



ArchHeritage



## **MOORSIDE HOUSE, ASTON ON TRENT, DERBYSHIRE**

### **WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

*by Glyn Davies*

**Report Number 2010/73**



# ArcHeritage

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### Abbreviations

YAT York Archaeological Trust

aOD above Ordnance Datum

## Non-technical Summary

Planning permission has been granted for the erection of an extension to Moorside House, Aston on Trent, Derbyshire. As the site is located in an area with extensive prehistoric cropmarks an archaeological condition has been imposed on the planning permission. The aim of the archaeological works was to mitigate the impact of the development on any archaeology present through an archaeological watching brief. ArcHeritage were commissioned to undertake the work.

No archaeological features or finds related to the prehistoric cropmark sites in the vicinity were identified. However, this apparent absence of archaeology might be deceptive as previous work in the area had identified that the cropmark features could be deeply buried, in one case the cropmark features were buried below 1.3m of sediment.

A brick constructed soakaway was the only feature identified by the watching brief. The soakaway was of 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century construction and related to the existing house.

The watching brief identified that no significant archaeological remains were disturbed by the groundworks associated with the extension to Moorside House.

## Key Project Information

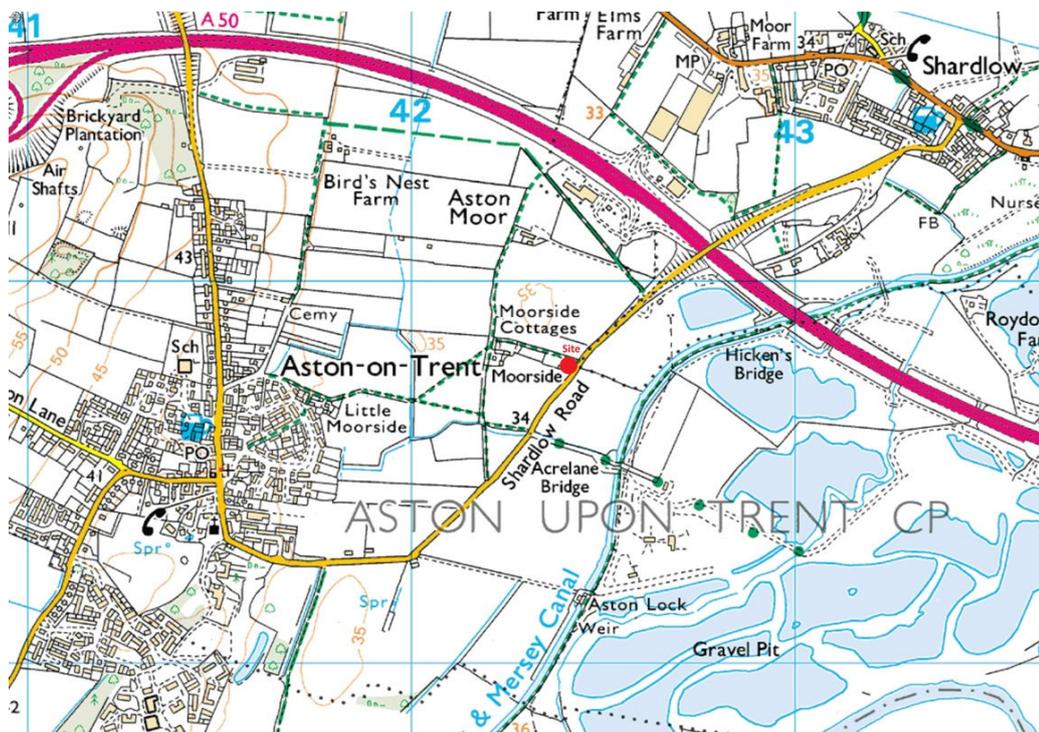
Project Name	Moorside House
ArcHeritage Project No.	5408
Report status	Final
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Planning Application No.	09/0054/FL
NGR	SK4241 2978
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Planning permission has been granted for the erection of an extension to Moorside House, Aston on Trent, Derbyshire. The site is located in an area of known archaeological potential, as such an archaeological planning condition has been imposed. The condition requires a programme of the archaeological works mitigate the impact of the development on any archaeology present through implementation of an archaeological watching brief. ArchHeritage were commissioned to undertake the work and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared following consultation with Steve Baker, Development Control Archaeologist for Derbyshire County Council.

## 2 LOCATION, GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY

The site lies to the east of the village of Aston on Trent in the valley of the River Trent (SK4241 2978 (**Figure 1**)). It is located on alluvial river gravel which overlies Triassic mudstones of the Mercia Mudstones Group.



