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# ArcheType

**The Old Rectory**

**West Tanfield**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

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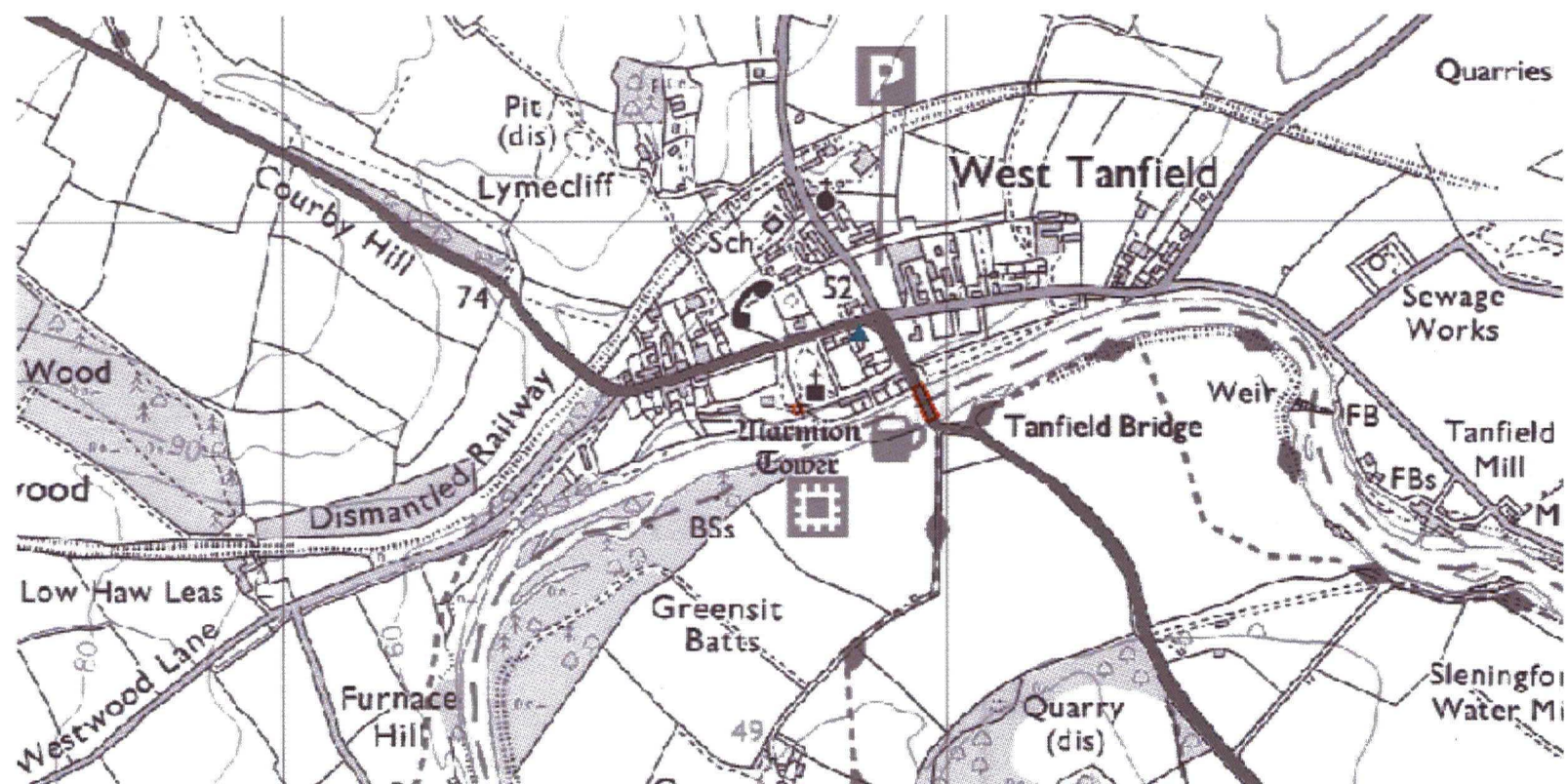


Fig 1 The Old Rectory, West Tanfield – location map.

