

**A WATCHING BRIEF AT
OLDE CHURCH HOUSE, CLUNTON, SHROPSHIRE 2015**

by
H R HANNAFORD MCIFA

A Report for

Dr J. & Mrs A. Salmon

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In September 2015 the Archaeology Service carried out a watching brief on groundworks associated with the erection of an extension to the Olde Church House, Clunton, Craven Arms, Shropshire (NGR SO 3354 8133). The works also included the realignment of the entranceway on the road into the property.

1.2 Before the Norman Conquest the manor of Clunton had been held as three separate manors by Almund and Wulfric. At the time of the Domesday Survey, Clunton was held from Roger of Montgomery, Earl of Shrewsbury by Robert de Say (Picot), one of the Earl's leading men in Shropshire. The manor was four hides in extent with land for twelve ploughs. There were two ploughs and six slaves in lordship. Four villagers, eight smallholders, and a rider had a further two ploughs between them. The manor had five hedged enclosures. Before 1066 it had been valued at £7 14s for tax; this fell to just 5s after the Norman Conquest, but by the time of the Domesday Survey its value had recovered to 40s. The manor formed part of the de Say's Barony of Clun and descended in the de Say family until about 1199, when the barony passed to the FitzAlans and became part of the Barony of Oswestry and Clun. (Thorn & Thorn, 1986, 4,20,3 and notes).

1.3 Olde Church House is a mid-17th century timber framed cottage, which was extended in the mid-to late 19th century and with later additions and alterations. The house is a Grade II Listed Building (National List Entry [NLE] No. 1175668). The house adjoins the Church of St Mary, a chapel-of-ease dating to about 1870/71. Originally a dependent chapelry of Clun, Clunton became a chapel-of-ease to Clunbury when that became a separate parish from Clun in 1341. The chapel had been given by the last de Say (Isabel) to Wenlock Abbey before the end of the 12th century. It is not clear whether the present Church of St Mary occupies the site of the medieval chapel. The present church is also a Grade II Listed Building (NLE 1055005)

1.4 Because of the potential archaeological significance of the development area it was made a condition of the planning consent that the development should be accompanied by a programme of archaeological work, to comprise a watching brief on groundworks associated with the development. The Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council was commissioned to carry out this programme of archaeological work.

2 THE WATCHING BRIEF

2.1 On the street frontage, the groundworks comprised the cutting back of the western edge of the front garden to allow for the re-aligned entranceway to the property. The front garden was raised about 0.55m above the level of the existing driveway and the road to the north. The garden deposits comprised about 0.45m of dark grey-brown humic loam topsoil over 0.2m of a dark brown silty loam topsoil, over dark brown silty loam natural subsoil with cobbles, pebbles and gravel.

2.2 At the rear of the property the excavation of the foundation trenches for the new extension was monitored. The topsoil here was of a lesser depth of 0.15m and lay directly over the natural subsoil comprising a dark brown sandy silty loam with cobbles, pebbles and gravel.

2.3 No significant archaeological features or deposits were recorded during the watching brief.

3 REFERENCES:

Cranage, D H S, 1901: *The Churches of Shropshire*, Part 5, p395

Newman, J, & Pevsner, N, 2006: *The Buildings of England: Shropshire*, p228

Thorn, F and Thorn, C (eds), 1986: *Domesday Book: Shropshire*, Chichester



Photo 1: The development at Olde Church House, looking NW towards St Mary's Church.



Photo 2: The for the realigned entranceway, looking NE; scale bar 1m



Photo 3: The foundation trenches for the new extension, looking E.

OLDE CHURCH HOUSE, CLUNTON 2015