

Archaeology Wales

Abercamlais House Abercamlais, Brecon

Archaeological Watching Brief



By
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Report No. 1669

Archaeology Wales

Abercamlais House, Abercamlais, Brecon

Archaeological Watching Brief

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Non Technical Summary

This report results from work undertaken by Archaeology Wales Ltd (AW) for Roberts Building Consultants Ltd on land within the grounds of Abercamlais House, Abercamlais, Brecon, LD3 8EY. The report details the results of an archaeological watching brief that took place to ensure the preservation by record of any archaeological remains encountered during the ground works associated with the installation of a biomass heating system serving Abercamlais House and neighbouring Dovecote Cottage, Planning Application Number 17/15230/FUL.

The site lies within the grounds of Abercamlais House, Grade I listed as one of the best surviving early 18th century houses in South Wales. A number of other structures within the grounds are also listed: the 17th century Abercamlais Bridge, Grade II; a late 18th century Stable Court, Grade II; the 19th century bridge over the Camlais, Grade II listed; and an 18th century octagonal dovecote, Grade II* listed. A house is known to have stood at this site since the 16th century.*

Archaeological remains were encountered in two areas of the trenching. Immediately to the north of the current northern wall of Abercamlais House was a potential wall foundation which may be associated with a previous building. This was overlain by a series of rubble deposits likely associated with its demolition. The remains of the foundation of a demolished section of the extant garden wall were encountered under the current entrance to Dovecote Cottage. The remaining features and deposits encountered were related to modern activity, mainly various service trenches related to Abercamlais House and Dovecote Cottage.

All work was undertaken to the Standards and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief as set by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014).

1. Introduction

Location and scope of work

In October 2017 Archaeology Wales Ltd (AW) was commissioned by Roberts Building Consultants Ltd to carry out an archaeological watching brief on land within the grounds of Abercamlais House, Abercamlais, Brecon, LD3 8EY. The site is centred on OS grid reference SN 96476 29011 (Fig 1 & 2). This work relates to the excavation of ground works associated with the installation of a biomass heating system serving Abercamlais House and neighbouring Dovecote Cottage, Planning Application Number 17/15230/FUL. The local planning authority is the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA).

The BBNPA Archaeologist, acting as archaeological advisors to BBNPA, stipulated that an archaeological watching brief be undertaken during all ground works associated with the development.

An approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was produced by AW in accordance with the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs (ClfA 2014) and was designed to provide an approved methodology of archaeological work to be implemented during the construction works (Appendix III).

The watching brief took place between the 20th and 26th February 2018 under the supervision of Andrew Shobbrook, Dan Moore and Susan Stratton.

Topography and Geology

The development area is situated within the grounds of Abercamlais House, which lies on the banks of the River Usk between Sennybridge (4.5km to the west) and Brecon (8km to the east). The river and valley run east to west through this area, crossed by a 17th century bridge associated with the Abercamlais estate. The A40 follows the line of the valley bottom a short distance to the south of Abercamlais. The Cwm Camlais stream feeds the Usk to the west of Abercamlais House.

The geology of the area is characterised by the Maughans Formation, composed of argillaceous rocks interbedded with subequal sandstone. The valley bottom location is likely to have a mix of overlying superficial deposits, including mixed alluvium, sand and gravel river terrace deposits, and Devensian Diamicton Till (BGS 2018).

Archaeological and Historical Background

The development works were undertaken within the grounds of Abercamlais House and associated buildings.

Abercamlais House is a large three-storey stone house, Grade I listed (Ref.6785) as one of the best surviving early 18th century country houses in South Wales, retaining fine panelled interiors and staircase. The site has been the home of the Williams family since the 16th century, the house itself being rebuilt in the early 18th century in much of its current form. A timber gothic porch was added in around 1864-6, with dormer windows added in 1909-10. The adjacent Dovecote Cottage is a 17th or early 18th century former laundry, game-larder and dairy, since converted into holiday accommodation.

The first of the Williams family to move to the site in *circa* 1571 was the Reverend Thomas Williams, vicar of Llanspyddid, known as Vicar Gwyn. His tombstone claims a relationship to Elizabeth I, and descent from Thomas de Boulogne, an 11th or 12th century knight granted land in the area. Vicar Gwyn's grandson, also called Thomas Williams and who was High Sheriff in 1668, began the rebuilding of the house. This was continued by his son (another Reverend Thomas Williams) in *circa* 1710-20. Although passing to different branches of the family, the house remained within the same family to the present day.

The biomass plant will be housed within a pre-existing modern agricultural building to the east of the main house, adjacent to the Stable Court. The Stable Court is a Grade II listed building (Ref.84454), included for its special interest as a large three-sided stable court, of group value with the house and nearby Abercamlais Bridge (also listed). The Stable Court building was built at a later date to the house, probably in the late 18th or early 19th century.

2. Methodology

A watching brief complying with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (2014) was undertaken during all intrusive ground work on the site.

The watching brief was undertaken to allow the preservation by record of any archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be determined in advance of works. The watching brief also provides an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard (CIfA, 2014).

The excavation was carried out using a 360° tracked excavator equipped with a 0.6m wide toothless ditching bucket. The entire process was monitored by a suitably trained archaeologist. A single trench was excavated to the width of the machine bucket. The total length of the trench was roughly 100m. It ran east-west along the southern side of the Stable Court, then turned north between the House and the Stable Court, west along the northern side of the House, before finally turning south to Dovecote Cottage. A short 2.2m long spur ran south from the trench to the northern wall of the House (Fig 3).

Sections and plans of the excavation were photographed using a 12MP digital camera. All the deposits encountered were recorded by means of a continuous context numbering system and recorded on pro-forma context sheets. All features and deposits are described in accordance with CIfA conventions. A register of all contexts and photographs was also made.

3. Watching Brief Results (Figures 3 - 5; Plates 1- 14)

In the western extent of the trench to the north of Dovecote Cottage the underlying bedrock of red marl (028) was encountered at a depth of 0.4m from the ground surface. It was also encountered at a depth of 0.1m in the southern spur of the trench, but not any point further east. Overlying (028) were the superficial natural deposits (003) of firmly compacted mid to dark brownish-red silty-clay with frequent small angular stones of red marl. In the southern spur this deposit was assigned context (027), but it is the same as (003). At the eastern end of the trench, (003) was encountered at a depth of 0.5m and it rose gradually to the west, until at the western end it was encountered immediately below the modern surface deposits.

Overlying (003) was the subsoil (002), a moderate to firmly compacted light reddish-brown deposit containing occasional small sub-angular stones. At the eastern end of the trench it was encountered at 0.26m deep and was an average thickness of 0.21m. It gradually rose to the west and thinned out until it was no longer present to the north of the main house.

Two areas of archaeological activity were encountered in the trench. The first was a possible cut for a wall foundation [051], located in the southern spur of the trench, 1.8m to the north of the north-western corner of Abercamlais House. It was difficult to distinguish due to the angle and width of the trench and truncation by modern services, but it appears to have been a linear cut on a north-west/south-east alignment with steep, near vertical sides and a flat base. It was 0.35m deep and exceeded 0.4m wide. Its length was unclear. It contained possible wall foundation (052), flagstones (023) and fill (053).

Possible wall foundation (052) consisted of large well-dressed limestone blocks, approximately 0.4m x 0.3m x 0.2m. It was 0.4m thick, but its width and length were unclear due to the size and angle of the trench and truncation by modern services. It possibly represented the *in situ* remains of a wall foundation for a building predating the current house, or it may have been rubble building material from its demolition. To its north-west, apparently abutting it, were a number of flagstones (023). These were roughly dressed large limestone slabs, varying in size, the largest of which was 0.72m x 0.76m x 0.06m. (023) covered an area of approximately 2m by 1m, but its full extent is unclear as it was likely truncated by modern service trenches.

