

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK AT BRAMBLE COTTAGE, FLECKNOE, WARWICKSHIRE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This short report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief of the excavation of foundations for a double garage in the garden of Bramble Cottage, Flecknoe, in the parish of Wolfhampton, near the eastern border of Warwickshire (N.G.R: SP 5145 6345; fig.1a).

The groundworks were monitored by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit on Thursday 17th March 1994 as part of the required planning conditions for the development within a project specification agreed with the Warwickshire Museum, the curatorial body for archaeology in Warwickshire. The work was carried out on behalf of Mr John Lee of Bramble Cottage.

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site is situated on the north-west side of Flecknoe which is thought to be a Shrunken Medieval Village (Warwickshire Sites and Monuments Record number **WA3042**; fig.1b). In the early 18th century the noted antiquarian William Dugdale listed Flecknoe as the largest and chief village of Wolfhampcote, he also mentioned a chapel (**WA 6372**), believed to be situated at the top of the field immediately west of Bramble Cottage (Dugdale 1730,304). A number of earthworks indicative of more extensive former settlement can be seen in pasture fields around the village. Around Flecknoe Farm on the east side of village these resemble abandoned house platforms, hollow ways and trackways, and a pond. Whereas in the field west of Bramble Cottage possible hollow ways, field boundaries and pits - possibly the result of quarrying - can be discerned.

In addition to these earthworks, the following archaeological sites are listed by the Warwickshire Sites and Monuments Record:

WA 2948 Manor Farm (N.G.R: SP 5173 6348), a post-medieval manor farmhouse with later additions, Listed Building Grade II. In advance of a housing development an area next to Manor Farm was evaluated in June 1992 by the Warwickshire Museum (**WA 6406**).

WA 3041 Church of Saint Mark (N.G.R: SP 5142 6350), a small late 19th-century red brick building with decorative blue brick features, situated on the north side of the hollow way immediately north of Bramble Cottage which may be an ancient drovers road to Northampton (Mr Lee pers.comm.).

3.0 THE WATCHING BRIEF (fig.1c)

Given the sensitive location of the development, excavation of the foundations for the double garage was archaeologically monitored. The area for the garage and its access driveway was cleared of topsoil to a depth of c.0.2m beneath the present ground surface. Subsequently, the foundations for the garage were dug by JCB-machine to a depth of 1m beneath the present ground surface using a 0.7m wide trenching-bucket. The dimensions of the trenches were 5.5m on the east and west sides of the garage, and c.7m on the northern side. At the front of the garage two short return

trenches were dug, each 0.75m long, together with a trench 1m in length in the middle for a central brick pier.

The trenches were sample cleaned in plan and section and recorded down to natural horizons using pro-forma record cards, a photographic record was maintained throughout and a sketch plan made of the site. This data comprises the project archive which will be deposited with Warwickshire Museum.

4.0 SUMMARY

No deposits or features of archaeological importance were discovered. There was a simple stratigraphic sequence consisting of a rich dark brown loam, containing crushed brick and charcoal flecks and 19th and 20th century pot-sherds, forming a gardensoil horizon 0.3m deep beneath the lawn-surface. This overlay a grey-brown clay-silt layer between 0.2m and 0.5m thick, containing a mixture of soil components from the overlying topsoil and the underlying weathered Lower Lias clays. The interface between the clay-silt and the overlying topsoil was indistinct, consistent with prolonged use of the site as a garden/orchard. Two poorly defined features containing a topsoil/clay-silt mix cut the clean light brown Lower Lias clays which lay under the clay-silt, these were interpreted as grubbed up tree-pits.

In addition, it is worth noting that the natural fall of the ground from south to north as seen in the field to the west of Bramble Cottage has been modified by a build-up of superficial deposits against the boundary of the site and the hollow way on its north side. The original slope-profile seen in the natural clays closely mirrors the fall of the road on the west side of the site.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

Flecknoe is situated on the eastern boundary of the *Feldon* region of Warwickshire. In general, nucleated villages with outlying enclosure-period farms are typical of the region, although rural settlement in the county is equally characterised by its diversity (Slater and Bartley 1981,1). There are a number of farms situated on the edge of the settlement which may reflect the typical pattern outlined above, although the pattern of earthworks around the village appears to indicate that the multi-period agglomeration which can be seen today was preceded by an earlier, and possibly larger, settlement nestling in the lea of Bush Hill. The extent and date of this earlier phase of the village would require excavation to confirm, as evidence is confined to those areas of earthwork which have not been ploughed or built over together with imprecise documentary evidence.

However, evidence from standing buildings suggests that the north-west corner of the village around the Church of Saint Mark and the stylistically similar Village Hall is probably a 19th century accretion, and that Flecknoe's earlier core probably lies around Flecknoe Farm on the eastern side of the present day village.

6.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was carried out by Steve Litherland and the accompanying figure drafted by Mark Breedon of B.U.F.A.U. The text was edited by Gwilym Hughes who also drafted the project specification. Thanks are also due to Douglas Moir of the Warwickshire Museum for additional information from the Sites and Monuments Record for Warwickshire.

7.0 REFERENCES

Dugdale, W. 1730 *The Antiquities of Warwickshire*

Slater, T. & Bartley, G. 1981 *Rural Settlement in Warwickshire*