



# Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

**A report on archaeological monitoring during  
alterations and groundworks at Bridgford Hall,  
Nottingham, 2016**

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# Bridgford Hall

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## A report on archaeological monitoring during alterations and groundworks at Bridgford Hall, Nottingham, 2016

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### Summary

Restricted areas of ground disturbance accompanied demolition and re-building works at West Bridgford Hall. These exposed a 19<sup>th</sup>-century well, but indicated that otherwise, these former service areas added to the 18<sup>th</sup>-century hall contained no earlier remains.

### Introduction and Background

Bridgford Hall is a Grade II-listed building which lies at the heart of the commercial centre of West Bridgford, Nottingham (NGR: SK 58762 37724; Fig 1). To the south-west lies Bridgford Road, leading to and from the River Trent bridge crossing, past Bridge Field on the north side of the hall. To the north lies housing along Edward Road, while to the south and east lies the arc of Albert Road, skirting some of the former gardens of the hall, now Bridgford Park.

The hall was constructed between 1768 and 1774 by Mundy Musters Jnr and his son John. The Musters family had held the manor of West Bridgford since at least 1697, although there is currently no evidence that the current Bridgford Hall site was ever used for an earlier building, whether manorial or not.

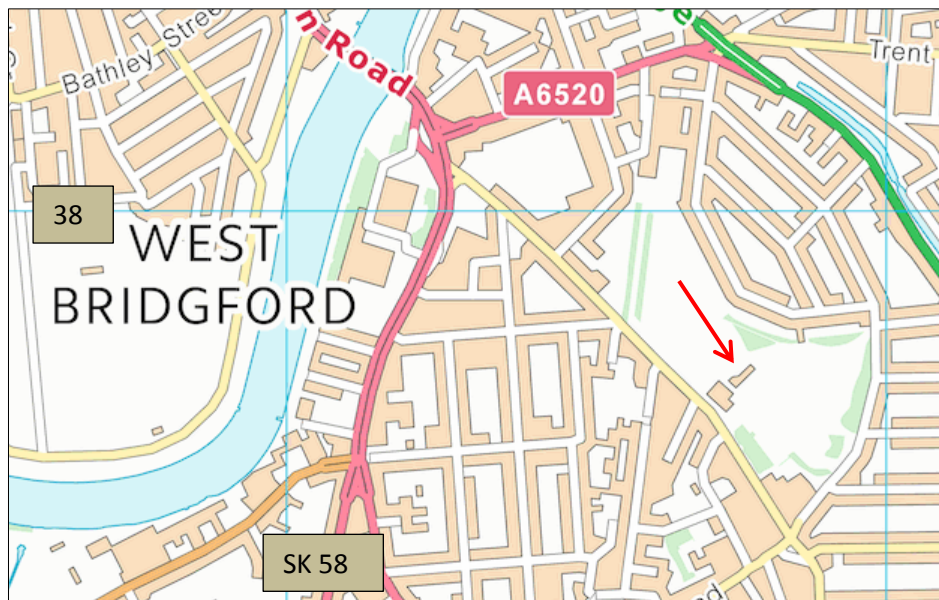


Fig 1: Site location (arrowed). Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2016

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The Musters family gradually began to favour their other properties and Bridgford was let out to successive tenants. In 1840 the tenancy fell to Lewis Heyman, Lace Manufacturer (1802-69), a prominent figure in Nottingham's lace industry the tenancy passed to his son Albert who in 1883 bought the hall outright. In 1923 it was sold by Heyman to West Bridgford Urban District Council, forerunner to the present Rushcliffe Borough Council, who own it to this day.

The hall is depicted at varying levels of accuracy from the Ordnance Survey Surveyors' drawing of 1815 (British Library) onwards, but it is not until the 1880s that the first reliable depictions were made, on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map (Dix et al 2015)

Planning- and Listed Building Consents were given to Rushcliffe Council for the conservation, refurbishment and extension of existing uses at Bridgford Hall with the aid of Heritage Lottery Fund funding (Consents: 15/01168/FUL; 15/01169/LBC).

As part of this, low-impact works of ground-disturbance have taken place to the front and rear of the building as follows:

- Replacement of a ramped access with a lift access at the west end of the building-front, with re-surfacing.
- Demolition of single-storey rear extension and reduction/levelling of ground for a replacement single-storey extension

## *Archaeological Objectives*

The aim of the archaeological fieldwork was as follows, set out in a foregoing Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) by Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd:

- To determine and understand the nature, function, character and development of any archaeological remains which may lie beneath the proposed buildings, in their cultural and environmental setting
- To record the extent, nature and date of any archaeological features or deposits that may be disturbed during the ground-works programme for the north and central areas of the new development.
- To preserve by record archaeological features or deposits impacted therein and report on them.

## *Research Agenda*

The relevant background research agendas have been published by Cooper (2006) and Knight et al (2012). Cooper (2006, 245-6), set out the agenda concerning the origins and development of country houses, estates and gardens. Likewise, Knight et al (2012) set out Research Objective 9.5 concerning country gardens and estates. As will be seen below, the current site appears to have little to contribute to either.