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Figure 1 Location map

## 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The area to the east of Aston on Trent contains extensive cropmark archaeological remains (**Figure 2**). These are mainly to the east of Shardlow Road with some located to the west of the road in the vicinity of Moorside House. The main feature within the cropmarks is Aston Cursus, a Neolithic Monument formed by two large parallel ditches running for over 1200m approximately southwest to north east. The cursus is located east of Shardlow Road but may extend further north, crossing the road. In association with the cursus are a number of other prehistoric features

including a possible causewayed enclosure, pit alignments, ring ditches, square enclosures and a complex of ancient fields (Stroud 2001). This area is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Derbyshire 185). North east of the cursus is the Neolithic henge monument of Hickens Bridge, which is also scheduled (Derbyshire 230). In the fields immediately north and south of Moorside House are further cropmark features which are recorded on the Derbyshire Historic Environment record (HER 16603). These sites form a nationally important concentration of monuments that relate to prehistoric activity on the Trent Valley gravels.



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**Figure 2 Plot of cropmarks near Sharrow Road**

#### **4 METHODOLOGY**

The area to be developed was fairly small and as such it was determined that an archaeological watching brief was the most appropriate strategy. This involved the excavation of the foundations for the extension under archaeological supervision, with provision to record any archaeological features present.

The location and depth of all foundation trenches were recorded in the field. These were mapped, relative to the existing house, on a plan of the site and any features of archaeological interest were added to the plan.

Unique context numbers were assigned to the main soil layers and to any archaeological features/deposits identified. Where assigned, each context was described in full on a pro forma context record sheet in accordance with accepted context record conventions.

Archaeological deposits were planned at a basic scale of 1:50. Sections were drawn to a basic scale of 1:10 depending on the size of the feature. All drawings were related to Ordnance Datum. All drawings were made on inert materials to accepted drawing conventions.

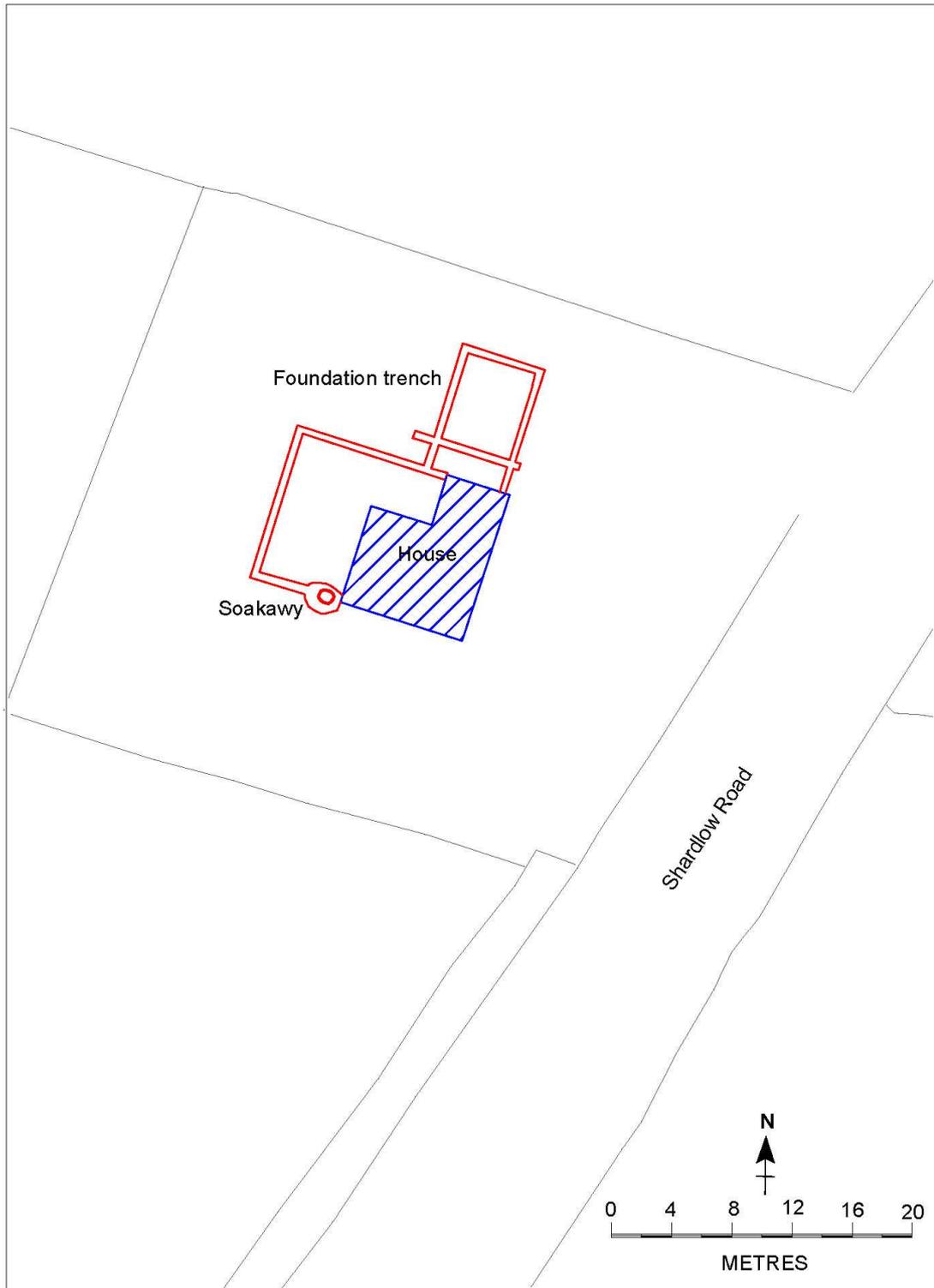
Photographs of archaeological deposits and features were taken. This included general views of the trenches and details of features as appropriate. All site photography adhered to accepted photographic record guidelines.

