



# Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

## An archaeological desk-based assessment of land adjacent to Bank House, Church Stowe, Northamptonshire

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## **An archaeological Desk-Based Assessment of land adjacent to Bank House, Church Stowe**

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### **Summary**

The site includes massive earthworks which indicate the location of limestone quarries which were dug or vastly expanded probably from around 1910. Before that the site has a well-mapped agricultural history going back to 1773. Its history has been traced from c1720 at around the time of Inclosure which had been by a series of private agreements.

### **Introduction**

It is proposed to build a new house within the enveloping curve of deep earthworks just north of the Heyford Road in Church Stowe, also called Stowe IX Churches. (NGR: SP 6400 5700; Fig 1). The earthworks are very dramatic and so deep that in recent years they have supported single-storey timber agricultural buildings which, owing to their depth in the hollow, are partly obscured from the road (Fig 2). At the corner of the Heyford Road and Main Street, south-west of the site, is Bank House, a modern brick home which takes its name from the earthworks, Bank House.

This archaeological assessment has consulted The Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record, The Northamptonshire Record Office and The Northamptonshire Local Studies Library, together with a site visit to view the plot.

Many thanks to Charlotte Walker, Historic Environment Advisor at the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record, and to Bryn Gethin of Archaeology Warwickshire for his expert eye on LiDAR images of the site. Thanks also to the staff of Northamptonshire Record Office and Northamptonshire Libraries.

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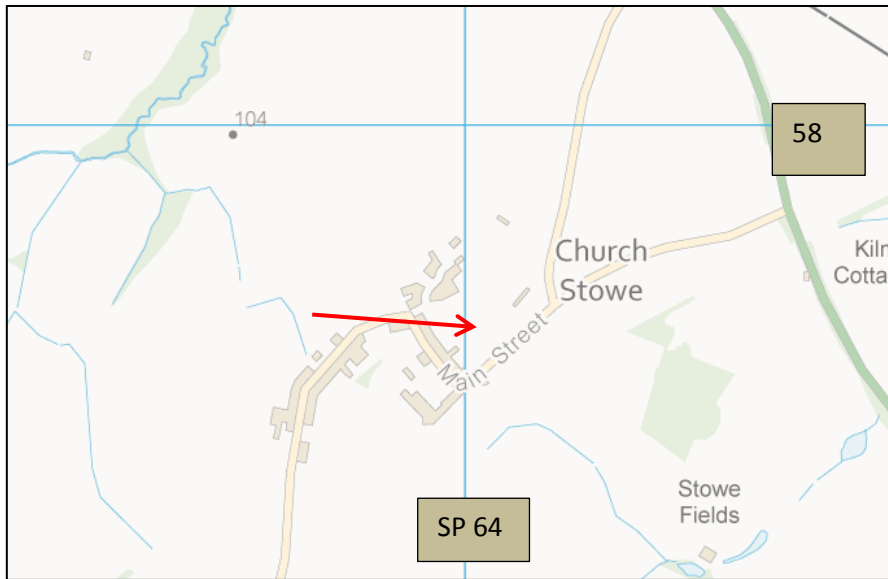


Fig 1: Site location (arrowed). Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2016

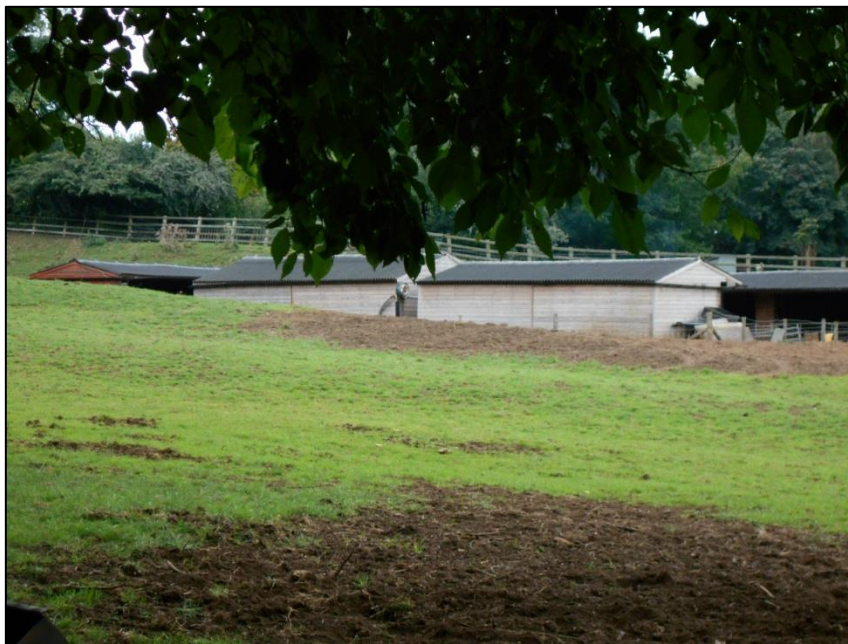


Fig 2: View of the site, looking north from the Heyford Road. Note the depth at which the modern agricultural buildings sit within the hollow.