(023) and (052) were overlain by a rubble deposit (053). This was a loose mid yellowish-grey silty-clay with frequent small to medium sized angular stones and occasional large well-dressed limestone blocks. The deposit had a maximum thickness of 0.2m and thinned to the south, not visible in Section 1. It was likely derived from the demolition of a building predating the current house, represented by (052) and (023). Overlying (053) was (026), a loose dark greyish-brown silty loam with frequent small to medium angular shale stones up to 0.3m x 0.3m x 0.05m in size. The deposit is likely another rubble deposit from the demolition of a previous building. It contained sherds of early to mid 18th century pottery, which would date

it to the period of the construction of the current house. It was encountered at a depth of 0.41m and was 0.3m thick at its thickest. It was only encountered in the southern spur of the trench, overlying and to the south of possible wall foundation (052). It extended 1.65m to the north of the current northern wall of Abercamlais House, where it thinned to nothing. Its full extent to the south was unclear as it extends under and beyond the current house wall. A further rubble deposit (039) overlaid (026). It was a loose light brownish-grey silty-clay with frequent small to medium sized angular stones, frequent mortar fragments, occasional CBM, and a thin lens of mortar 0.04m thick. It was only present in the southern spur of the trench and extended 2.2m north of the northern wall of the current house. The full width of the deposit was unclear. Its maximum thickness was 0.21m.

Fills (011), (014) and (017) and the rubble deposits (026) and (039) in the southern spur of the trench were overlain by a friable mid pinkish-brown silty-clay (025) with small to medium sized angular stones. It was encountered 0.22m below the current ground surface and had a maximum thickness of 0.2m. It extended 2.2m north from the current northern wall of the house and extended at least 10m to the east. To the west it was truncated by a series of modern services. This appears to be a levelling deposit for the laying of a cobbled surface (019). It contained a mixture of 18th and 19th century pottery, indicating it was partially formed by disturbance of earlier deposits although it appears to have primarily been derived from the local subsoil.

The cobbled surface (019) was laid on top of (025). It consisted of sub-angular and rounded stones of varying size, averaging 0.1m x 0.1m x 0.05m. To its northern edge it had stone edging of roughly dressed stones measuring 0.3m x 0.15m x 0.2m. The cobbled surface extends between the Stable Court and Abercamlais House and still forms the ground surface in some places where it has not been overlaid by the tarmac road. It extended westwards to the north of Abercamlais House in the trench but was not observed any farther west than the house. It is potentially contemporary with the house.

To the eastern part of the trench, between Abercamlais House and the Stable Court, four service trenches were cut into (002), three containing lead water pipes [007], [009] and [015], and one containing a ceramic waste pipe [012]. Each cut contained a pipe and a deliberate backfill of light reddish-brown silty-clay – fills (008), (011), (017) and (014) respectively – derived from the subsoil. [015] contained an additional fill (018) of dark brownish-black silt. No finds were obtained from these fills.

The other area of archaeological activity encountered during the trenching was located in the west part of the trench, to the north of Dovecote Cottage. A linear, roughly east/west aligned cut [040] with vertical sides and a flat base was cut into the natural (003). It was 0.3m deep, 0.5m wide and in excess of 0.7m in length. It was in alignment with the extant garden wall and was the foundation for a section of wall which was demolished to create the current access to Dovecote Cottage. The cut was filled by wall foundations (041), consisting of roughly dressed large blocks of limestone up to 0.4m x 0.3m x 0.2m in size with friable light brownish-

white lime mortar. The remaining foundations were 0.3m deep, 0.5m wide and in excess of 0.7m in length. The gap is not visible in the 1904 OS Country Series map but can be seen on the 1976 OS Plan, dating the demolition of this section of the garden wall to the early to mid 20th century. The wall foundations are abutted by a loose light yellowish-grey silty-clay deposit (054), containing frequent mortar fragments and small angular stones. The maximum thickness of the deposit was 0.1m thick. Its full extent is unclear, but it extended 1m to the south of (041).

A variety of modern service trenches from the mid to late 20th century was encountered to the north of Abercamlais House and Dovecote Cottage. Trenches [031], [033] and [036] were cut through the cobbled service (019) to the north of Abercamlais House, and contained ceramic sewerage pipes which ran to manhole (029).

To the south of the Stable Court the site is overlain by topsoil (001), a loosely compacted dark reddish-brown silty-clay with occasional small sub-angular stones, 0.26m thick. The rest of the site is overlain by (005), a firm mid reddish-brown silty-clay with over 50% subangular stones, averaging 0.1m thick. This is a layer of substrate for the tarmac road surface (004), which has a maximum thickness of 0.1m. The stratigraphic relationship between (001) and (005) is not clear, but it is likely that (001) predates (005).

4. Conclusion

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks associated with the installation of a biomass heating system serving Abercamlais House and neighbouring Dovecote Cottage, at Abercamlais House, Abercamlais, Brecon, LD3 8EY (SN 96476 29011). The work was undertaken as part of the planning conditions for the development (Planning Application Number 17/15230/FUL), on the recommendation of Brecon Beacons National Park Authority Archaeologist.

Abercamlais House is a large three-storey stone house, Grade I listed (Ref.6785) as one of the best surviving early 18th century country houses in South Wales. The site has been the home of the Williams family since the 16th century, the house itself being rebuilt in the early 18th century in much of its current form.

Evidence of a possible building predating the current Abercamlais House was encountered in one part of the trench during the excavations. Immediately to the north of the north-western corner of the current house was a possible foundation cut for a wall [051] containing large roughly dressed stone blocks (052) and flagstone surface (023). Unfortunately, this area was highly disturbed by several 20th century service trenches running into manhole (029) to the north, and the possible foundations were only observable in section. It is therefore not possible to say with certainty what these remains represented. However, the presence of

building stone, overlain by a series of rubble deposits containing 18th century pottery and themselves running under the foundations of the current house demonstrate that these are likely to be the remains of an earlier building.

The foundations of a demolished section of the garden wall (041), which probably dates to the building of the current house in the early 18th century, were also encountered. Historic map evidence indicates this was probably demolished in the early 20th century to provide access to Dovecote Cottage.

The remaining features related to various service trenches to the House and Cottage. Two distinct phases can be established. Cuts [009] and [015], containing lead water pipes, and [012] containing a ceramic waste pipe are stratigraphically under the cobbled surface (019) and its levelling/bedding deposit (025). Cut [007] was outside of the cobbled area, but also contained a lead water pipe, and therefore probably dates to the same phase. The second phase of services cut the cobbled surface, and date to the mid-late 20th century and early 21st century.

5. Bibliography

Cadw (2017) *Listed Building Description database*

CIfA. (2014) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (Unpublished Guidance accessible at www.archaeologists.net)

NERC. (2016) British Geological Survey Maps (accessed at www.bgs.ac).



Figure 1: Location map, 1:25,000 @ A4

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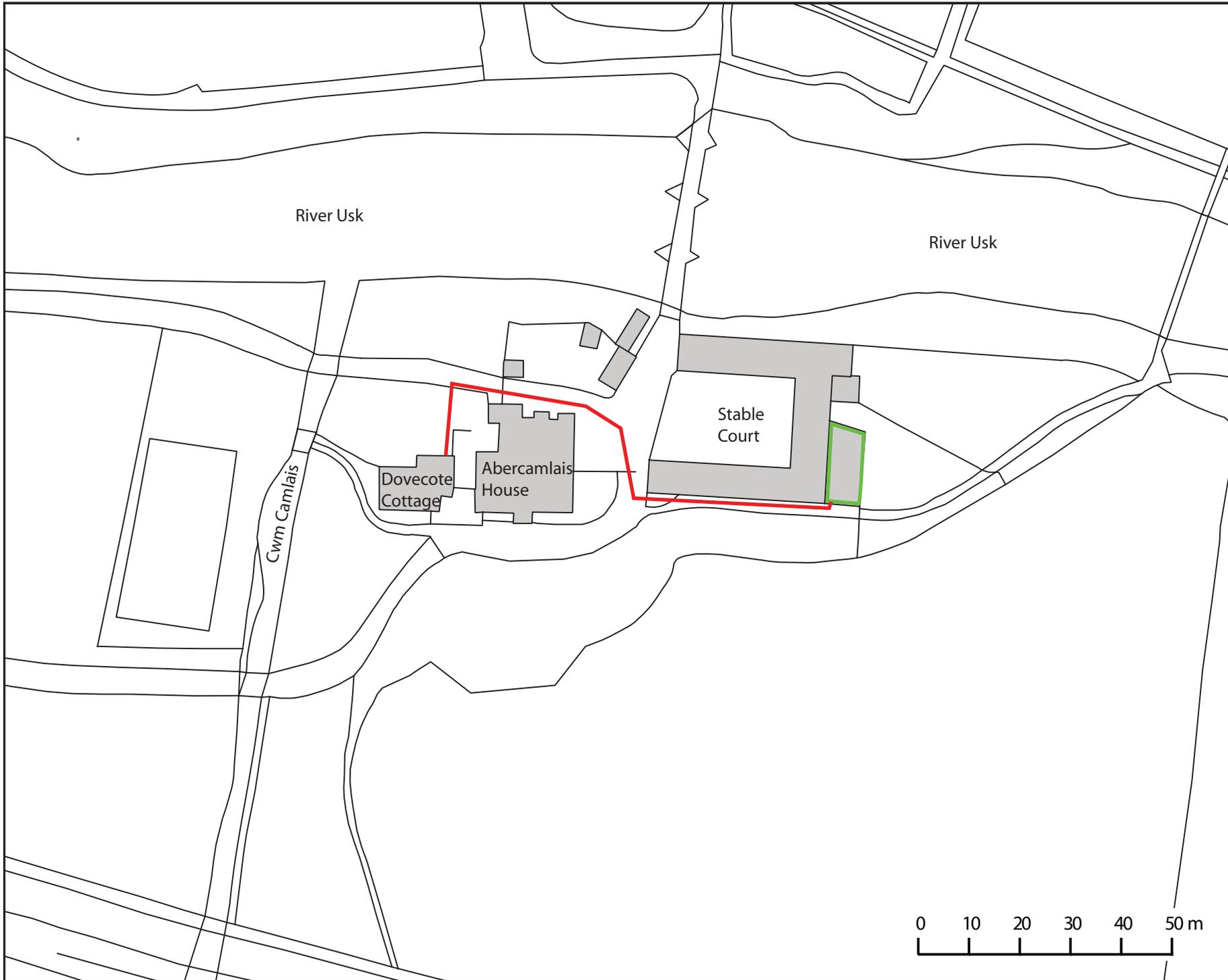


