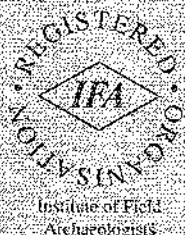




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Church Cottage, Wychnor,
Staffordshire:
An Archaeological Watching
Brief

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit



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Church Cottage, Wychnor, Staffordshire:
An Archaeological Watching Brief

by
S.LITHERLAND

For further information please contact:
Simon Buteux or Iain Ferris (Directors)
Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
The University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham B15 2TT
Tel: 0121 414 5513
Fax: 0121 414 5516
E-Mail: BUFAU@bham.ac.uk
Web Address: <http://www.bufau.bham.ac.uk>

**Church Cottage, Wychnor, Staffordshire:
An Archaeological Watching Brief**

Contents

<i>Summary</i>	<i>1</i>
Introduction	1
Archaeological background	1
Aims	2
Method	2
Results	2
Discussion	2
Acknowledgements	3
References	3

List of figures

1. General location plan, based upon OS 1:50,000
2. The development site (1:500)

Church Cottage, Wychnor, Staffordshire: An Archaeological Watching Brief

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on an extension to Church Cottage, Wychnor, Staffordshire (NGR SK 177 162) on 13th October 2000. The development site lies within the deserted medieval village of Wychnor, recorded on the County Sites and Monuments Record as PRN 00128, and is adjacent to a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The aim of the watching brief was to identify and record any archaeological features affected by the cutting of foundation trenches for the extension, and was required by East Staffordshire Borough Council as a condition of planning consent. The watching brief followed an archaeological evaluation in March 2000 and a watching brief that was carried out in June 2000 on land immediately north of Church Cottage. Those excavations found evidence of drainage gullies that were broadly medieval in date, but no actual settlement activity. No further evidence of medieval activity was found during the present watching brief. The only archaeological feature affected by the ground works for the new extension was a well of Victorian date.

Introduction

This report details the results of archaeological observation of the foundations for an extension to Church Cottage, Wychnor (NGR SK 177 162, Figs 1 & 2). The work was commissioned by DS Design on behalf of Mr and Mrs Windley and was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit in October 2000. The watching brief was carried out in order to fulfill a condition of planning consent (Application no. HO/01280/003), and was undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation prepared by BUFAU (Litherland 2000).

The development site lies within the deserted medieval village of Wychnor (Staffordshire Sites and Monuments Record Number 00128). Much of the area of the deserted medieval village lies in a field to the south of Wychnor Church that has been designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Church Cottage is situated about 30m north of Wychnor Church, outside of the area of the Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Archaeological background

Wychnor is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 as being held by Robert of Stafford (Darby 1977). It is described as consisting of four villagers and two smallholders, with land for four ploughs, a mill, meadow and woodland with a total value of 15s. The village lies on sloping ground immediately above the edge of the floodplain of the River Trent. The drift geology consists of sands and gravels. The basic pattern of

settlement in medieval Staffordshire was established early in the medieval period, and did not alter dramatically in the following two centuries. Wychnor bridge was on Icknield Street and provided an important crossing over the marshy valleys of the River Trent (*VCH Staffs. Vol. II*). Such was its importance that it was gifted oak trees from the crown forest at Cannock Chase. However, from the 14th century one in every two villages or hamlets began to disappear in southeast Staffordshire, possibly in response to generalised climatic deterioration, although other localised factors were always important (Palliser 1976).

Aims

The aim of the archaeological watching brief was to record any archaeological remains uncovered during the course of groundwork in order to contribute to an understanding of the nature, extent and significance of archaeological remains within the area.

Method

The foundation trench for the extension was cut under archaeological supervision. It was 0.8m wide and was excavated to a depth of c.0.6m. The sections and base of the trench were then manually cleaned and any significant archaeological deposits were examined, recorded and photographed to provide information concerning the survival and complexity of feature fills, and to recover artefactual evidence. Where no archaeological deposits were identified, the stratigraphy was also recorded and photographed. These records comprise the site archive, which, at the time of writing, is stored at Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit.

Results

The top of the clean orangey-red natural sands and gravels occurred at a depth of c.0.6m from the ground surface. These natural deposits were sealed by a 0.3m-thick, weathered subsoil horizon containing organic materials and silt, which in turn was overlain by 0.3m of topsoil.