Fig 3: View of the site looking west from Pit Cottages along the former Pound Close (see below). That portion of the earthworks recorded by AE Brown (see below) in the former Pound Close have been smoothed out in recent decades.

### **Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record**

The Pre-Conquest archaeology of the village of Church Stowe has been the subject of academic enquiry for some time, most notably in respect of rare, surviving Anglo-Saxon boundary charters which reveal it as an important pre-conquest estate (Brown et al 1981). There is a notable fragment of Anglo-Saxon Cross-shaft built into the north-west corner of the parish church tower, with others elsewhere in the structure (Fig 4; Taylor and Taylor 1965; Brown et al, op cit, 1981).

Little above ground, but the parish church, survives of the medieval village of Church Stowe, and the historic building stock is of 17<sup>th</sup> century and later dates.



Fig 4: Anglo-Saxon cross-shaft with interlace decoration, built as a quoin into the medieval parish church tower

The earthworks of the village core were the subject of a survey in the 1980s by academic archaeologist, A E Brown, formerly of University of Leicester, including the present site. The results are deposited in the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record (ENN 103903). These were also later published by Brown (1987, 78-9 & fig 42). His interpretations concentrated upon those earthworks to the north of the parish church and west of Manor Farm, which were felt to be medieval. However, although they mapped those to the south east of Manor Farm, including the present site, they did not interpret them (see Fig 5, below). These have since been somewhat softened by concerted levelling (Fig 3).

The earthworks have previously elsewhere been interpreted as medieval agricultural lynchets or terraces, and this is recorded in relation to four oblique-angle aerial photographs in the Northamptonshire HER (ENN 6457). These give only partial views of the current site, due to trees and light conditions were not ideal for showing up earthworks.

The terrace interpretation fails to take account of the fact that there are no such terraces anywhere in the medieval agricultural fields of this otherwise quite undulating parish; nor do the photographs show the current site particularly well. In the most recent synthesis of county-wide data, the site was not included as agricultural but was classed as part of the village core (Partida et al 2013, map 54M). As will be seen, a far more reliable interpretation lies in the industrial history of this geologically startling settlement.