Figure 2: Location plan showing site of biomass unit (in green) and line of pipework requiring an archaeological watching brief (in red) 1:1000 @ A4

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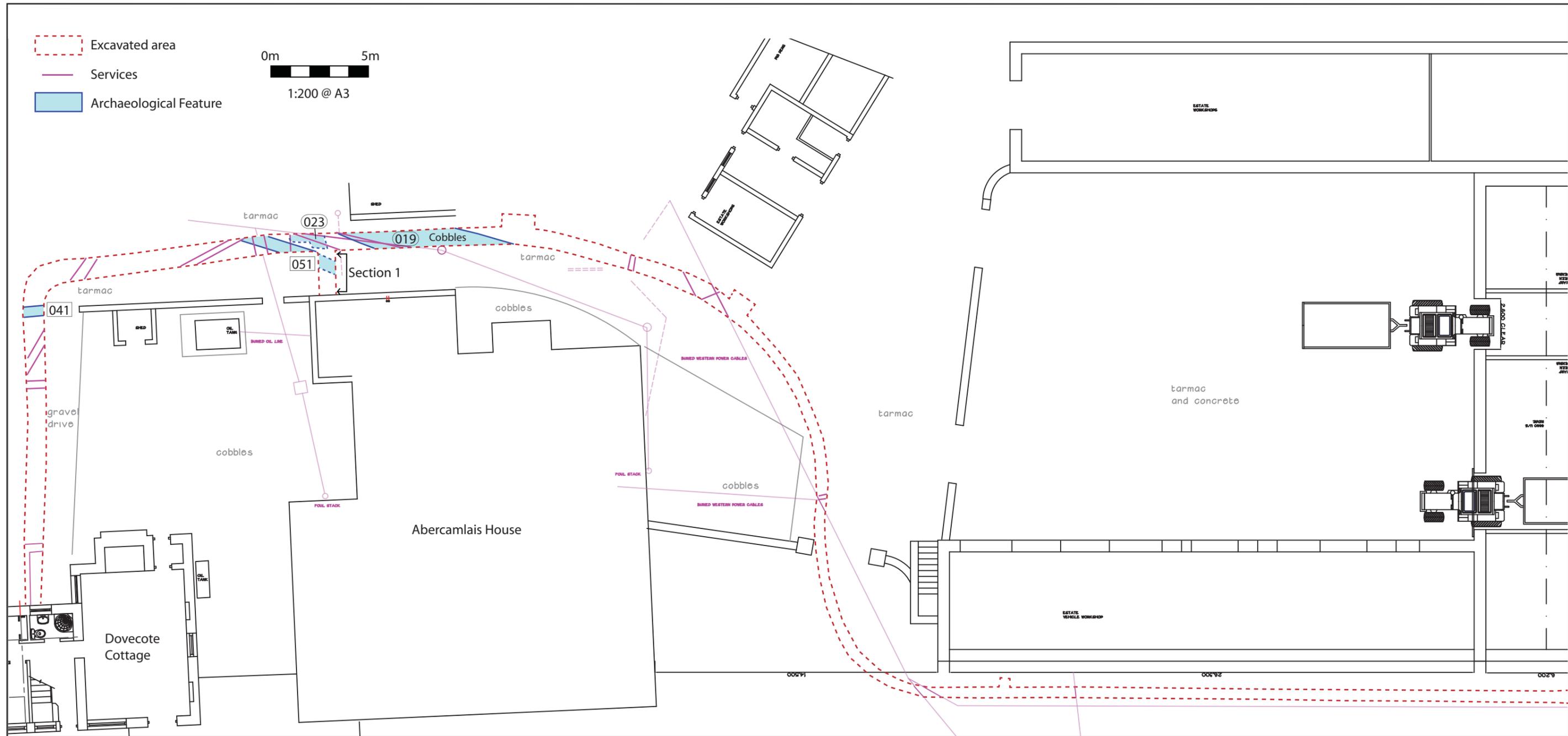


Figure 3: Plan of excavated area, showing identified features described in the main text. 1:200 @ A3 Based on development plan drawn by Andrew Billingsley Ltd (June 2017).