## **Archaeological Watching Brief at The Old Rectory, West Tanfield**

### Introduction

In September 2008 ArcheType was requested by Mr Mark Cran to undertake archaeological work during development at the site know as The Old Rectory, West Tanfield, North Yorkshire. The development work comprised the demolition of existing outbuildings/extensions including a swimming pool, and the construction, on new foundations, of a replacement range of buildings including garages, stores, a conservatory and a workshop.

The site at the Old Rectory, West Tanfield, has heritage interest because of its position close to the centre of the medieval settlement, to the church, and to the Listed Building/Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 13274) known as the Marmion Tower (figs 1 & 2). This is the fifteenth century gatehouse of the fortified manor known as Tanfield Castle, the precise position of which is unknown.

Any development work in this area may reveal further evidence of the history and development of West Tanfield, and of Tanfield Castle, seat of the Marmion family, in particular.

The Old Rectory is not Listed as a building of historic or architectural interest, and is probably of late 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century date.

It was therefore requested by Hambleton District Council, the planning authority, in conjunction with North Yorkshire County Council Heritage Section, that an archaeological watching brief should take place during the development work. This should be to the standards and design laid out by North Yorkshire County Council Heritage Section in their standard 'Watching Brief' specification, a copy of which can be obtained from the Heritage Section at County Hall, Northallerton.

The archaeological work took place over 3 days in September and October 2008, after the demolition of the previous range of outbuildings/extensions. It included the supervision of a mechanical excavator and close inspection and photographic recording of the resulting foundation trenches.



### Observations

The area of the previous range of outbuildings/extensions, which included a small swimming pool, an orangery and a garage, lay to the west of the house, and was largely to be a central yard area within the new development, with the new stores etc extending beyond the existing footprint to the north, west and south.

The subsoil over the whole area consisted of cobbles, gravels and sandy soils which appeared to be glacially derived, though the possibility of river deposits cannot be excluded in this location. These were overlaid by a layer of loamy topsoil no more than 150mm in thickness. Disturbance by pipes and other services relating to the previous range of buildings was noted in the new foundation trenches across the site (figs 3 – 5), but there was no trace of structures or foundations relating to the medieval buildings contemporary with or earlier than the gatehouse (Marmion Tower), which are believed to exist in this area.

Part of the development involved the excavation of a substantial area at the south-west corner of the house. This revealed the external face of a stone-built cellar. For reasons of Health and Safety it was impossible to get very close to this face, but the photograph (fig 6) shows it to be constructed of good quality dressed sandstone blocks which may well have been re-used from another structure. These could have been brought in from elsewhere during the construction of the present house, or may have been re-used from a previous building on the site. If the latter, these are the only indication of an earlier building on the site of the Old Rectory.

### Conclusions

The watching brief at the site of The Old Rectory, West Tanfield, produced no evidence of medieval buildings on the site. The only suggestion of earlier structures came from the dressed stone used in the construction of the cellar of the Old Rectory, as revealed by excavation for an extension at the south-west corner of the structure.

It may be that the Old Rectory occupies the footprint of a major pre-existing building, with the outbuildings necessary to a medieval manorial complex located elsewhere on the site and so far undiscovered. However, it cannot be proved that the dressed blocks in the cellar came from this site. They may have been brought in from elsewhere.

