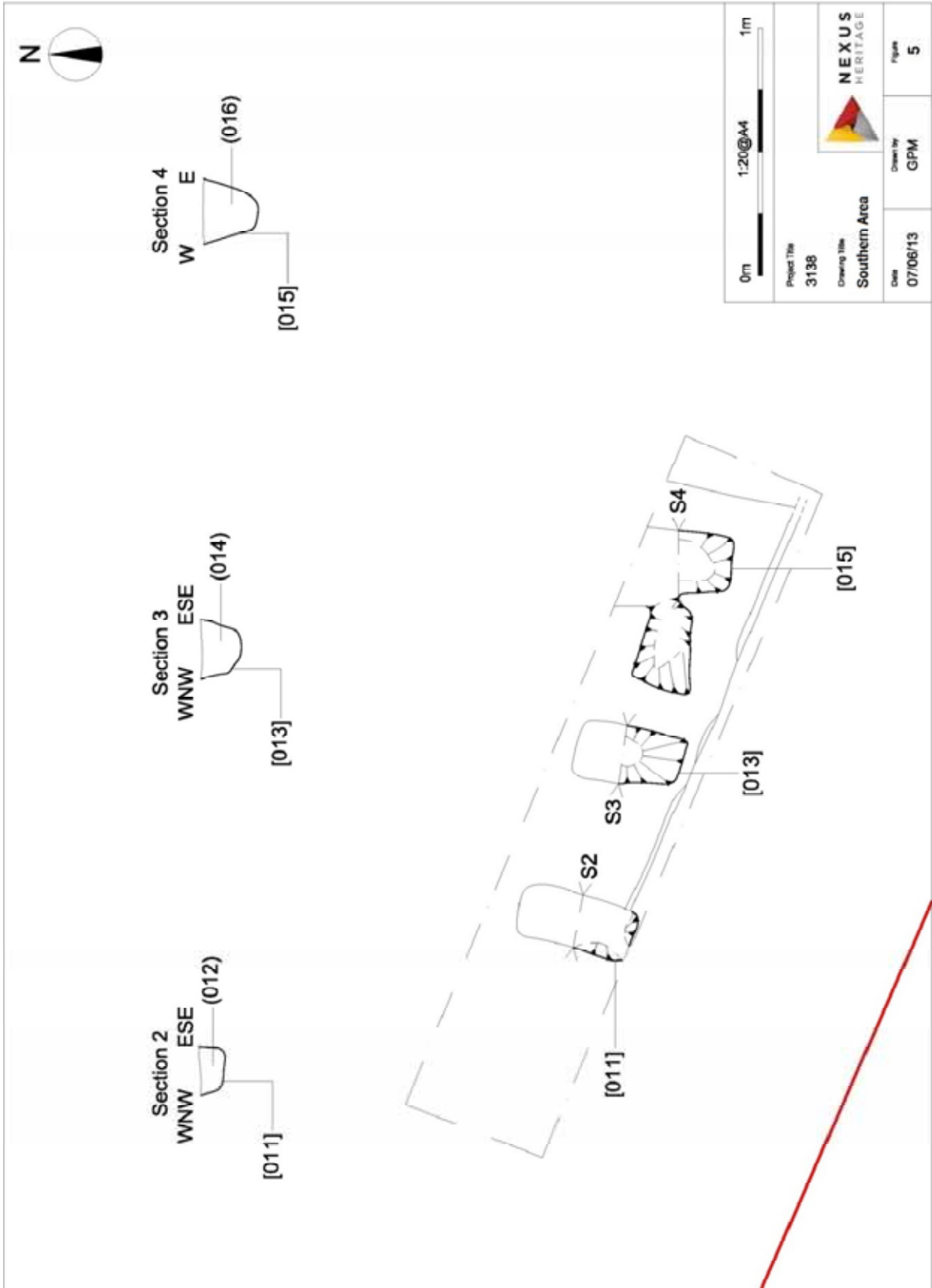
**Plate 5: Central Posthole [013] before excavation, looking NW**

A single fragment of CBM was recovered from (014) the fill of [013].



**Plate 6: Ceramic artefact from Context 014**





## DISCUSSION

The watching brief identified seven cut features on this site, three of these were postholes, [008], [009] and [010] which followed the line of linear feature [004]. It is highly likely that these postholes are contemporary with the linear forming some sort of palisade within the ditch, however, it is possible that they may pre-date it and the 'fence' line was superseded by a linear feature.

Three further postholes were seen within the foundation trench for the southern elevation of the building, [011], [013] and [015]. These were on the southern side of the site and formed a line running roughly east to west. These may have formed some sort of fence running at right angles and joining into the main 'palisade'.