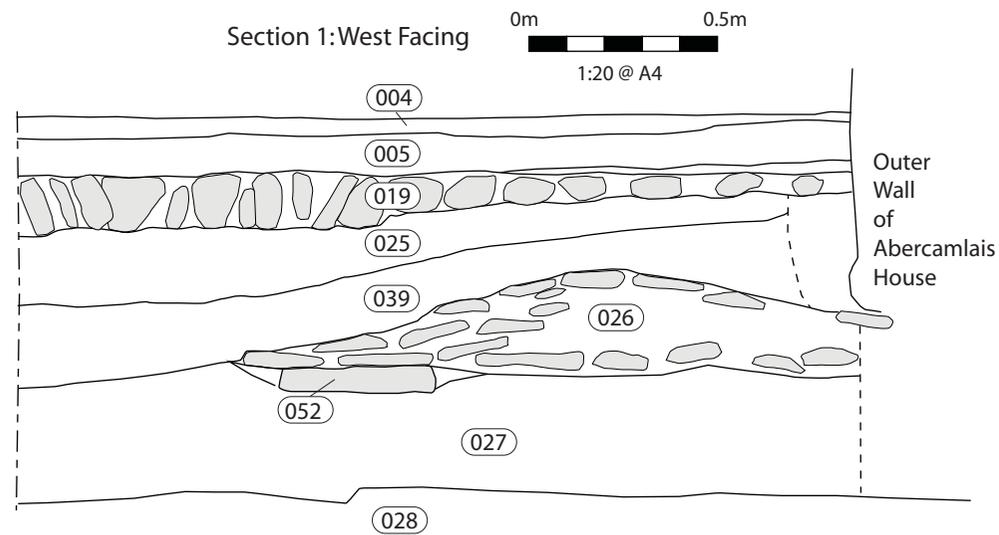
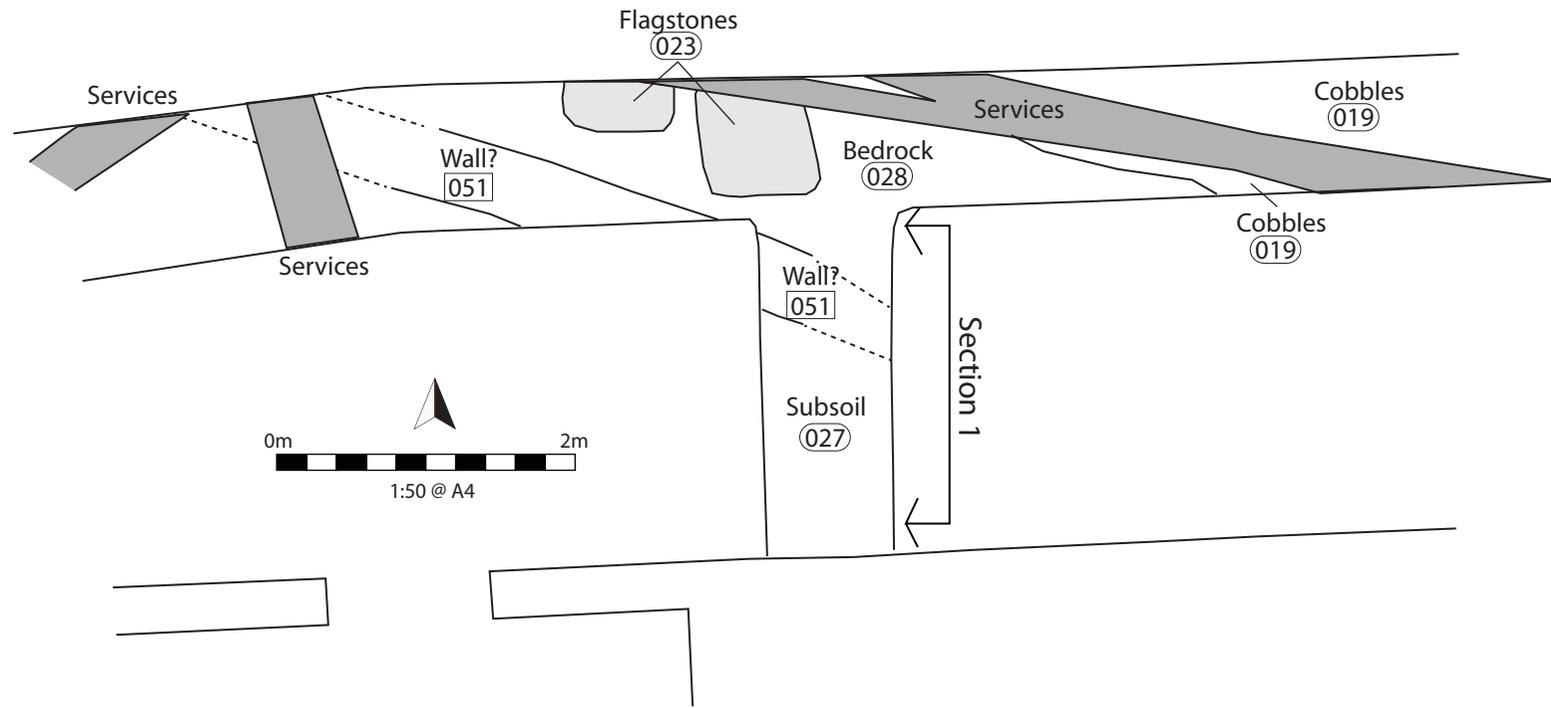


Figure 4: Plan showing detail of wall [051]/[052] and flagstone surface (023). Section of excavated trench, also showing possible wall [051]/[052].

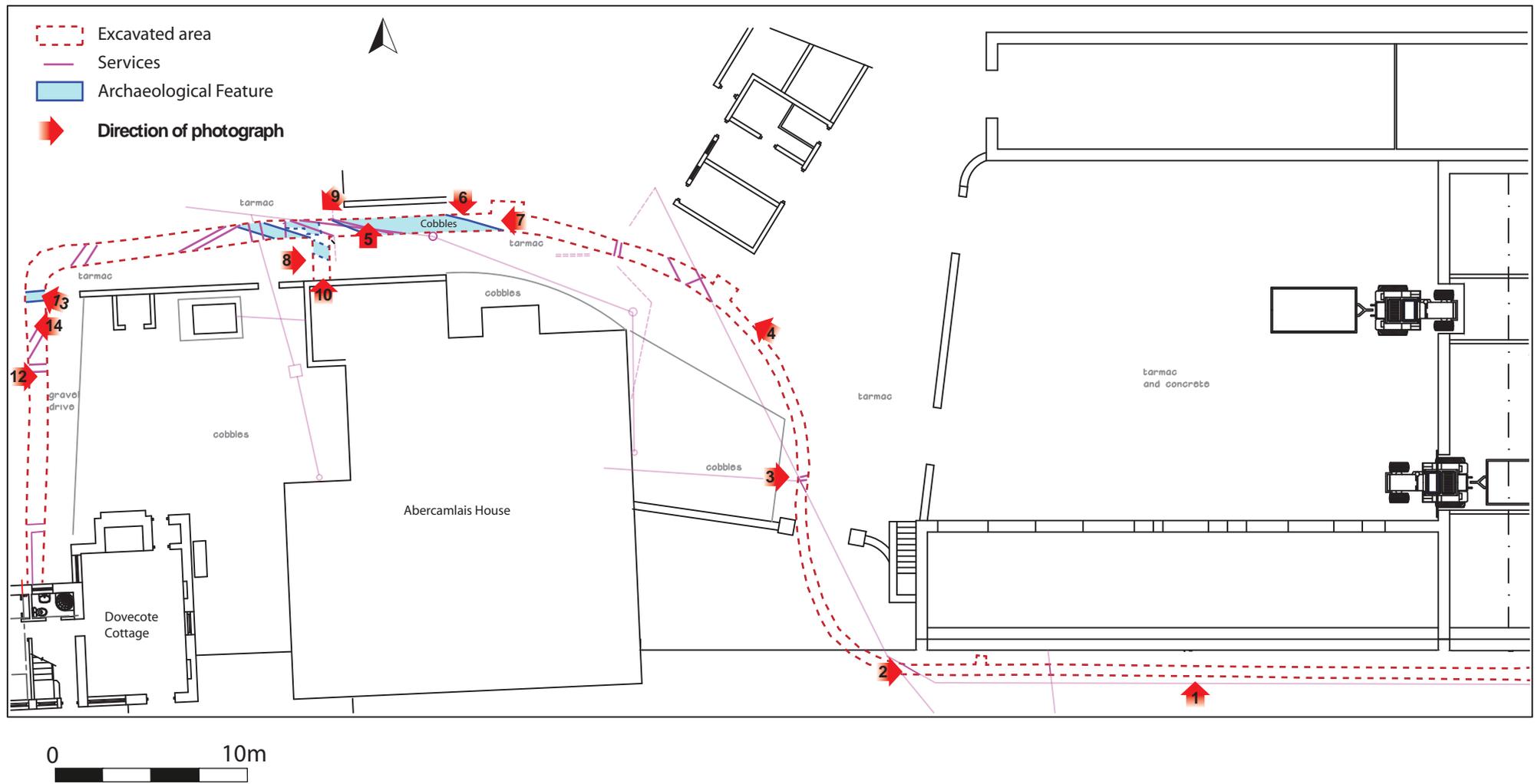


Figure 5
Direction of Photographs



Plate 1: Stratigraphy to the south of the Stable Court, showing (001), (002) and (003), looking north. 1m scale.



Plate 2: General shot of the trench to the south of the Stable Court, looking east. 1m scale.

