



global environmental solutions

Cambridge Court (The Hollies), Ellesmere, Shropshire

Archaeological recording of historic garden features

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CONTENTS

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| 1.0 INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| 1.1 Report purpose..... | 1 |
| 1.2 Site location | 1 |
| 1.3 Background | 1 |
| 1.4 Site works | 2 |
| 2.0 RESULTS | 3 |
| 2.1 Sunken garden | 3 |
| 2.2 Retaining wall | 4 |
| 3.0 DISCUSSION..... | 5 |
| 4.0 CLOSURE..... | 6 |
| 5.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... | 6 |
| 6.0 REFERENCES..... | 6 |

FIGURES

| | |
|--|----------|
| Figure 1 Site location..... | 1 |
| Figure 2 Scheme design..... | 2 |
| Figure 3 Topographic survey showing location of sunken garden | 3 |

PLATES

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Photographic plates 1 - 8 | 7 - 10 |
|--|---------------|

DRAWINGS

| | | |
|------------------|---|-----------|
| DRAWING 1 | Plan and sections of sunken garden and retaining wall..... | 12 |
|------------------|---|-----------|

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Report purpose

This report details the results of an archaeological watching brief to record features of historic interest within the gardens of The Hollies, Scotland Street, Ellesmere. The works were carried out in accordance with a Method Statement (SLR, February 2013) approved by Shropshire Council, and executed to discharge Condition 4 of the planning permission 11/04521/FUL for erection of seven dwellings. The new development within the former gardens of The Hollies, will be called Cambridge Court.

1.2 Site location

The Hollies is located on the north-western side of Scotland Street, Ellesmere, SY12 0ED, (SJ3964 3466) (Figure 1). The 0.9 acre development area lies within the formal gardens which extend to the north and east of the listed building. The development area is bordered by Scotland Street to the south-east, and by modern housing developments on the eastern and northern sides, with older properties to the south-west. It lies at c.95m AOD.

Figure 1
Site location (adapted from Frost 2011)



1.3 Background

A Desk-Based Assessment (DBA) was undertaken by Castlering Archaeology (Frost 2011) which identified the history of the site and its ownership. The formal gardens and house were developed by John Stanton during the early 19th century, but had fallen into disuse by the 1990s. The DBA flagged the existence of two historic features within the garden that had

sufficient heritage significance to require recording prior to their demolition as part of the proposed development. These features were a sunken garden and an associated retaining wall, which were heavily overgrown and being actively damaged by vegetation.

1.4 Site works

Development of Cambridge Court was begun at the end of April 2013, and involved demolition of the property boundary wall along Scotland Street, the excavation of service trenches and creation of an access road to 700mm depth, ground reduction and landscaping (Figure 2). While the site was still being set up, but after vegetation had been cleared, an archaeologist attended site on 1st May to record the historic garden features.