Only one archaeological feature was observed. This was a brick-lined well that was c.10m deep. The build of the well indicated that it was probably contemporary with the construction of Church Cottage sometime in the 19th century.

Discussion

While no evidence of medieval activity was found during the watching brief it should be borne in mind that the actual area observed was extremely limited in size.

Acknowledgements

The watching brief was carried out by Roy Krakowicz and the report produced by Stephen Litherland. The illustrations are by Nigel Dodds. The project was monitored by Chris Wardle, the Heritage Data Manager for Staffordshire County Council. Thanks are also due to David Smith (DS Design) for his assistance.

References

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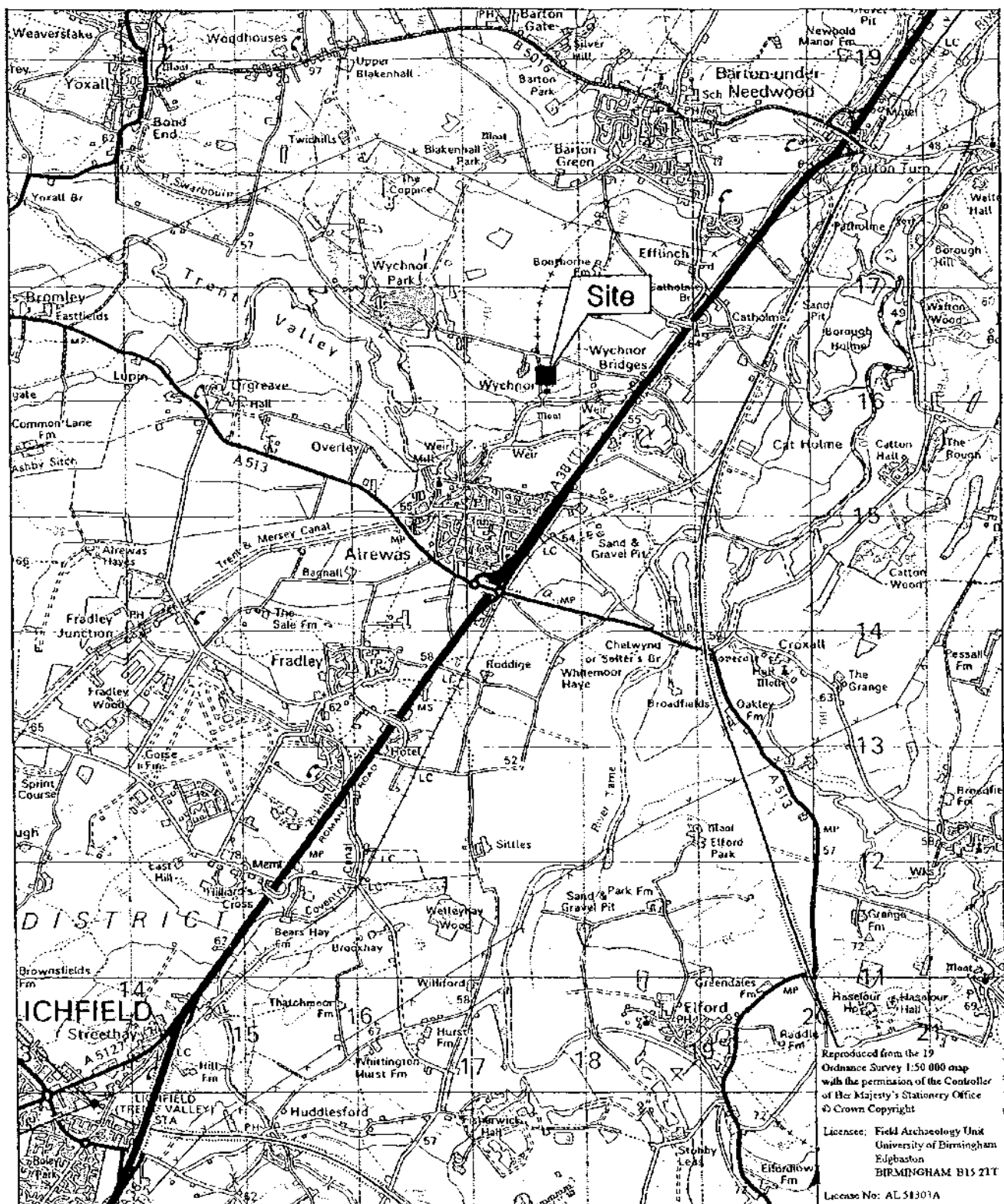