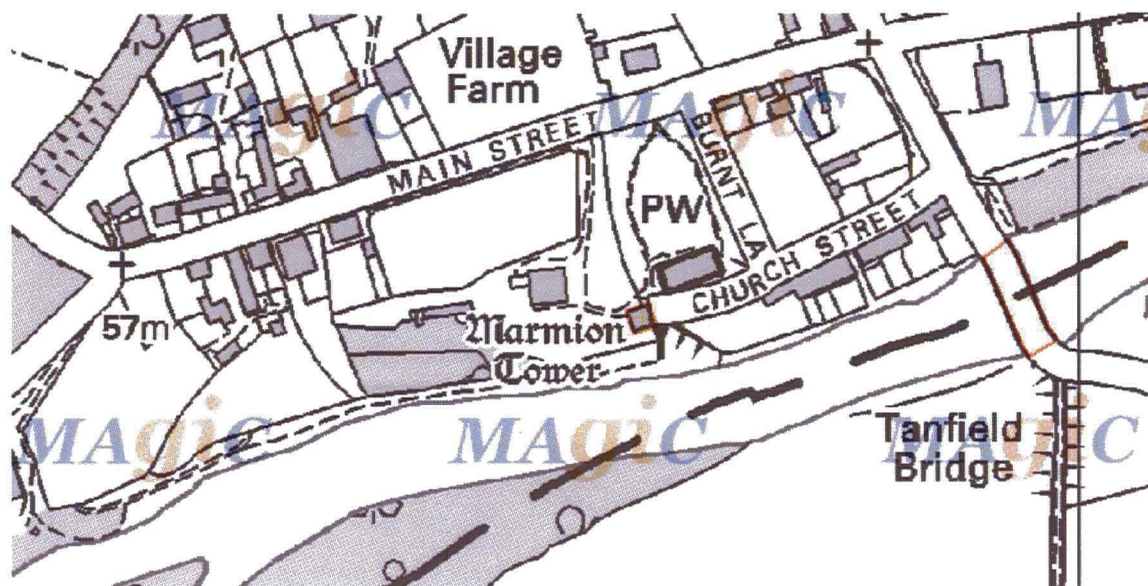


Fig 2 The Old Rectory, West Tanfield, showing its location to the west of the church and the 15<sup>th</sup> century medieval gatehouse known as Marmion Tower.





Fig 3. The Old Rectory, West Tanfield, showing the disturbance caused by the previous range of outbuildings/extension.



Fig 4. The Old Rectory, West Tanfield, showing the new foundation trench at the north-east corner of the site.





Fig 5. The Old Rectory, West Tanfield, showing the new foundation trench at the north-west corner of the site.

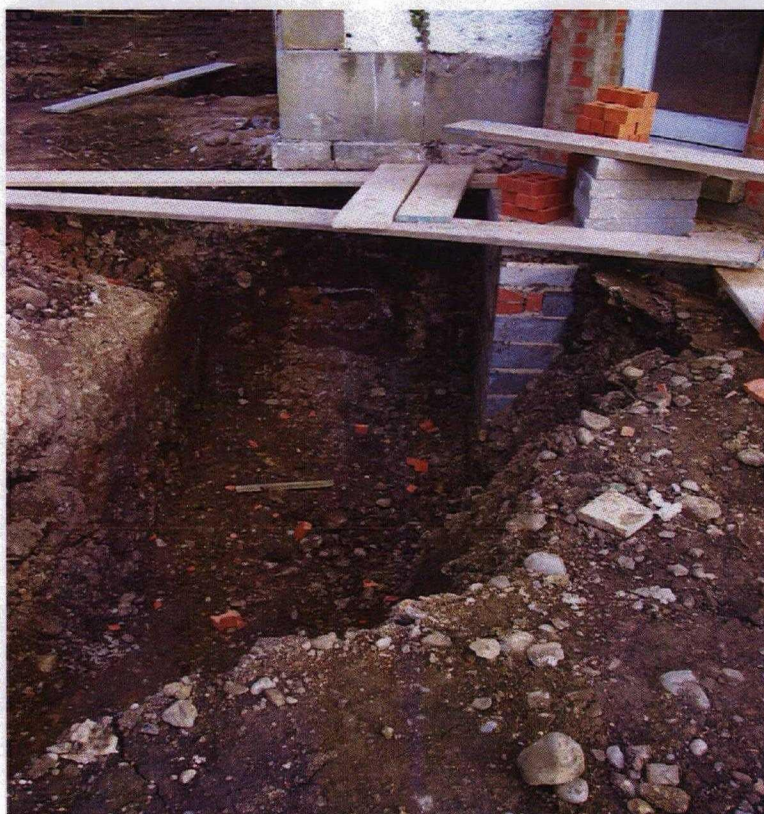


Fig 6. The Old Rectory, West Tanfield, showing the re-used stone in the exposed cellar wall (to the left of the brick and breeze block pillar).