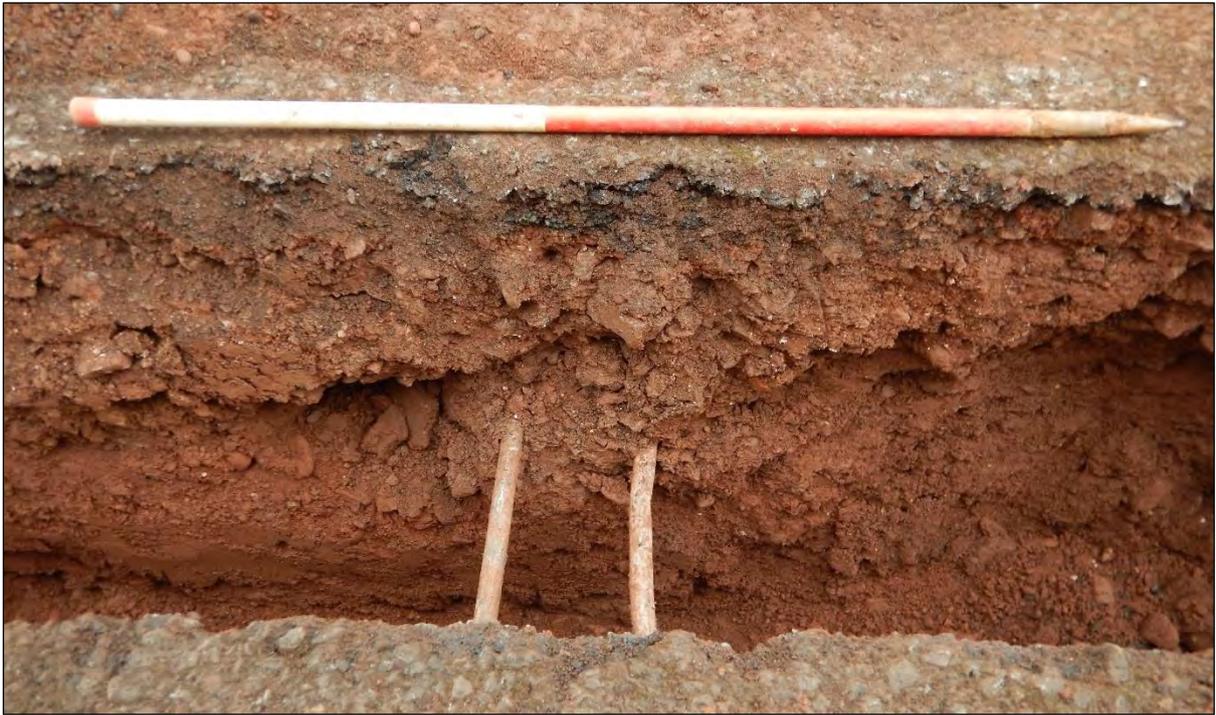


Plate 3: Stratigraphy to the east of Abercamlais House, showing cut [007], water pipes (006), fill (008) and deposits (004), (005), (002) and (003), looking east. 1m scale.



Plate 4: General shot showing excavation of the trench to the west of Abercamlais house, looking north-west.



Plate 5: South-facing section of cobbled surface (019), cut [009], water pipe (010) and fill (011), looking north. 1m scale.



Plate 6: Plan view of exposed cobbled surface (019). 1m scale.



Plate 7: Working shot showing removal of tarmac road (004) to expose cobbled surface (019) to the north of Abercamlais House, looking west.



Plate 8: West-facing section of southern spur, showing deposits (004), (005), (019), (025), (039), (026), (027), (028) and [051]/{052}, looking east. This section is recorded as Section 1 (Fig.4). 1m scale.



Plate 9: General shot looking south-west, of corner between main trench and the southern spur of trench, showing possible wall foundation cut [051] and masonry {052}, and deposits (004), (005), (019), (025), (039), (026), (053) and (023). Exposed bedrock (028) is also visible.



Plate 10: As above, view north. Flagstone surface (023) visible beneath protruding pipe.



Plate 11: Flagstone removed from surface (023). 1m scale.



Plate 12: West-facing section of trench to the north of Dovecote Cottage, showing cut [048], modern pipe (049) and fill (050), and general stratigraphy (004), (005), (003) and (028).



Plate 13: Shot looking west showing the remains of wall foundation (041) in cut [040] in relation to current garden wall.

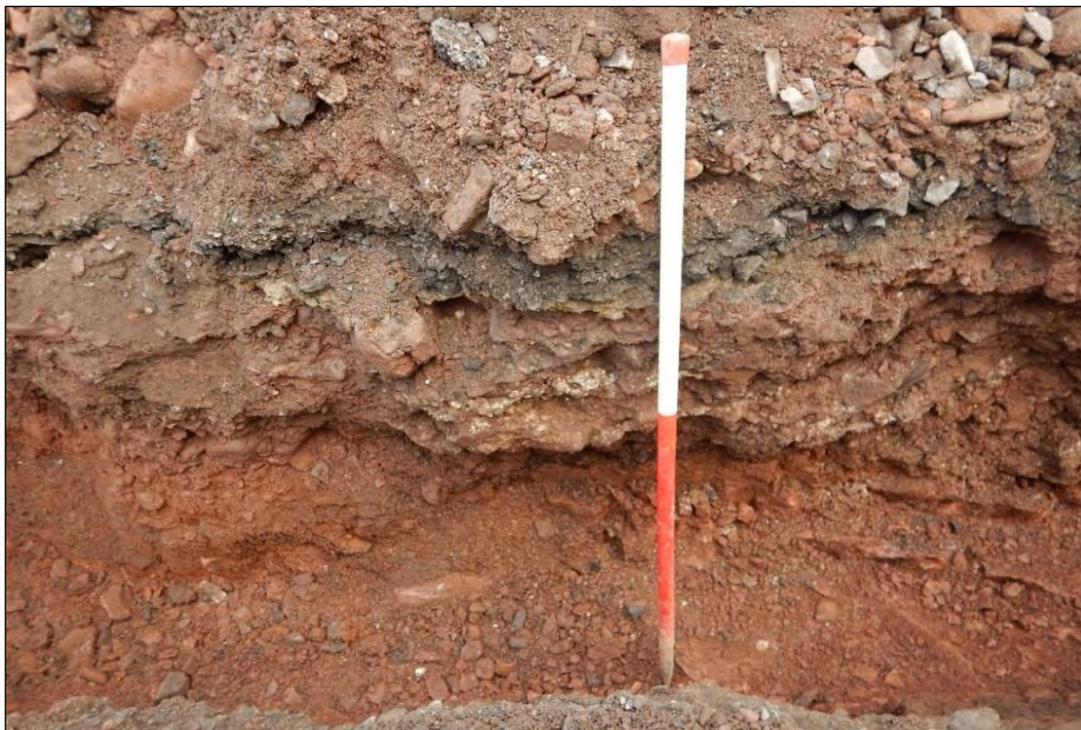


Plate 14: West-facing section showing deposits (004), (005), (054), (003) and (028). 1m scale.

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APPENDIX I: Context List

Appendix 1 – Context List

Context	Description	
001	Deposit	Topsoil - dark reddish brown silty clay. 0.26m average thickness.
002	Deposit	Subsoil - light reddish brown silty clay. 0.21m average thickness.
003	Deposit	Natural - mid brownish red silty clay with frequent small sub-angular stones. Exceeds 0.3m in thickness.
004	Deposit	Tarmac road. 0.1m thick.
005	Deposit	Mid to light reddish brown silty clay with occasional sub-angular stones. 0.1m average thickness.
006	Structure	Lead pipe, 0.04m diameter.
007	Cut	Cut of service trench, 0.21m deep, 0.3m wide, in excess of 0.5m long.
008	Fill	Fill of service trench [007]. Light reddish brown silty clay.
009	Cut	Cut of service trench, 0.3m deep, 0.2m wide, in excess of 0.5m long.
010	Structure	Lead pipe, 0.05m diameter.
011	Fill	Fill of [009]. Light reddish brown silty clay with occasional small sub angular stones.
012	Cut	Cut of service trench. 0.15m deep, 0.21m wide, exceeds 0.5m in length.
013	Structure	Ceramic pipe, 0.1m diameter.
014	Fill	Fill of trench [012]. Light reddish brown silty clay.
015	Cut	Cut of service trench. 0.21m deep, 0.4m wide, in excess of 0.5m in length.
016	Structure	Lead pipe, 0.03m diameter.
017	Fill	Fill of trench [015]. Light reddish brown silty clay with occasional small sub angular stones. 0.13m thick.
018	Fill	Fill of trench [015]. Dark brownish black silt with occasional small sub angular stones. 0.08m thick.
019	Structure	Cobbled stone surface with stone edging. Cobbles - rounded river stones, averaging 0,1m x 0.1m x 0.5m. Edging stones - angular, roughly dressed, averaging 0.3m x 0.15m x 0.2m.
020	Cut	Cut of service trench. Approximately 0.4m deep, 0.5m wide and in excess of 1m long.
021	Structure	Ceramic pipe, 0.1m diameter.
022	Fill	Fill of trench [020]. Dark blackish brown silty loam with frequent small-medium sub angular stones. 0.4m thick.
023	Structure	Possible flagstone floor. Roughly finished stones, averaging 0.7m x 0.5m x 0.06m. Covers area in excess of 0.7m x 1m.
024	VOID	VOID
025	Deposit	Mid pinkish brown silty clay with frequent small to medium angular stones. 0.2m thick, extends beyond trench.