Received wisdom indicates that the current hall is the product of four main phases of development:

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1. The main block of c1768-74
2. A single storey service extension of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century;
3. A roughly coeval Billiard Room
4. The increase of the single storey service range to three storeys and the construction of adjacent stables
5. Local authority single storey rear extension and infill of post-1923.

This structural development of the hall, summarised in Fig 2, below, is fully highlighted in Dix et al (2015) and is not further elucidated here.



Fig 2: Block-phasing of the hall, with areas of archaeological monitoring (Andy Isham, with acknowledgement to Purcell, Architects).

## Fieldwork

The areas of archaeological monitoring are depicted in Figure 2.

### *Works at the front of the house*

In the angle formed by the two parts of the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup>-century service range lay a tarmacked yard with a disabled-access ramp to a pedestrian door in the south-western end of the hall. This was planned to be the location of a new lift access.

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A rectangular area of tarmac was cut with a floor saw and then reduced by a 5-ton tracked mechanical excavator under archaeological control.

Beneath the tarmac lay a sub-base of rolled chippings. Under this lay directly the sandy-gravel natural geology of the Trent valley river gravels. There was no former topsoil, subsoil or earlier laid surfaces. The natural sandy gravel was very soft and disturbed at the top, where there lay some disused salt-glazed drains under the former concrete access ramp, to which they had adhered. It became denser and more gravelly at depth.

The only archaeological feature present was a brick-built well, 1.6m in diameter externally with a single brick skin. The uppermost surviving six courses of brick had been re-built and bonded in cement mortar, and the well spanned with an RSJ and provided with a plastic-pipe for an overflow. It had then been capped using large slabs of York Stone, before being tarmacked over. The original top of the well had not survived.

The depth to water level was 4.2m and upon pumping, the water was found to be about 1m deep. Once emptied it could be seen that the old upper brick courses, broken up, lay at the base of the well. The well had been constructed in a standard 19<sup>th</sup>-century fashion using an iron hoop at the base, dug down within a hand-excavated cylindrical shaft, the bricks being laid above the hoop, which was then dropped bit by bit. The hoop remained *in-situ* at the base.

Since this location was that of the planned lift pit, the well was removed and capped in concrete at depth.

The area stripped was then doubled in size to the south-west but no other archaeology was present. The ground had been reduced previously, and the tarmac yard was the only surviving surfacing.



Fig 3: The well as uncovered, with its York Stone capping, looking north-east; scale 1m



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Fig 4: The well, capping removed, showing the rebuilt uppermost courses, RSJ and overflow pipe, looking south-west; scales 1m

## *Works at the rear of the house*

The area for a new single storey extension was stripped by machine using a toothless ditching bucket under archaeological control. This was the site of a post-1923 outbuilding.

Under a modern concrete yard surface lay very disturbed topsoil c400mm thick, over natural river terrace sands and gravels. There was no pre-1923 archaeology present.

It was noted that the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup>-century service range, both in its single storey and its three-storey phases, utilised foundations of only two offset courses of bricks on top of a single course of stone blocks. The building at this point appears to have no other foundations.



Fig 5: Composite photo-montage showing the exposed rear of the 1886 building after demolition of the modern accretions and ground reduction. Scales 1m and 2m



Fig 6: Detail showing the flimsy brick offset and single course of stone foundation; scale 1m

## Conclusions

There was no archaeology present which pre-dated the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century. There were no artefacts or material finds. No pre-modern surfaces were present.

The well indicates that the angle at the south-west end of the house was a yard serving the nearby kitchens and possibly the adjacent stable too. Its location, along with that of the service ranges, off to the south-west (on the library site) meant that such buildings and area uses, could be screened by planting and did not clutter or spoil views of the front approach to the house (from the east, now municipal gardens), or the more important garden front (now grass and car-park to the north-west), which was a view of family relaxation and leisure and one with which to impress invited guests.

Since the well was only constructed to relate to the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century service wing, there remains no indication of the location of an earlier well. This may have been in a basement kitchen.

## Bibliography

Cooper N, 2006 *The archaeology of the East Midlands: an archaeological resource assessment and research agenda*; Leicester Archaeology Monograph **13**

Dix H, Humphries S, and Highton L, 2015 *Bridgford Hall: Conservation Management Plan*, Purcell

Knight D, Vyner B, and Allen C, 2012 *East Midlands Heritage: an updated research agenda and strategy for the historic environment of the East Midlands*, Nottingham University/English Heritage



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## Appendix

### *OASIS data*

Project Name	Bridgford Hall, West Bridgford, Nottingham
OASIS ID	Iainsode1-258016
Project Type	Watching Brief
Originator	Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd
Project Manager	Iain Soden
Previous/future work	No
Current land use	In use as a building
Development type	Alterations
Reason for investigation	Planning Condition (LBC)
National grid reference	SK 58762 37724
Start/end dates of fieldwork	16 May 2016- 24 June 2016
Archive recipient	Nottinghamshire Museums
Study area	200 sq m



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

19 July 2016