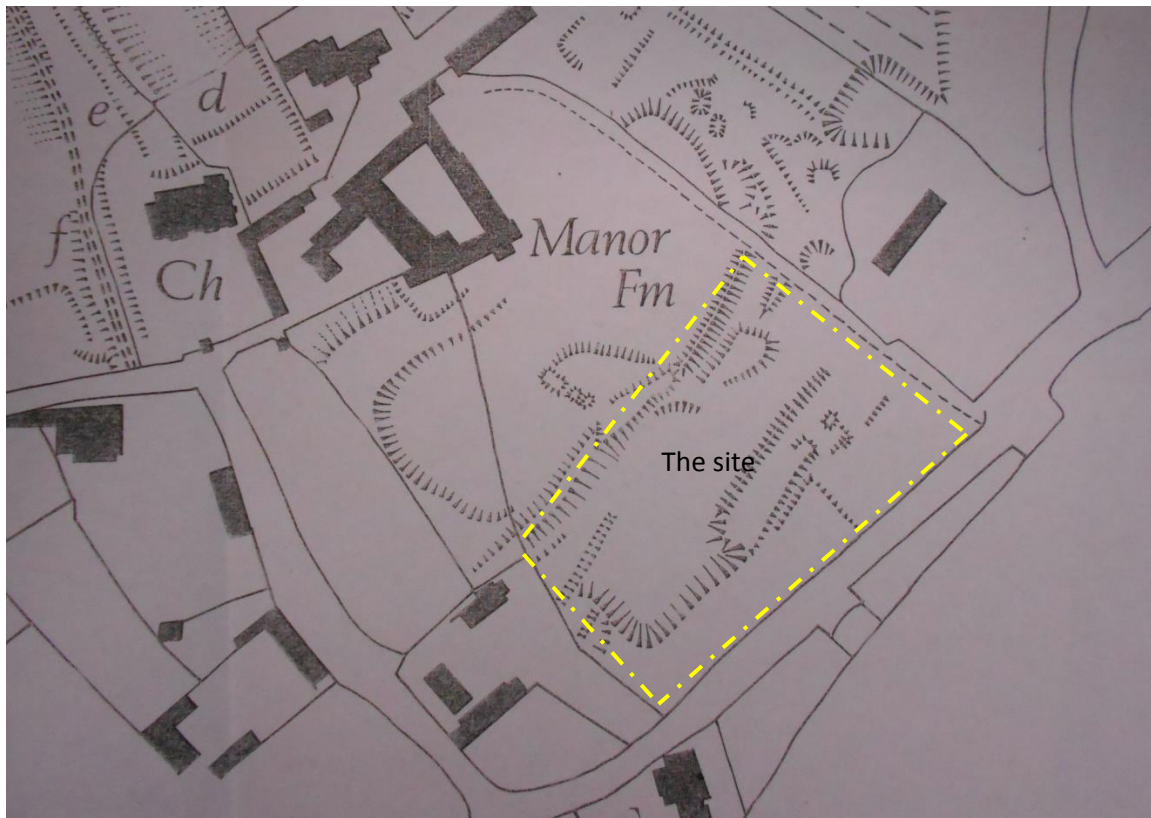


Fig 5: Extract from earthwork survey by A E Brown in Northamptonshire HER (ENN 103903), later published in Brown (1987, fig 42).

### Previous research, published records and historic maps

The academic and county geologist Diana Sutherland is effusive about Church Stowe. In addressing Blisworth Limestone, she says:

*'Away from the main outcrop, Church Stowe and Upper Stowe...stand out as limestone villages in mainly brown sandstone territory. Here is a narrow strip of Blisworth Limestone brought down between two geological faults. An old quarry still exists (it provided limestone for the local ironworks in the nineteenth century), alongside a quarry in brown Northampton Sand sandstone.'* (Sutherland 2003, 98).

Sutherland also describes the more widespread Northampton Sand products of the parish, which have been used for conservation purposes as late as 1982 (ibid, 56).

Although he was not primarily interested in limestones, the noted Industrial Archaeologist Eric Tonks researched all of the commercial ironstone quarries in Northamptonshire and noted, when addressing the considerable nineteenth-century Church Stowe industry *'a later quarry south-east of Stowe Church'* (Tonks 1989, 87). Although less detailed in his approach on that occasion, Geoffrey Starmer lists the companies which successively quarried across Church Stowe from 1863, and which eventually turned their attention to clay extraction for brick and tile making, only eventually closing in 1940 (Starmer 1970, 20-1, preserved as NRO: ROP 906).

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A glance at the British Geological Survey maps show that, just as Sutherland observed the two sides of the massive geological fault scythe through Church Stowe in a north-west to south-east direction (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk> Geology of Britain viewer 'Church Stowe'; website visited 22 Sept 2016). Most startlingly, it can be seen how the western side of the fault is perfectly aligned with the rear of the properties fronting the east side of Main Street.

This aligns perfectly with the western extent of the current site and shows that a whole array of former pits within and at the edge of the village were for limestone extraction, whether for building stone or lime-burning.