026	Deposit	Dark greyish brown silty loam with 50% small to medium angular stones. 0.3m maximum thickness, exceeds 1.6m in width and 0.7m in length.
027	Natural	Dark pinkish red silty clay with frequent small sub angular stones. 0.3m maximum thickness.
028	Deposit	Bedrock. Red marl. Exceeds 0.4m thick.
029	Structure	Brick manhole, well fired modern red bricks, 0.22m x 0.11m x 0.08m, cement mortar. 0.6m deep, 0.8m wide, 0.8m long.
030	Structure	Ceramic pipe, 0.1m diameter.
031	Cut	Cut of service trench. 0.6m deep, exceeds 1m x 1m in length and width.
032	Fill	Fill of trench [031]. Dark blackish brown loam with frequent small angular stones. 0.6m thick, exceeds 1m x 1m in length and width.
033	Cut	Cut of service trench. 0.5m deep, 0.5m wide, exceeds 0.7m in length.
034	Structure	Ceramic pipe, 0.1m diameter.
035	Fill	Fill of [033]. Mid brownish grey silty clay with frequent medium sized angular stones.
036	Cut	Cut of service trench. 0.3m deep, 0.3m wide and exceeds 0.5m in length.
037	Structure	Ceramic pipe, 0.1m diameter.
038	Fill	Fill of [036]. Mid brownish black silty clay loam with frequent small angular stones.
039	Deposit	Light brownish grey silty clay with frequent small to medium angular stones, a lens of mortar rubble and frequent mortar and CBM fragments.
040	Cut	Cut of wall foundation. 0.3m deep, 0.5m wide, in excess of 0.7m long.
041	Structure	Wall foundation. Large roughly dressed irregular stone blocks up to 0.4m x 0.3m x 0.2m with light brownish white lime mortar. 0.3m thick, 0.5m wide, in excess of 0.7m in length.
042	Cut	Cut of modern service trench. 0.2m deep, 0.25m wide, in excess of 0.7m in length.
043	Structure	Plastic pipe, 0.1m in diameter.
044	Fill	Fill of [042]. Dark greyish brown silty loam with occasional small sub-angular stones.
045	Cut	Cut of modern service trench. 0.18m deep, 0.9m wide, in excess of 2m in length.
046	Structure	Plastic pipe, 0.06m in diameter.
047	Fill	Mid reddish brown silty clay with frequent small to medium sized sub angular stone and large pockets of clean sand.
048	Cut	Cut of modern service trench. 0.3m deep, 0.2m wide and exceeds 0.7m in length.
049	Structure	Rubber pipe, 0.04m diameter.

050	Fill	Fill of [048]. Mid reddish brown silty clay with frequent small to medium sized sub angular stone.
051	Cut	Cut of possible wall foundation. Unclear, heavily truncated. 0.35m deep, exceeds 0.4m wide.
052	Structure	Wall foundation. Large roughly dressed stone blocks up to 0.4m x 0.3m x 0.2m. 0.4m thick, exceeds 0.4m, wide.
053	Deposit	Mid yellowish grey silty clay with occasional large well-dressed stones, and frequent small to medium angular stones. 0.2m deep, 1m wide.
054	Deposit	Rubble/mortar deposit abutting (041)
055	Cut	Cut of modern service trench.
056	Structure	Plastic pipe. 0.1m diameter.
057	Fill	Fill of [055]. Dark reddish brown silty clay with frequent small angular stones.

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APPENDIX II: Finds List

Archaeology Wales Ltd
Finds Inventory Abercamlais House

Site Code: AHB/17/WB

	Context	Remarks	Amount	Kept (Y/N)
Pottery	22	20th century	9 sherds	N
	25	18th - 19th century	5 sherds	N
	26	Early-mid 18th century	1 sherd	N
Clay Pipe	26	Clay pipe stem (post-med)	2 fragments	N
		Pottery	15	
		Clay Pipe	2	
		Total	17	

Archaeology
Wales

APPENDIX III
Written Scheme of Investigation

WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION
FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF
AT ABERCAMLAIS HOUSE, ABERCAMLAIS, BRECON, LD3 8EY

Prepared for:
Roberts Building Consultants Ltd

Planning Application Number: 17/15230/FUL
Project No: 2568

October 2017



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Figure 1. Site location

Figure 2. Site plan showing development site and route of pipework

Figure 3. Detailed site development plan

Summary

This Written Scheme of Investigation details a programme of archaeological mitigation to be undertaken by Archaeology Wales at the request of Roberts Building Consultants Ltd.

The archaeological mitigation will consist of a watching brief, and will be undertaken during ground works associated with the installation of a new biomass heating system with associated pipework at Abercamlais House, Abercamlais, Brecon, LD3 8EY, centred on SN 96476 29011. The associated Planning Application No. is 17/15230/FUL.

The development lies within the grounds of Abercamlais House, Grade I listed as one of the best surviving early 18th century houses in South Wales. The proposed pipework will run between the Stable Court, a Grade II listed late 18th or early 19th century stable courtyard, and the House. A house has stood at this site since the 16th century, therefore there is the potential for remains of earlier buildings or evidence of associated activity to exist below ground.

Consequently it has been recommended that an archaeological watching brief is undertaken during ground works to mitigate the impact of the proposed development on the archaeological resource

All work will be undertaken in accordance with the standards and guidelines of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014).

1. Introduction and planning background

This Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) details the methodology for a programme of archaeological mitigation (watching brief) to be undertaken in association with the proposed installation of a new biomass heating system with associated pipework at Abercamlais House, Abercamlais, Brecon, LD3 8EY, centred on SN 96476 29011 (Figures 1 - 3). The associated Planning Application No. is 17/15230/FUL. The local planning authority is the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA).

The development lies within the grounds of Abercamlais House, Grade I listed as one of the best surviving early 18th century houses in South Wales. The proposed pipework will run between the Stable Court, a Grade II listed late 18th or early 19th century stable courtyard, and the House. A house has stood at this site since the 16th century, therefore there is the potential for remains of earlier buildings or evidence of associated activity to exist below ground. As a result of this archaeological sensitivity a condition is attached to the planning consent requiring that an archaeological watching brief be undertaken to monitor the groundworks associated with the development.

This WSI has been prepared by Philip Poucher, Project Manager, Archaeology Wales Ltd (henceforth - AW) at the request of Roberts Building Consultants Ltd.

The methodology set out in this WSI has been agreed with the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority Archaeologist (BBNPA-A). BBNPA-A has recommended that an archaeological watching brief is undertaken during ground works to mitigate the impact of the proposed development on the archaeological resource.

The recommendations made by BBNPA-A, along with comments made by the BBNPA Buildings Conservation Officer, are laid out in the Delegated Decision Report associated with the planning decision. As a result of these recommendations a Condition is included within the Planning Decision Notice which reads:

(Condition 3) Prior to the commencement of any groundworks an archaeological written scheme of investigation shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme of investigation shall meet the standards laid down by the Institute for Archaeologists in their Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief.

The approved archaeological fieldwork shall be carried out in accordance with the approved written scheme of investigation.

The developer will ensure that a suitably qualified archaeological contractor is present during the undertaking of any ground works in the development area, so that an archaeological watching brief can be maintained.

Following completion of the fieldwork a copy of the Watching Brief report shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority Archaeologist for approval. Following approval, the report will be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and the local Welsh Archaeological Trust for inclusion in the Regional Historic Environment Record (HER).

The purpose of the archaeological mitigation (watching brief) is to provide the local planning authority with sufficient information regarding the nature of archaeological remains on the site of the development, the requirements for which are set out in Planning Policy (revised edition 9, 2016), Section 6.5 and Technical Advice Note (TAN) 24: The Historic Environment (2017). The work is to ensure that all buried artefacts and deposits are fully investigated and recorded if they are disturbed or revealed as a result of activities associated with the development.

All work will be undertaken to the standards and guidance set by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014). AW is a Registered Organisation with the CIfA.