Figure 2
Scheme design

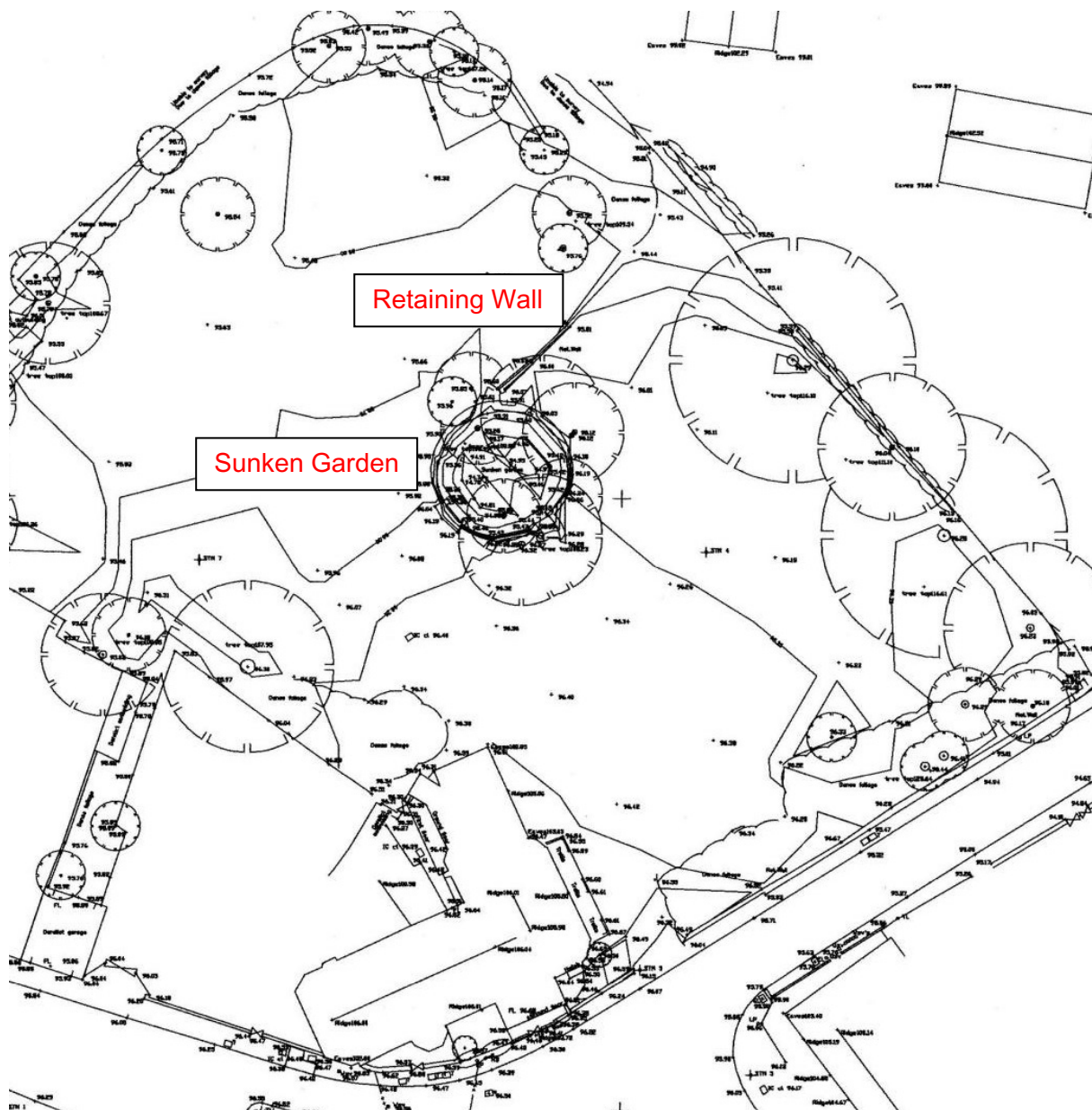


2.0 RESULTS

2.1 Sunken garden

The sunken garden (Figure 3) measured 12.5m in diameter and was 0.87m in depth, defined by a wall of irregularly coursed sandstone slabs, 0.2 – 0.8m length, 0.35m width and 0.2m thick (Plates 1 and 2, Drawing 1). The wall was probably of dry-stone construction originally, but earth and modern cement were noted as bonding material in places, and the wall had been capped with cast concrete. It was founded on broken brick mixed with concrete to a depth of 0.25 – 0.30m, set into a brown sandy-silt subsoil, above the natural orange sand.

Figure 3
Topographic survey showing location of sunken garden



The design of the sunken garden was circular with opposing entrances to the north-west and south-east (Drawing 1). These consisted of six steps, the top two of stone, and the basal four steps cast concrete (Plates 3 and 4). Dimensions were 1.3m length, 0.36m width, with 0.16m between steps. The steps were arranged with a slight curve down to the garden, and the steps were flanked by a pillar on each side at the top and base, constructed in a similar style to the coursed stone wall of the garden feature. These pillars were capped by square cast concrete blocks. The pillars were 0.7m high at the top of the steps, and c.1.3m high at the base.