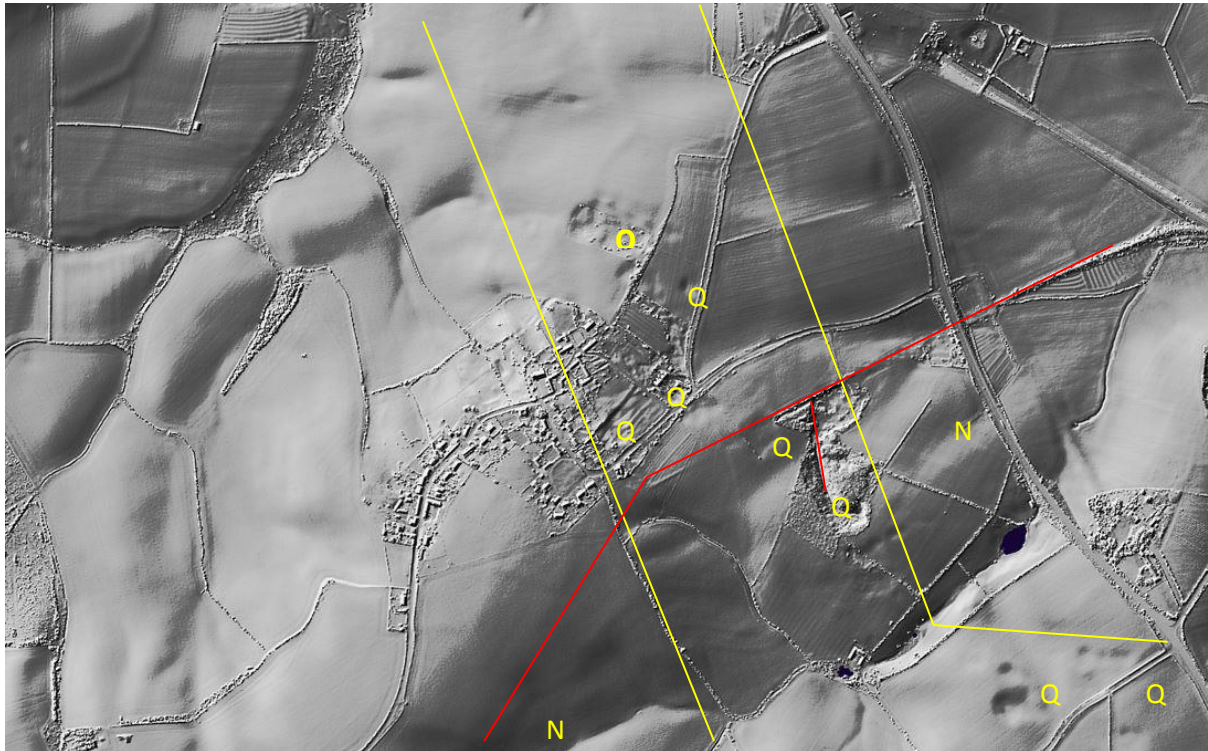


Fig 6: LiDAR satellite view of the village and surroundings (Thanks to Bryn Gethin). The limestone bearing fault is marked and limestone quarries are marked Q. Principal Northampton sand quarries are marked N. The approximate line of the nineteenth-century mineral railway is marked in red.

The Lidar image of the wider parish (above) shows that the area remains heavily pockmarked and cratered by disused limestone-pits and quarries, which have been made good to varying degrees. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century they took their products via mineral railway to a line adjacent to the Watling Street, where they met stone from the Northampton Sand deposits in the wider parish



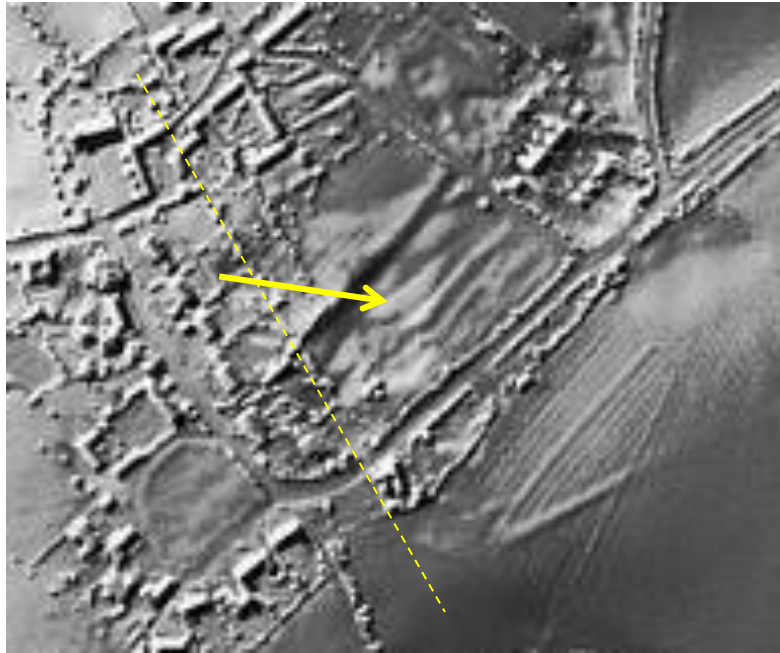


Fig 7: Extract from LiDAR satellite view, showing the site in the centre of the view (arrowed). The western edge of the limestone fault is shown dashed, coinciding with the western site boundary

Scrutiny of the LiDAR satellite view shows that the site is part of a wider complex of interconnected pits which have become separated by differential backfilling and re-use of the land. Some uses have preserved the edges almost without softening them, while others have moderated their impact on the land considerably. On the ground the surviving great depth of some is notable.

The site is very well provided for in terms of historic maps, as will be seen, most particularly as the Lords of the Manor were for 200 years from 1720 the Corporation of the Sons of Clergy, a charity set up to provide for widowed clergy wives and their children. They owned large estates also in neighbouring Astwell and left copious records. They relinquished their estates during the First World War.

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### 1773

The site in 1773 was mapped as part of a survey of the estates of the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy (Fig 8; NRO: Map 2837).

At that date the site is divided into three parts:

- 112 Home Close (Glebe); 1 acre 1 rod 12 perches
- 114 House and Close; 0 acres 3 rods 31 perches
- 116 Dovecote Close; 4 acres 1 rod 27 perches

At this point the site is more divided up than it ever appears again. To the east lies 115 (House and Yard) but these buildings are clearly predecessors to the cottages which stand there today. The plot 132 is called Stone Pit Close (17a 2r 2p), bisected by the northerly track (now a road) which survives today and leads to the Watling Street.



Fig 8: The site mapped in 1773 for the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy (NRO: Map 2837). The site is shown approximately in yellow

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**1839**

In 1839 the parish was mapped for the tithe apportionment and the Tithe Map of that year records an altered layout to the site in which a whole plot has been lost (no 114 in 1773; Fig 9).

41 Pound Close (pasture) - Glebe -1 acre 1 rod 12 perches

46 Dovecote Close (pasture) – Sons of Clergy – 4 acres 3 rods, 5 perches

Between the two plots lies a causeway, for east-west access, fenced or hedged on the south side (NRO: Map T10).