Fig.1

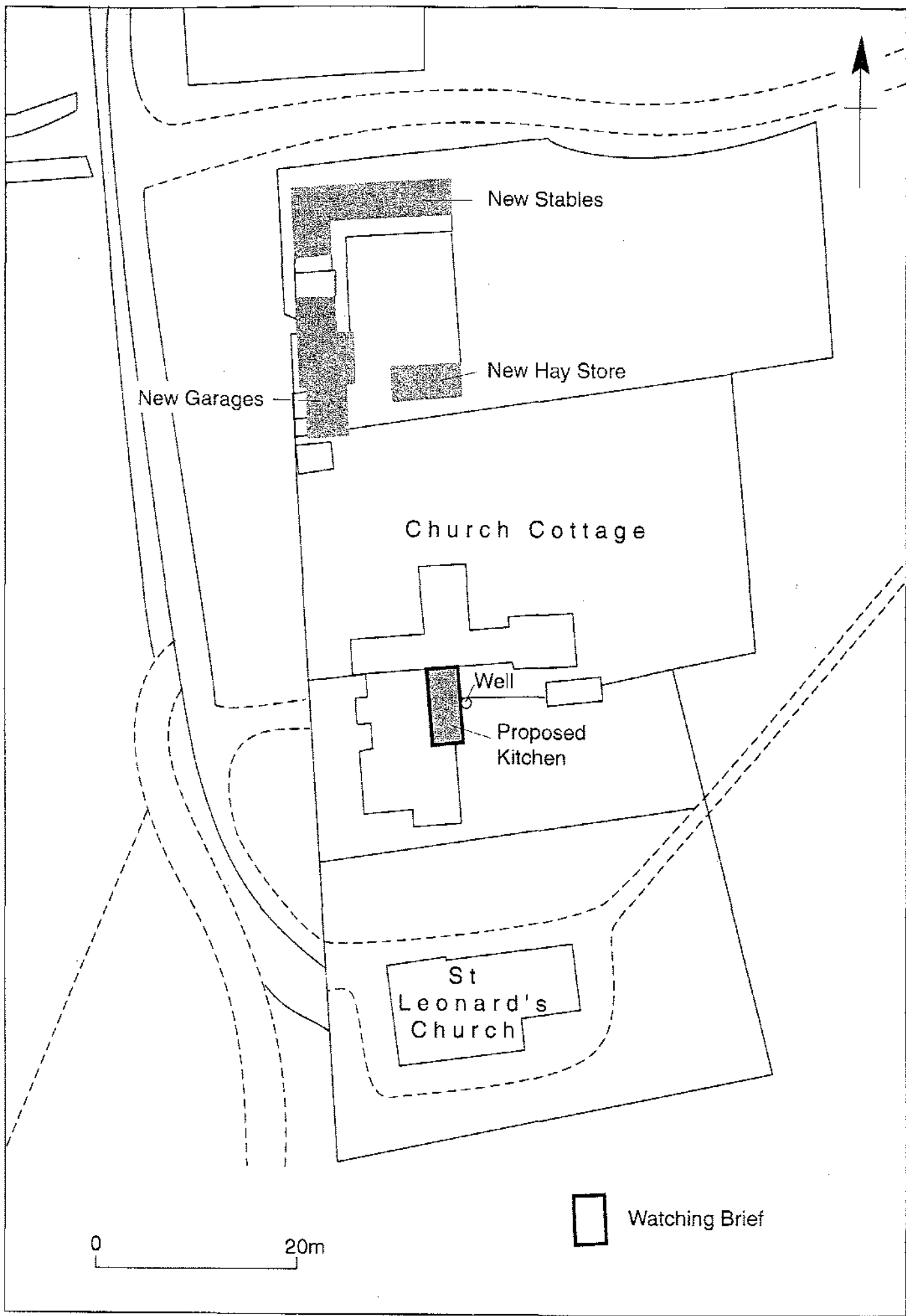


Fig.2