Two benches were part of the sunken garden in opposing directions, set into the main wall on the south-western and north-eastern sides. These consisted of a single sandstone slab each 2.0m by 0.5m, and 0.10m thick. The front of the benches were supported on two pillars each of which were three courses of sandstone high, 0.25m, and were 0.50m x 0.32m in dimension (Plates 5 and 6).

A path constructed out of sandstone slabs connected the two entrance stairs, comprised of crazy paving raised 0.5m above the garden beds. This path was replicated following the interior circuit of the sunken garden wall.

Another path followed the external circuit of the wall along the top of the sunken garden.

2.2 Retaining wall

Built in the same style as the sunken garden wall, a retaining wall ran north-eastwards from the sunken garden (Figure 3, Plate 7). It was 7.8m in length, 0.32m wide, and 0.7m high constructed of roughly squared sandstone slabs and concrete. Two courses of stone had been laid into the brown sandy-silt subsoil as a foundation above natural sands (Drawing 1). Two sandstone steps connected the retaining wall with the top of the sunken garden. The top one was 0.75m in length, 0.3m wide, and 0.2m high, the bottom one was 1m in length, 0.3m wide, and 0.15m high (Plate 8).

A path followed the retaining wall along its north-western side. It was constructed in the same fashion as the paths within and around the sunken garden. Beneath it a ceramic drainage pipe was detected at c.0.4m below the garden surface (Plate 7).

3.0 DISCUSSION

The archaeological investigation has provided a record of the now demolished historic garden features that lay within the grounds of The Hollies. The assumption had been made that these may have been dated to the early 19th century garden design, and an indication of where the sunken garden was located is given against John Woods' 1835 map of Ellesmere (Frost 2011, Fig. 3 p.9). The depiction of this feature, however, is not clear on that map, and does not feature on the Tithe or Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping of the later 19th century, when other aspects of the garden layout are represented.

The style of stonework and use of concrete steps and capping, and the crazy paving of the paths, all suggest that a more likely period of construction would have been in the 20th century, post-dating the 1926 OS map on which the feature is not shown. Until the vegetation had been removed such observation would have proved difficult, and it is understandable how an assumption was reached that these features were probably of greater antiquity than it now appears.

The investigation and this report have ensured compliance with the approved method statement, and forms an appropriate record for discharge of the planning condition.

4.0 CLOSURE

This report has been prepared by SLR Consulting Limited with all reasonable skill, care and diligence, and taking account of the manpower and resources devoted to it by agreement with the client. Information reported herein is based on the interpretation of data collected and has been accepted in good faith as being accurate and valid.

This report is for the exclusive use of Gordon Mytton Developments Ltd; no warranties or guarantees are expressed or should be inferred by any third parties. This report may not be relied upon by other parties without written consent from SLR.

SLR disclaims any responsibility to the client and others in respect of any matters outside the agreed scope of the work.

5.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are given to Lee Mytton (Gordon Mytton Developments Ltd) in commissioning the watching brief, to Kevin Slack, Greenspace Architects, Andy Cottle Civil Engineers for arranging access and providing machine clearance of the sunken garden, to Dr Andy Wigley of Shropshire Council (Historic Environment Team), and Mathew Jones of CR Archaeology for undertaking the archaeological recording. The report has been written by Tim Malim and illustrations completed by Caroline Malim.

6.0 REFERENCES

Frost P., 2011 Land Adjoining the Hollies, Scotland Street, Ellesmere: Archaeological Appraisal Castleryng Archaeology report No. 363

SLR Consulting 2013 Cambridge Court, formerly The Hollies, Ellesmere, Shropshire: Method Statement for an Archaeological Watching Brief



Plate 1: Sunken Garden during clearance of vegetation



Plate 2: Sunken Garden after removal of vegetation and archaeological investigation