Fig 9: The site mapped for the 1839 Tithe Apportionment (NRO: Map T10). Site shown approximately in yellow. Nearby 24 was *Stone Pit Close*, while 38 was *Little Stone Pit Close*

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**1853**

A map made in 1853 for the Corporation estates (Fig 10) included 17 locations where new soundings were to be made to look for outcrops of Northampton Sand with Ironstone. However, these were mostly far outliers within the parish and many became the core of the emerging ironstone industry which was to dominate the village in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century (NRO Map 2676). The map key makes no mention of limestone pits.

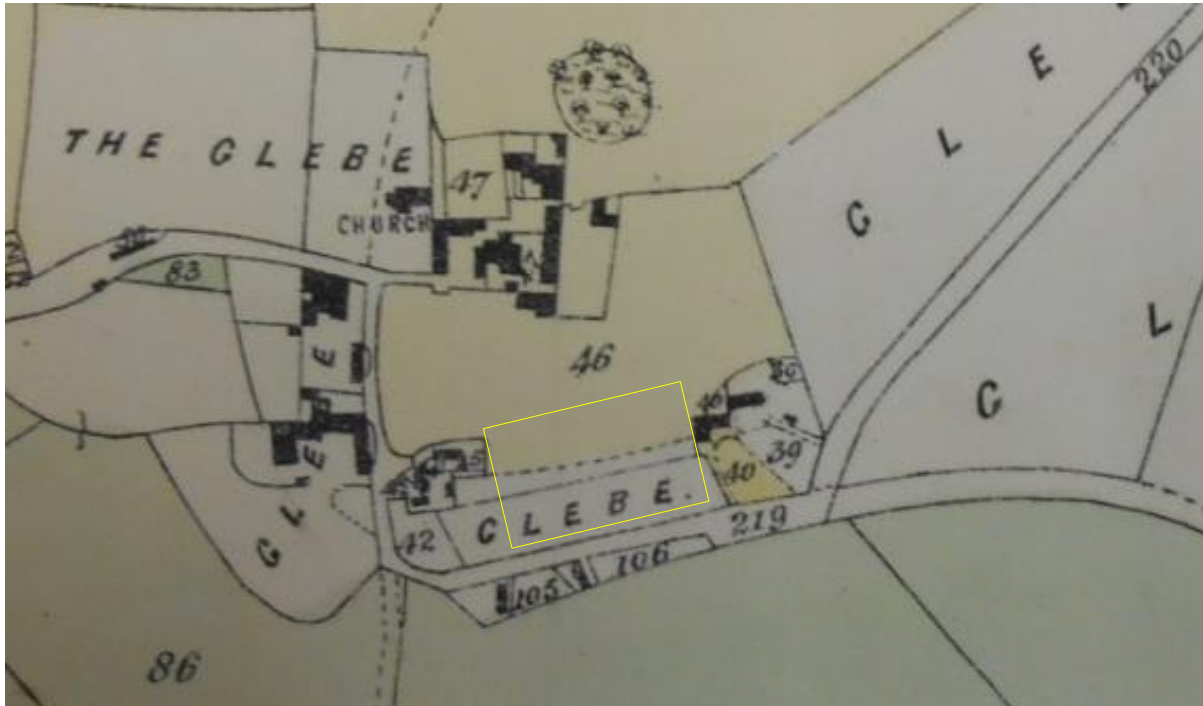


Fig 10: The site mapped in 1853 (NRO: Map 2676). Site shown approximately in yellow.

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**1862**

The title apportionment was reappraised in 1862 and a fresh map and schedule produced (NRO Map T175; Fig 11). Dove House Close was listed as pasture and measured 3a 3r 37p. Pound Close (41) was also pasture, owned by the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy (not Glebe) and measured 1a 1r 12p. The small Main Street frontage site 46d was also called Dove House Close and measured 0a 3r 0p. As will be seen this is a key plot and crops up later on.



Fig 11: The site mapped in 1862 (NRO T175). The site is shown approximately in yellow. Note the new mineral tramway south of the site and the Heyford Road (86d/104a).

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**1868**

In 1868 part of the estate of the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy was mapped again, in order to lease out Manor Farm (Fig 12; NRO: YZ 7948). The site is shown as divided as it was previously in 1853, but by then it had apparently lost the causeway access from west to east. The northern portion of the site was part of Dovecote Close (no 46a) and which amounted to 5 acres 3 rods 37 perches in area, bigger than it had ever previously been. The southern portion (44) remained Glebe land, in the hands of the Vicar and was known as Pound Close, 1 acre 1 rod and 12 perches of pasture. Later correspondence from the vicar shows that this was the village animal pound.



Fig 12: The site mapped for the lease of the Manor House Farm 1868 (NRO: YZ 7948). Site shown approximately in yellow.