All finds were collected and handled following the guidance set out in the IfA guidance for archaeological materials. Unstratified material was not kept unless it was of exceptional intrinsic interest. All pottery of medieval or earlier date was retained if identified. Material discarded as a consequence of this policy was described and quantified in the field. Other finds were collected as Bulk Finds from discrete contexts and bagged by material type.

All artefacts and ecofacts were appropriately packaged and stored under optimum conditions, as detailed in the RESCUE/UKIC publication *First Aid for Finds*. No finds were recovered that fell within the purview of the Treasure Act (1996).

## 5 RESULTS

The extension to Moorside house involved the construction of new accommodation to the rear (west) of the house and a garage to the north of the house (**Figure 3**). The foundation trenches for both these arms of the extension were cut as 0.6m wide and 1.0m deep trenches (**Plate 1**). Excavation was not required between the foundation trenches as the floor was to be built up from the current ground surface. In addition, a service trench was excavated through the garage to run a duct for bringing a water supply to the property (**Plate 2**). A brick built soakaway was encountered in the foundation trench to the rear of the house. This was removed, resulting in deeper excavation (2.2m) at its location. This feature is discussed further in section 5.2.



**Figure 3 Plan of foundation trenches and existing building.**



**Plate 1 Foundation trench to the west of the house.**



**Plate 2 Service trench with ducting**

## 5.1 Stratigraphic Sequence

In all of the foundation trenches the same basic stratigraphic sequence was identified. This comprised a natural sequence of alluvial river gravels overlain by topsoil (**Plate 3**). The base deposit identified was an orange brown sand [103]. This sand extended down from 0.8m below ground level to at least 2.2m below ground level, the deepest point reached by foundation excavation (**Plate 4**). The sand contained evidence of banding and had patches of dark brown/black staining probably from iron or manganese. No archaeological finds or features were identified within this deposit.



**Plate 3** Section of natural stratigraphic sequence



**Plate 4 Sand 103 in deep excavation following soakaway removal**

Above the sand [103] was a brown gravelly sand deposit [102] approximately 0.5m thick. This deposit varied somewhat in colour and in its gravel component. The gravel component was small to medium in size with the former usually predominant. One piece of unworked flint was recovered from this deposit [102]. This was the only piece of flint recovered from the watching brief and would not normally be worthy of comment. Its location in proximity to the cursus may be of interest. No archaeological features were identified in this deposit [102].

The topsoil [100], which overlay [102], was a black brown sandy loam. This contained a number of pieces of modern rubbish including pieces of plastic, 20<sup>th</sup> century ceramics and two pieces of rusty iron. The modern material in 100 was not retained.

## **5.2 Archaeological Features**

The only archaeological feature identified was a brick structure [101] next to the south west corner of the existing building (**Plate 5**). This feature was built of unmortared bricks (**Plate 6**). The bricks were similar to those used in the house construction, although of a more consistent colour. The structure was slightly oval in plan 0.9m long and 0.8m wide. A lead pipe at one side of the structure connected to the down pipe at the rear of the house. The structure was capped with two large stone slabs (**Plate 7**). Initially thought to be a well, the presence of the downpipe and the unmortared structure suggest it was used as a soakaway, at least in its later days.



**Plate 5 Soakaway 101 next to the south west corner of the house**



**Plate 6 Detail of soakaway 101**



**Plate 7 Stone used to cap the soakaway**

## **6 CONCLUSIONS**

No archaeological features or finds related to the prehistoric cropmark sites in the vicinity were identified. This apparent absence of archaeology might be deceptive as the eastern ditch of the cursus was found under 1.3m of sediment when identified in the side of field drain in 1998 (Garton and Elliott 1998). The trenches excavated during this watching brief only extended to 1.0m below ground level.

The soakaway/well was the only feature identified and this was of 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century date.

The watching brief identified that no significant archaeological remains were disturbed by the groundworks associated with the extension to Moorside House.

## **7 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Garton, D. and Elliott, L (1998) 'Acre Lane Aston upon Trent' *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*, 118 page 148.

Stroud, G. (2001) *Derbyshire Extensive Urban Survey Archaeological Assessment Report Shardlow*. DCC

## APPENDIX 1 – Context List

Table 1 Context list

Context no.	Description
100	Black/brown sandy loam topsoil
101	Brick soakaway/well
102	Brown gravelly sand
103	Orange brown sand
104	Cut for 101

## Appendix 2 – Index to Archive

Table 2 Index to archive

Item	Number of items
Context sheets	5
Levels register	0
Photographic register	1
Drawing register	1
Original drawings	1
Digital photographs	15
Written Scheme of Investigation	1
Report	1