2. Site Description

The development area is situated within the grounds of Abercamlais House, which lies on the banks of the River Usk between Sennybridge (4.5km to the west) and Brecon (8km to the east). The river and valley runs east to west through this area, crossed by a 17th century bridge associated with the Abercamlais estate. The A40 follows the line of the valley bottom a short distance to the south of Abercamlais. The Cwm Camlais stream feeds the Usk to the west of Abercamlais House.

The Abercamlais estate includes the house with associated traditional and modern outbuildings to the west and east, along with other estate features such as bridges, dovecote and tennis courts. Woodland surrounds the site to the west and along the river banks, with more sporadic tree to the east of the house, presumably remnants of parkland planting. The biomass plant will be located in a pre-existing modern agricultural building on the east side of the Stable Court, a range of farm buildings to the east of the main house. The proposed pipework will run to the south of the Stable Court, and then north up the drive between the Stable Court and the House, before turning west to run behind (to the north) the House, and into the adjacent Dovecote Cottage to the west.

The geology of the area is characterised by the Maughans Formation, composed of argillaceous rocks interbedded with subequal sandstone. The valley bottom location is likely to have a mix of overlying superficial deposits, including mixed alluvium, sand and gravel river terrace deposits, and Devensian Diamicton Till (BGS 2017).

3. Archaeological background

The planned development works are to be undertaken within the grounds of Abercamlais House and associated buildings.

Abercamlais House is a large three-storey stone house, Grade I listed (Ref.6785) as one of the best surviving early 18th century country houses in South Wales, retaining fine panelled interiors and staircase. The site has been the home of the Williams family since the 16th century, the house itself being rebuilt in the early 18th century in much of its current form. A timber gothic porch was added in around 1864-6, with dormer windows added in 1909-10. The adjacent Dovecote Cottage is a 17th or early 18th century former laundry, game-larder and dairy, since converted into holiday accommodation.

The first of the Williams family to move to the site in *circa* 1571 was the Reverend Thomas Williams, vicar of Llanspyddid, known as Vicar Gwyn. His tombstones claims a relationship to Elizabeth I, and descent from Thomas de Boulogne, an 11th or 12th century knight granted land in the area. Vicar Gwyn's grandson, also called Thomas Williams and who was High Sheriff in 1668, began the rebuilding of the house. This was continued by his son (another Reverend Thomas Williams) in *circa* 1710-20. Although passing to different branches of the family, the house remained within the same family to the present day.

The biomass plant will be housed within a pre-existing modern agricultural building to the east of the main house, adjacent to the Stable Court. The Stable Court is a Grade II listed building (Ref.84454), included for its special interest as a large three-sided stable court, of group value with the house and nearby Abercamlais Bridge (also listed). The Stable Court building was built at a later date to the house, probably in the late 18th or early 19th century.

4. Objectives

This WSI sets out a program of works to ensure that the mitigation (watching brief) will meet the standard required by The Chartered **Institute for Archaeologist's Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs (2014)**.

The objective of the watching brief will be:

- to allow a rapid investigation and recording of any archaeological features that are uncovered during the proposed groundworks within the application area.
- to provide the opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief are not sufficient to support the treatment to a satisfactory or proper standard.

A written report will be compiled following the fieldwork. Sufficient desk-top research will be undertaken to ensure that the results of this work are properly understood, interpreted and reported.

The report will include a comprehensive assessment of the historic context within which the archaeological evidence rests and will aim to highlight any relevant research issues within regional, national and, if relevant, international research frameworks.

4.1. Site Specific Research Aims

It is important to recognize that whilst primarily designed to mitigate impacts, developer-led archaeology is also regarded as research activity with an academic basis, the aim of which is to add to the sum of human knowledge. Curators recognize the desirability of incorporating agreed research priorities as a means of enhancing the credibility of the development control process, ensuring cost-effectiveness and legitimately maximizing intellectual return.

A research framework for the archaeology of Wales has been produced and currently in the process of review. This mitigation has the capacity to identify areas that may contribute to the published research aims in Post Medieval Wales (1539-1750) – Estates, Parks and Gardens. This was highlighted in the original document (Briggs 2007) which states a need to intensify studies of relict estates, recording all buildings, identifying horticultural and parkland features and tracing boundaries.

5. Timetable of works

5.1. Fieldwork

The programme of mitigation will be undertaken during ground works associated with the proposed development. A start date for the ground works has not yet been finalised. Archaeology Wales will update BBNPA-A with the exact date.

5.2. Report delivery

The report will be submitted to the client and to BBNPA-A for approval within three months of the completion of the fieldwork. Following approval a copy of the report will be submitted to BBNPA. A copy of the report will also be sent to the regional Historic Environment Record.

6. Fieldwork

6.1. Detail

The work will be undertaken to meet the standard required by **The Chartered Institute for Archaeologist's Standard and Guidance for Watching Briefs (2014)**.

The Watching Brief will be carried out by a suitably qualified archaeologist on groundworks associated with the installation of the pipework leading from the Biomass Unit to Dovecote Cottage (Figure 2 & 3), where sub-surface deposits are likely to be exposed or cut into. The mechanical excavation will be undertaken by a tracked 360 degree excavator using a toothless ditching bucket wherever possible.

The site archaeologist undertaking the watching brief will be afforded the required access by the main contractor in order to observe and where necessary to record any archaeological remains revealed. Groundwork will not be undertaken without the presence of the site archaeologist. The site archaeologist will record finds and less significant archaeological deposits and features without significant delay to the work program.

Where significant or complex archaeological deposits or features are encountered there will be a requirement for those areas to be fenced off and highlighted to all contractors employed on the site. Machines or contractors shall not enter this area until archaeological recording has been completed. If significant archaeological features are revealed during the work a meeting between the client, BBNPA-HO and AW will be called at the earliest convenience.

To comply with professional guidelines, a contingency for a **maximum of three days'** uninterrupted access to each such area and for a team of up to two further archaeologists to be employed should be provided. Contingency costs will be agreed in advance before any extension to the programme commences and will follow a site meeting between Archaeology Wales, the client and BBNPA-A.

6.2. Recording

Recording will be carried out using AW recording systems (pro-forma context sheets etc) using a continuous number sequence for all contexts.

Plans and sections will be drawn to a scale of 1:50, 1:20 and 1:10 as required and related to Ordnance Survey datum and published boundaries where appropriate.

All features identified will be tied in to the OS survey grid and fixed to local topographical boundaries.

Photographs will be taken in digital format with an appropriate scale, using a 12MP camera with photographs stored in Tiff format.

The archaeologist undertaking the watching brief will have access to the AW metal detector and be trained in its use.

6.3. Finds

The professional standards set in the Chartered Institute for **Archaeologists' Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological (2014)** will form the basis of finds collection, processing and recording.

All manner of finds regardless of category and date will be retained.

Finds recovered that are regarded as Treasure under *The Treasure Act 1996* will be reported to HM Coroner for the local area.

Any finds which are considered to be in need of immediate conservation will be referred to a UKIC qualified conservator (normally Phil Parkes at Cardiff University).

6.4. Environmental sampling strategy

Deposits with a significant potential for the preservation of palaeoenvironmental material will be sampled, by means of the most appropriate method (bulk, column etc). Where sampling will provide a significant contribution to the understanding of the site AW will draw up a site-specific sampling strategy alongside a specialist environmental archaeologist. All environmental sampling and recording and will **follow English Heritage's Guidelines for Environmental Archaeology (2002)**.

6.5. Human remains

In the event that human remains are encountered, their nature and extent will be established and the coroner informed. All human remains will be left *in situ* and protected during backfilling. Where preservation *in situ* is not possible the human remains will be fully recorded and removed under conditions that comply with all current legislation and include acquisition of licenses and provision for reburial

following all analytical work. Human remains will be excavated in accordance with the Chartered **Institute for Archaeologist's** *Excavation and Post-Excavation Treatment of Cremated and Inhumed Human Remains: Technical Paper Number 13* (1993).

A meeting with BBNPA-A, the client and AW will be called if the human remains uncovered are of such complexity or significance that the contingency arrangement (6.1 above) would not be of sufficient scope.

6.6. Specialist advisers

In the event of certain finds, features or sites being discovered, AW will seek specialist opinion and advice. A list of specialists is given in the table below although this list is not exhaustive.