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1909

In 1909 the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy began a programme of assessment of its estates for insurance purposes and this included the buildings which lay east and west of the current site.

The relevant plan (Fig 13) which accompanied this particular portion of the village includes a number of buildings which still survive:

69-73 are on plots today still built up along Main Street, and of which no 69 is on most maps going back to 1773. Nos 74-77 are called Pit Cottages and are described as two pairs of cottages, brick and slate, let with Manor Farm.

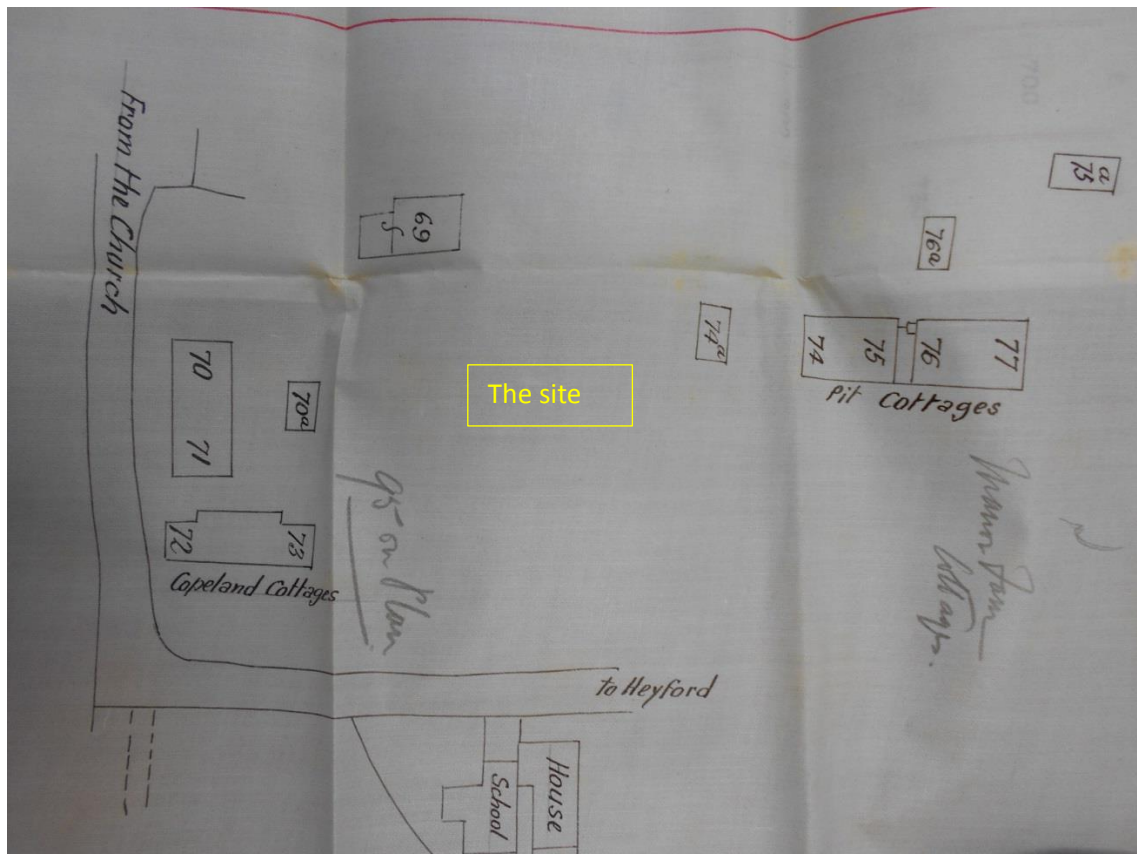


Fig 13: Insurance plan drawn up for the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy (1909) for the Manor Farm cottages (NRO: ZA 5579). The building marked no 69 has been a common denominator to all maps since 1773. Pit cottages, which on the ground clearly sit within an old quarry, are now called Manor Cottages. The space between 69 and 74 (the site) has been squashed up from west to east, as the scale did not matter for the insurance plan.

In 1910 there was undertaken a national survey of all farmland, with a valuation, related partly to a Government move to ensure greater nutrition across Britain after it was embarrassed by the physical quality and diminutive stature of recruits during the Boer War; the programme was deemed a great success by the outbreak of World War I. Everywhere farmland was classified and valued. The assessors' hand-written books for Northamptonshire survive in Northants Record Office but not the accompanying maps which were usually the 1900 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey. That for Church Stowe is in Book 'Farthingstone 1'. All the farms and properties of Church Stowe are listed, with

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owner and occupier, including the valuations. The Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy are listed as owning both *Land containing a Stone pit* (6a) and *Land and Limestone Quarry* (8a). Neither has an agricultural value of any sort. At the end of the Church Stowe schedule is a curious afterthought of ten entries in a different ink and partly in a different hand (163-173). These include:

164 Dovecote Close Owned by Corp of Sons of Clergy, Occ by Rev H H Crawley.

166 Pound Close, Owned by Rev H H Crawley, Occ by Corp of Sons of Clergy.

Neither plot, however, is ascribed any value whatsoever.