Plate 3: Sunken Garden wall, foundation, raised path and steps looking southwest



Plate 4: Detail of steps and path construction



Plate 5: Bench on north-western side of Sunken Garden



Plate 6: foundations for bench

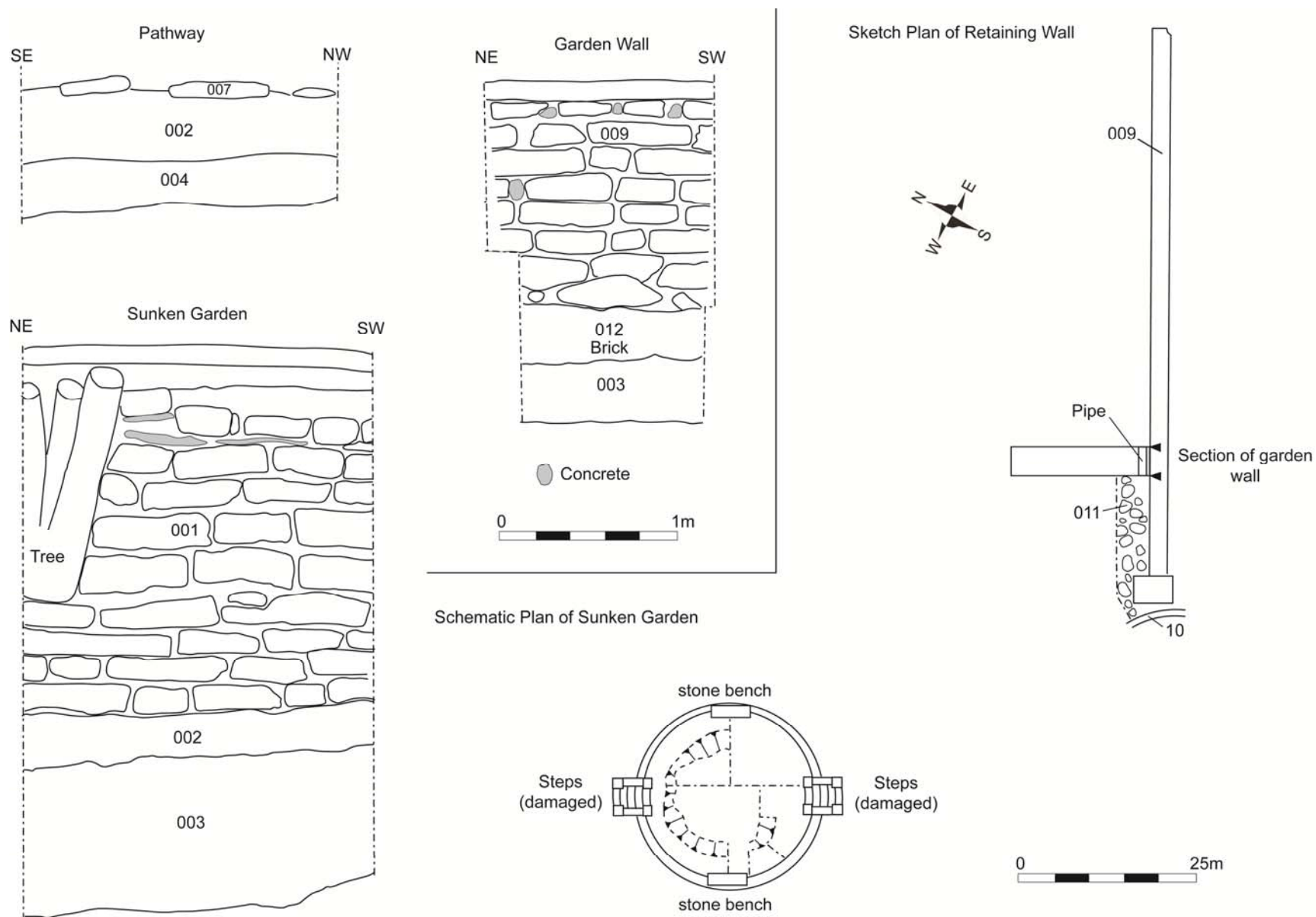


Plate 7: Retaining (dividing) wall looking southwest, and foundations looking east



Plate 8: steps down from retaining wall on to path

DRAWINGS



Drawing 1 Plan and sections of sunken garden and retaining wall



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