Artefact type	Specialist
Flint	Kate Pitt (Archaeology Wales)
Animal bone	Richard Madgwick (Cardiff University)
CBM, heat affected clay, Daub etc.	Rachael Hall (APS)
Clay pipe	Hilary Major (Freelance)
Glass	Rowena Hart (Archaeology Wales)
Cremated and non-cremated human bone	Malin Holst (University of York)/Richard Madgwick (Cardiff University)
Metalwork	Kevin Leahy (University of Leicester)/ Quita Mold (Freelance)
Metal work and metallurgical residues	Dr Tim Young (GeoArch)
Neo/BA pottery	Dr Alex Gibson (Bradford University)
IA/Roman pottery	Jane Timby (Freelance)
Roman Pottery	Rowena Hart (Archaeology Wales)/ Peter Webster (Freelance)
Post Roman pottery	Stephen Clarke (Monmouthshire Archaeology)
Charcoal (wood ID)	John Carrot (Freelance)
Waterlogged wood	Nigel Nayling (University of Wales – Lampeter)
Molluscs and pollen	Dr James Rackham

Charred and waterlogged plant remains	Wendy Carruthers (Freelance)
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6.6.1. Specialist reports

Specialist finds and palaeoenvironmental reports will be written by AW specialists, or sub-contracted to external specialists when required.

7. Monitoring

BBNPA-A will be contacted approximately two weeks prior to the commencement of archaeological site works, and subsequently once the work is underway.

Any changes to the WSI that AW may wish to make after approval will be communicated to BBNPA-A for approval on behalf of Planning Authority.

BBNPA-A will be given access to the site so that they may monitor the progress of the field evaluation. No area will be back-filled, until BBNPA-A has had the opportunity to inspect it, unless permission has been given in advance. BBNPA-A will be kept regularly informed about developments, both during the site works and subsequently during post-excavation.

8. Post-fieldwork programme

8.1. Archive assessment

8.1.1. Site archive

An ordered and integrated site archive will be prepared in accordance with: Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) (Historic England 2006) upon completion of the project.

The site archive (including artefacts and samples) will be prepared in accordance with the National Monuments Record (Wales) agreed structure and deposited with an appropriate receiving organisation, in compliance with ClfA Guidelines (*Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives*, 2014). The legal landowners consent will be gained for deposition of finds.

8.1.2. Analysis

Following a rapid review of the potential of the site archive, a programme of analysis and reporting will be undertaken. This will result in the following inclusions in the final report:

- Non-technical summary
- Location plan showing the area/s covered by the watching brief, all artefacts, structures and features found

- Plan and section drawings (if features are encountered) with ground level, ordnance datum and vertical and horizontal scales.
- Written description and interpretation of all deposits identified, including their character, function, potential dating and relationship to adjacent features. Specialist descriptions and illustrations of all artefacts and soil samples will be included as appropriate.
- An indication of the potential of archaeological deposits which have not been disturbed by the development
- A discussion of the local, regional and national context of the remains by means of reviewing published reports, unpublished reports, historical maps, documents from local archives and the regional HER as appropriate.
- A detailed archive list at the rear listing all contexts recorded, all samples finds and find types, drawings and photographs taken. This will include a statement of the intent to deposit, and location of deposition, of the archive.

8.2. Reports and archive deposition

8.2.1. Report to client

Copies of all reports associated with the mitigation (watching brief), together with inclusion of supporting evidence in appendices as appropriate, including photographs and illustrations, will be submitted to the client and BBNPA-A upon completion.

8.2.2. Additional reports

After an appropriate period has elapsed, copies of all reports will be deposited with the relevant county Historical Environment Record (CPAT), the National Monuments Record and, if appropriate, Cadw.

8.2.3. Summary reports for publication

Short archaeological reports will be submitted for publication in relevant journals; as a minimum, a report will be submitted to the annual publication of the regional CBA group or equivalent journal.

8.2.4. Notification of important remains

Where it is considered that remains have been revealed that may satisfy the criteria for statutory protection, AW will submit preliminary notification of the remains to Cadw.

8.2.5. Archive deposition

The final archive (site and research) will, whenever appropriate, be deposited with a suitable receiving institution, usually the relevant Local Authority museums service. Arrangements will be made with the receiving institution before work starts.

Although there may be a period during which client confidentiality will need to be maintained, copies of all reports and the final archive will be deposited no later than six months after completion of the work.

Copies of all reports, the digital archive and an archive index will be deposited with the *National Monuments Record*, RCAHMW, Aberystwyth.

Wherever the archive is deposited, this information will be relayed to the HER. A summary of the contents of the archive will be supplied to BBNPA-A.

8.2.6. Finds deposition

The finds, including artefacts and ecofacts, excepting those which may be subject to the Treasure Act, will be deposited with the same institution, subject to the agreement of the legal land owners.

9. Staff

The project will be managed by Philip Poucher (AW Project Manager) and the fieldwork undertaken by suitable qualified and experienced AW archaeologists. Any alteration to staffing before or during the work will be brought to the attention of BBNPA-A and the client.

Additional Considerations

10. Health and Safety

10.1. Risk assessment

Prior to the commencement of work AW will carry out and produce a formal Health and Safety Risk Assessment in accordance with *The Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992*. A copy of the risk assessment will be kept on site and be available for inspection on request. A copy will be sent to the client (or their agent as necessary) for their information. All members of AW staff will adhere to the content of this document.

10.2. Other guidelines

AW will adhere to best practice with regard to Health and Safety in Archaeology as set out in the FAME (Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employers) health and safety manual *Health and Safety in Field Archaeology (2002)*.

11. Community Engagement and Outreach

Wherever possible, AW will ensure suitable measures are in place to inform the local community and any interested parties of the results of the site investigation work. This may occur during the site investigation work or following completion of the work. The form of any potential outreach activities may include lectures and talks to local groups, interested parties and persons, information boards, flyers and other forms of communication (social media and websites), and press releases to local and national media.

The form of any outreach will respect client confidentiality or contractual agreements. As a rule, outreach will be proportional to the size of the project.

Where outreach activities have a cost implication these will need to be negotiated in advance and in accordance with the nature of the desired response and learning outcomes.

12. Insurance

AW is fully insured for this type of work, and holds Insurance with Aviva Insurance Ltd and Hiscox Insurance Company Limited through Towergate Insurance. Full details of these and other relevant policies can be supplied on request.

13. Quality Control

13.1. Professional standards

AW works to the standards and guidance provided by the *Chartered Institute for Archaeologists*. AW fully recognise and endorse the Chartered Institute for **Archaeologists' Code of Conduct**, *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology* and the *Standard and Guidance for archaeological watching briefs* currently in force. All employees of AW, whether corporate members of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists or not, are expected to adhere to these Codes and Standards during their employment.

13.2. Project tracking

The designated AW manager will monitor all projects in order to ensure that agreed targets are met without reduction in quality of service.

14. Arbitration

Disputes or differences arising in relation to this work shall be referred for a decision **in accordance with the Rules of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators' Arbitration Scheme for the Institute for Archaeologists** applying at the date of the agreement.

15. References

BBNPA 2017 *Delegated Decision Notice – 17/15230/FUL*

Briggs, CS 2007 *A Research Framework for the Archaeology of Wales Version 01, Final Paper Post Medieval Wales (1539 -1750)*

Cadw 2017 *Listed Building Description database*

British Geological Survey 2017

<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> (Accessed 26.10.17).

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APPENDIX IV:
Archive Cover Sheet

ARCHIVE COVER SHEET

Abercamlais House, Brecon

Site Name:	Abercamlais House, Brecon
Site Code:	AHB/17/WB
PRN:	31140 Abercamlais House 59483 Abercamlais Estate 60742 Abercamlais Stable Court
NPRN:	25005 Abercamlais Mansion
Listed Building:	6785 Abercamlais inc Dovecote Cottage (I) 84454 Stable Court at Abercamlais (II)
Other Ref No:	-
NGR:	NGR SN 96476 29011
Site Type:	Service trench for biomass heating in grounds of 18 th century house with 16 th century predecessor
Project Type:	Watching Brief
Project Manager:	Philip Poucher
Project Dates:	October 2017 – April 2018
Categories Present:	-
Location of Original Archive:	AW
Location of duplicate Archives:	RCAHMW, Aberystwyth
Number of Finds Boxes:	-
Location of Finds:	-
Museum Reference:	-
Copyright:	AW
Restrictions to access:	None

Archaeology Wales

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