At this date, if one adds the most reliable acreages of the relevant plots together, they sum up as follows:

| Plot                         | Acreage         |
|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Dovecote Close               | 5a 3r 37p       |
| Dovecote Close<br>(frontage) | 0a 3r 0p        |
| Pound Close                  | 1a 1r 12p       |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>8a 0r 9p</b> |

With only nine perches difference, this is surely the *Land with limestone pit – 8a* the assessor also noted as unvalued land owned by the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy.

During the First World War the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy moved to sell off its Church Stowe holdings after some 200 years as landowner. This caused a storm locally, a cause taken up by the Vicar (Rev. H H Crawley), who considered that the timing, in 1915-16, was deplorable, and discourteous, grossly insensitive to the village, which was taking its part (and casualties) in the fighting in France and beyond. His angry and indignant correspondence to the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy and as far as the Archbishop of Canterbury is preserved in the Northamptonshire Record Office. Of course it was the very effects of the war on the clergy and their families which were moving the process along.

Crawley was particularly moved by the plight of the elderly in estate cottages in the village, who were in dire fear that they were going to be given notice to quit. Unless there was a fear that the land would be put to another use (further quarrying?) or there was a need to redevelop the cottages, then there seems little reason for that concern, as there was little press for space, with nearly a million men at The Front.

The sale went through in 1916 but the ramifications continued to produce paperwork until the end of the war (Fig 14; NRO: 305p no24). In 1918 lands were exchanged with the Vicar, who traced a plan 'Copied from the plan sent me by Messrs Bridges and Sawtell 14/10/1918' (NRO SNC 149). Bridges and Sawtell were London solicitors acting throughout for the Corporation of the Sons of The Clergy. The exchange included the former Glebe Land, Pound Close. The village pinfold and the town well, together with a water-pipe (feeding Pit Cottages/Manor Cottages) were caught up in the deed of exchange.



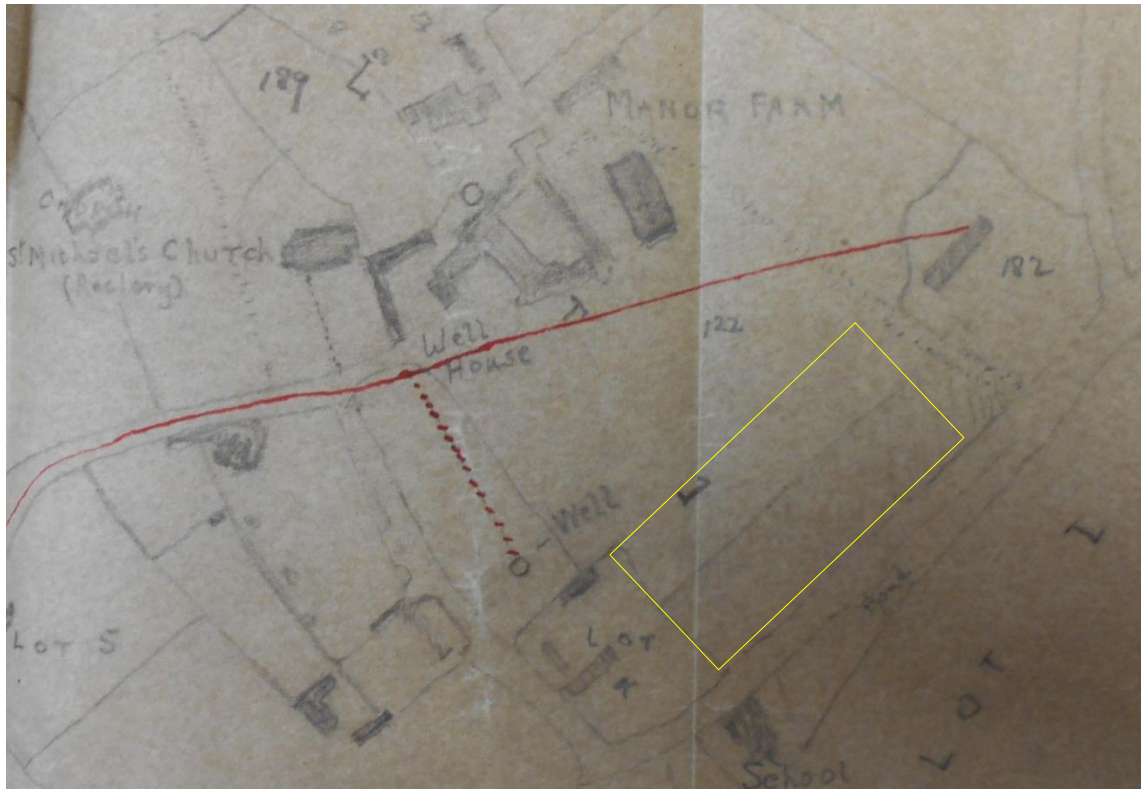


Fig 14: Tracing of 1918 made by the Vicar of Stowe relating to an exchange of lands (NRO: SNC 149) It was 'Copied from the plan sent me by Mess Bridges and Sawtell, (Solicitors for the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy)'. Site marked approximately in yellow. The red lines were drawn by the Vicar. The numbers he traced off show that the map used the 1900 OS map as its base.