Owing to the presence of post-medieval pottery found within the linear feature it is highly likely that it dates to this period as the fill, (003) appeared to be homogenous. There is a possibility that the feature may be earlier than this but filled up slowly and acquiring no other artefacts than this one. The presence of residual material possibly being on site is shown by the single fragment of CBM found in posthole [013]. This was not able to be dated, but may be derived from Roman brick as easily as post-medieval material. The level of activity represented at the site combined with the assessed level of significance was insufficient to justify palaeoenvironmental analysis into the character of the environment of the area at the time of occupation and any changes to it over time.

## CONCLUSIONS

The watching brief was successfully undertaken during the ground investigations. An appropriate line of communication was maintained between Nexus Heritage and Ms. De Grey Homer, ensuring that a Nexus Heritage representative, once commissioned, was on site at the required time.

No significant archaeological deposits, structures or features were uncovered within the area of the ground investigations; however, one linear feature with three internal postholes and three further discrete postholes lying at right angles to the linear were observed, investigated and recorded during the works. These features as a group may represent the remains of the limits of the old town and intramural features, or the fields or boundaries of an extramural dwelling site, probably from the medieval or post-medieval periods.

The two artefacts recovered did not provide a broad enough assemblage to positively date the features, but it is highly likely they are post-medieval in date.

The fact that all the features noted were not very deep and were immediately below the lower topsoil, (002) may suggest that the land was once shallow ploughed, which may have truncated some of the features seen here and may even have removed some smaller features or terraces which may have been present, before the whole area was covered by more topsoil at a later period.

The archaeological watching brief has been completed in line with the aims and objectives and the reporting of results is proportional to the significance of the evidence. It is concluded that this investigation has been completed within expectations and in accordance with IfA standards and guidance.

## ARCHIVE

Nexus Heritage will conform to the arrangements for archive preparation and submission prior to commencing fieldwork and will be responsible for requests to transfer the legal title to the artefact archive from the landowner to a repository approved by Wrexham Borough Council.

The archive generated during the project will be offered to a suitable local museum with Museum and Galleries Commission approved storage facilities. In this instance Wrexham County Museums Service (County Buildings, Regent Street, Wrexham, LL11 1RB, Tel: 01978 297460) is identified as the archive repository. Every effort would be made to deposit the archive in an appropriate location with the agreement of C. de Grey Homer and to secure an agreement with the relevant repository to accept the archive prior to the commencement of the fieldwork.

Nexus Heritage will maintain the archive until the period of report preparation is complete and will be responsible for necessary conservation work on the artefact archive to be undertaken to ensure the long-term stability of the artefacts and their availability for future study.

The archive has been prepared, compiled and presented for long term storage according to the requirements of the receiving institution and as set out in the Institute for Archaeologists document *Standard and Guidance for the Collection, Documentation, Conservation and Research of Archaeological Materials* (2008). Liaison has been undertaken with S. Greuter of the Wrexham County Museums Service (telephone conversation at 10.25a.m. Tues. 15<sup>th</sup> Jan. 2013) in order to confirm the requirements of the receiving institution.

An indexed project archive has been prepared (see below). The project archive will comprise all primary written, documents, drawn plans and sections, photographic negatives and a set of labelled photographic prints.

The archive will comprise the stratigraphical/structural, artefact, environmental and other catalogues and all other records as well as details of the methods employed. Each separate data has been cross-referenced to related data groups, and the general context index to allow users maximum accessibility to the contents. The archive contains some or all of the following elements:

- Context Register
- context sheets (16)
- photographic catalogue:
- digital photographs (75)
- drawing index
- Site drawings (4)
- artefact catalogue
- hard and digital copies of the final report

The above context index acts as synopsis of the archive for submission to the regional Historic Environment Record.

## SOURCES

Frere, S.S. '*Britannia*' Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.

Lilley, K., Lloyd, C. and Trick, S. (2005), '*Mapping the Medieval Townscape: a digital atlas of the new towns of Edward I*', ADS, 2008.

Moles Archaeology, (2010), *An Archaeological Evaluation on land adjacent to Dee Park, Holt, Wrexham County Borough, Wales*. Unpublished report

Nexus Heritage, (2013), Dee Park, Holt; Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief. Unpublished Report

Pratt, D. (1965), The medieval borough of Holt, *Denbighshire Historical Society Transactions* 14

Slater, T.R. (1981), The analysis of burgage patterns in medieval towns, *Area, Journal of the Institute of British Geographers*. Vol. 13, Number 3.