

## **SOLIHULL, Elmdon Hall (SP 163 827)**

In March 2008, Solihull Archaeological Group was approached by Neil Cameron, a Park Ranger employed by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, asking if we would try to re-establish the exact footprint of Elmdon Hall. Elmdon Hall was an imposing Georgian Mansion, completed in 1795 by Isaac Spooner, on a ridge overlooking the Coventry Road, and was demolished in 1956.

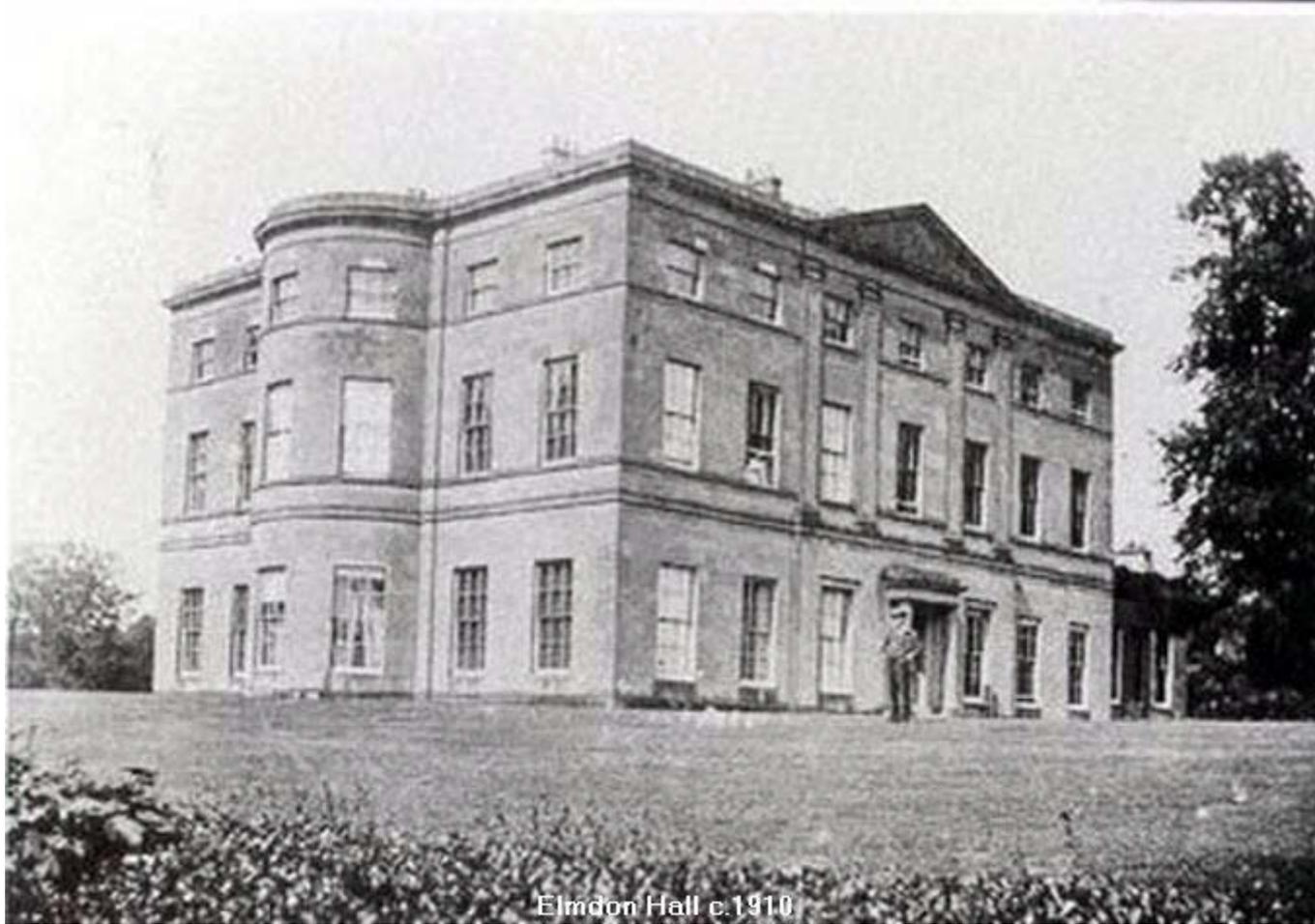
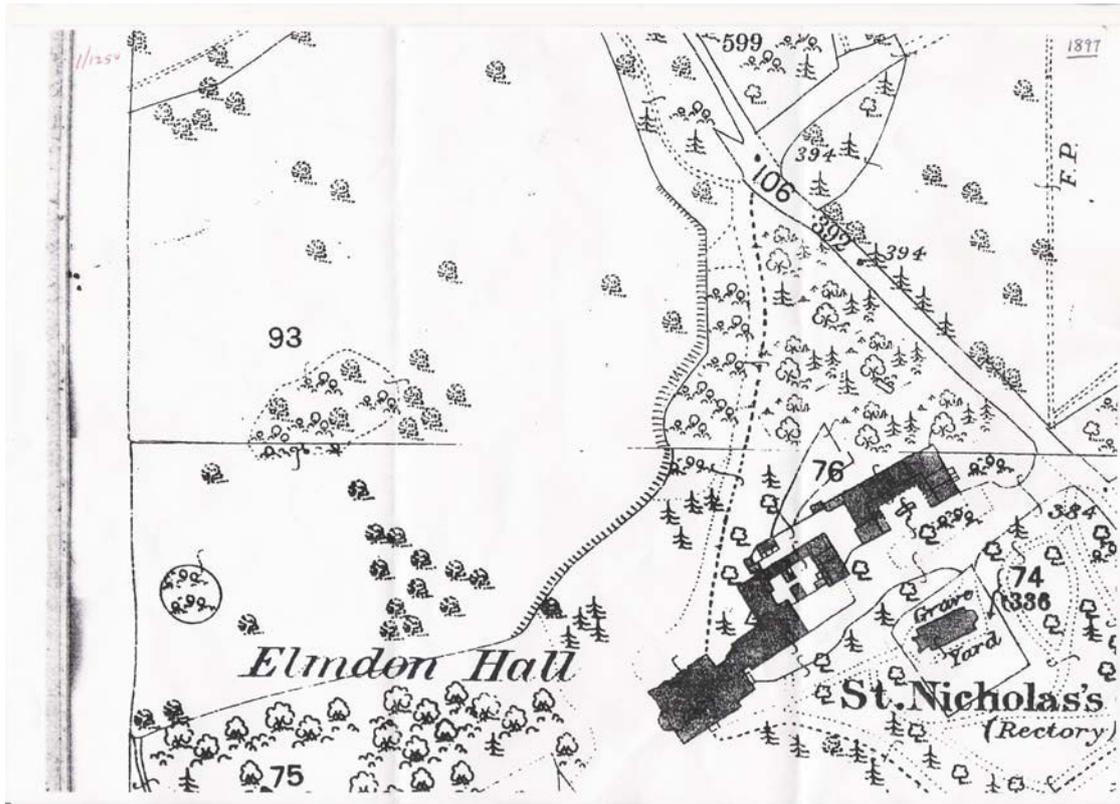
Documentary research was carried out and old maps consulted. Settlement on the ridge dates from Saxon times, through Norman, to a Tudor manor house built in 1547. The present church was rebuilt in 1781 over existing Saxon foundations.

In July 2008, using the 1897 map (below), poles, tape and prismatic compass, and with the help of Roger Bellis, a solo trans-Atlantic yachtsman, we took a bearing from the centre of the church door at approximately 240° along which we measured a distance of approximately 275ft, to establish the SW corner of the Hall. This exercise was much hampered by thick woodland in front of the church. Meanwhile others in the Group had dug several small test pits along one of the visible bumps in the ground, broadly where the Hall had stood. These uncovered a corner stone remaining from the foundations. The survey from the church arrived at a point within 4ft of this point, confirming its location and identity. Further test pits established the NW corner at a distance of 70ft and the other corners at right angles at 80ft. This was the main building, the rest of it and out-buildings now lie mostly under the car park and woodland.

The Council plan to mark the footprint permanently and to put up a display board describing the history of the settlements and Hall together with its interesting occupants - William Wilberforce married Spooner's eldest daughter in 1797, and Spooner was the originator of 'spoonerisms'!

The fact that the church has occupied the same spot since Saxon times implies that the Saxon and subsequent buildings were probably near it and so most likely under the old Hall, woodland and car park.

Malcolm Cook, Solihull Archaeological Group, September 2008



Elmdon Hall c.1910