In 1924 the church, under a new Vicar, Rev Davies, issued a revised tithe apportionment (NRO 305p no 51a). Unfortunately no accompanying map survives. However, it is telling that the former Dovecote Close at this time comprises only the Main Street frontage plot, which by then supported individual tenancies (0a 3r 0p). The plot had lost five acres, surely a loss which can only be ascribed to quarrying, already probably in operation by the Domesday land assessment of 1910. Nor is there any tithe entry against Pound Close, which is never again shown on maps.

No separate third edition of the Ordnance Survey was produced for the village, which might have shown the extent of quarrying at around 1925. Instead a re-levelled second edition (1900) was issued. By the time of later maps, the old layout has gone.

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The descent of the relevant plots from 1773 – 1926 can be summarised thus:

| Date                                       | Pound Close/Home Close  | Dovecote Close   | House and Close                   | NRO map ref           |
|--|---|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>1773</b>                                | 1a-1r-12p (Glebe, 112)  | 4a-1r-27p (117)  | 0a-3r-31p (114)                   | 2837                  |
| <b>1839</b>                                | 1a-1r-12p pasture (Glebe, 41)                                   | 4a-3r-5p pasture (46)  | Subsumed in Dovecote Close        | T10                   |
| <b>1853</b>                                | Present   | Present (46)   |                                   | 2676                  |
| <b>1862</b>                                | 1a-1r-12p pasture (not Glebe, 41)                               | 3a-3r-37p pasture (46a) + 0a-3r-0p (46d)                     |                                   | T175                  |
| <b>1868</b>                                | 1a-1r-12p pasture (44)  | 5a-3r-37p pasture (46a)                                      |                                   | YZ7948                |
| <b>1st ed OS 1885 1:2500</b>               | Subsumed (6.5a, 113)  |  |                                   | See www. Old-maps.com |
| <b>2<sup>nd</sup> ed OS 1900 1:2500</b>    | Subsumed (6.5a, 122)  |  |                                   | See www. Old-maps.com |
| <b>1910</b>                                | Mentioned but no agricultural value ascribed                    | Mentioned but no agricultural value ascribed                 | Farming Domesday: Farthingstone 1 |                       |
|  | <i>Land and limestone quarry - 8a</i>                           |  |                                   |                       |
| <b>1924</b>                                | No mention  | Only the smaller Main Street frontage plot of 1868: 0a-3r-0p | 305p SNC 51a                      |                       |
| <b>3<sup>rd</sup> ed OS 1925-30 1:2500</b> | Irrelevant– this is a re-issue of 1900 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition. |  | OS maps 50.4                      |                       |
|  |   |  |                                   |                       |

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### Conclusions

The current plot has a long mapped history and one which comprised consistently-mapped and named fields until 1910.

There has been extensive limestone quarrying close by in the period before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and this plot may have been known as limestone-bearing since well before the first extant map of 1773.

However, in 1910 the mapping shows that the plots of the current site were apparently conjoined to form a single limestone quarry, which pressed westwards to the Main Street frontage's rear boundary and which coincided totally with the western edge of the fault bearing the limestone outcrop. It may have been worked out in only a few years. This is probably the 'later quarry' which Tonks (1989, 87) alluded to 'south-east of Stowe church'.

The massive earthworks which today still dominate the site are the softened infill of that quarrying, yet still stand some 8-10 feet deep, sufficiently deep to house a number of agricultural buildings which can barely be seen from the road.

There is no possibility of the earthworks which Brown mapped in 1987 having been medieval terracing. The remaining quarry earthworks, much softened since the 1987 survey, are of only limited archaeological interest.

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## Appendix

### OASIS data

|                              |                                    |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Project Name                 | Land adjacent Bank House           |
| OASIS ID                     | Iainsode1-263918                   |
| Project Type                 | Desk Based Assessment              |
| Originator                   | Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd   |
| Project Manager              | Iain Soden                         |
| Previous/future work         | No/Unknown                         |
| Current land use             | Small-holding                      |
| Development type             | Domestic-single house              |
| Reason for investigation     | In support of planning application |
| National grid reference      | SP 6400 5700                       |
| Start/end dates of fieldwork | n/a                                |
| Archive recipient            | Northamptonshire Archive           |
| Study area                   | c5000sq m                          |



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

27 September 2016