

Avondale House

Kennel Bank, Crophorne, Worcestershire



one ten archaeology

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Archaeological recording

NGR: SO 9964 4487

HER ref: WSM 57118

Site code: AHC14

OASIS ID: 110archa1-307506

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23rd February 2018

one ten archaeology

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Contents

SUMMARY	4
INTRODUCTION (Figs. 1 & 2).....	6
<i>Location and scope of work</i>	6
<i>Geology and topography</i>	6
ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.....	7
RESULTS (Figs. 3-5)	8
<i>Method and nature of the excavation</i>	8
<i>Description of deposits</i>	8
<i>The Finds</i>	11
<i>Environmental data</i>	11
DISCUSSION (Figs. 6-9)	13
<i>Archive Location</i>	18
BIBLIOGRAPHY	18

Appendix 1: Front view of Caroline Tarplee's Cottage, Cropthorne

Appendix 2: OASIS

Frontispiece: view of cottage remains looking westward over the River Avon to the Vale of Evesham and the Malvern Hills beyond

SUMMARY

Archaeological recording was carried out during May 2014 at Avondale House, Kennel Bank, Cropthorne, Worcestershire during groundworks within the existing garden associated with the erection of a detached dwelling and garage.

Although limited in scope, the excavation revealed no evidence to indicate settlement before the post-medieval period. Instead it confirmed the cartographic evidence (OS 1886) which showed the development area to contain earlier structures. The remains of one of these structures survived within the former vegetable garden and was represented by the remains of the foundation wall indicating the outline of a former cottage with a fireplace and oven at the south-east end and internal features suggesting a two-bay building.

A late C19 photograph survives showing the front of the timber-framed cottage with Caroline Tarplee, born in 1828 and living until she was 97, and her niece Lizzie Meakins. Enough of the frame is shown to allow comparison with other buildings in the village to suggest a possible C17 construction date.



Fig. 1; site location



Fig. 2; area of study

INTRODUCTION (Figs. 1 & 2)

Location and scope of work

This document details the results of archaeological recording (watching brief) carried out during 21st-23rd May 2014 at Avondale House, Kennel Bank, Cropthorne, Worcestershire WR10 3ND at the request of the owner. The work was required as a condition of planning permission granted in respect of an application (planning ref: W/13/02582) to erect a detached dwelling and garage within the existing garden and was undertaken in accordance with a brief issued by Worcestershire County Council Historic Environment & Archaeology Service (Mike Glyde, 9th April 2014). The site lies within the historic settlement of Cropthorne and cartographic evidence showed the development area to contain earlier structures, possibly a former farmstead. It was therefore considered likely that sub-surface deposits relating to these structures may survive. The area is also rich in prehistoric and Romano British remains, and being located on a site overlooking the river, the site had potential to contain such remains.

Geology and topography

The parish of Cropthorne lies in the south-east of the county and is bounded on the north by the Avon and a stream called Merry Brook, the latter also forming the greater portion of the eastern boundary of the parish and flowing into the Avon on its left bank. The north of the parish lies in the valley of the Avon, but to the south the land rises, reaching a height of 60m at Haselor Hill. The village of Cropthorne is located on the left bank of the River Avon 4km west of Evesham, Main Street is linked to the Evesham Worcester Road, which runs through the middle of the parish, by Brook Lane along the west bank of a tributary originating on Bredon Hill. The development site is represented by a roughly rectangular strip of land, comprising an area of approx. 790m², lying adjacent to the north-west side of Avondale House and overlooking the River Avon. The underlying geology of the site (BGS, 1974) comprises a Lower Lias, mainly clay and this was confirmed during excavation.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (HER) was consulted within a 500m radial search area centred on the site. Within the search area lies 34 historic buildings dating to the 13th, 14th, 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, one of which is grade I listed and a further 13 are grade II listed. The Historic Farmsteads Project has identified seven historic farmsteads.

The search area is within a region of open, flat landscape on the Avon gravel terraces, characterised by nucleated villages, surrounded by large arable fields. This is an intensively farmed area associated with fertile, free draining soils which give rise to high quality agricultural land used for growing a wide variety of crops. The historic landscape in this search area is dominated by small nucleated settlements linked by a network of Medieval or earlier roads. These are set in a landscape derived from vast expanses of former open field, which have remained under intensive cultivation following their enclosure. There is little in the way of woodland or tree cover. Market gardening and orchards are strong features of this region, particularly close to the villages. The parish records have evidence of human occupation from the Roman, Medieval and Post Medieval periods through finds evidence. There are few archaeological events within this region, however within the search area these include geophysical survey, building recording, desk-based assessment and a watching brief (WSM33628) carried out in 2004 at The Watergate, Cropthorne. In the north east of the search area there is conjectured evidence of a coffin path between the villages of Charlton and Cropthorne that maybe early Medieval in origin. Cropthorne is documented in the Saxon period and again during Domesday clearly indicating an earlier settlement had been established before the Norman Conquest. Near to the centre of the search area there is documentary evidence of a Post Medieval pound. Within the confines of the village there is cartographic evidence of several sites of outbuildings associated with historic farmsteads.

The search confirmed the potential for below ground archaeological features and deposits within this vicinity from the Medieval period onwards with some scope for earlier periods also being represented in the archaeological record. Above ground archaeology is confined to the listed and unlisted buildings seen mostly at the village core, which is also a Conservation Area.

RESULTS (Figs. 3-5)

Method and nature of the excavation

Archaeological recording was undertaken to obtain a record of any archaeological deposits or finds disturbed or exposed during excavation of the site. Excavation comprised initially of the driveway which was followed by recording and hand excavation to reveal the remains of the former cottage. A trench was subsequently excavated across the wall and central area of these remains to assess the underlying stratigraphy. Once the remains of the cottage had been removed by hand, an area comprising the footprint of the development was stripped by machine using a toothless grading bucket under archaeological supervision.

Description of deposits

Context 102 (natural substrate); context 101 (relict subsoil layer) & context 100 (topsoil layer)

The surface of the geological horizon, comprising a light yellowish-brown and orangey-brown clay (102), was exposed throughout the excavation at a level height of approx. 29.10m AOD. The clay was truncated by the construction of a small limestone well (107) although its construction was probably associated with the overlying subsoil layer (101). It was located at approx. 3m west of the remains of the former cottage (103) and this is consistent with the OS 1886.

Overlying the natural substrate to depth varying between 0.10m and 0.15m across the excavated area was an undated relict subsoil layer (101) comprising a mid-greyish-brown sandy-silt. It was sealed by the modern topsoil (100) to a similar depth of 0.10-0.15m.

Context 103 (building)

Lying insitu within the proposed development plot and forming the boundary of a raised vegetable garden surrounded by a gravel path, were the remains of a limestone cottage. These comprised the lower one or two courses of masonry fabric marking the outline of the former structure situated directly on the clay (102). The internal floor area, comprising contexts 102 & 106 was sealed by a garden soil equivalent with the topsoil layer (100). The building was orientated north-west to south-east, approx. 10.50m long and 5m wide. Three gaps in the

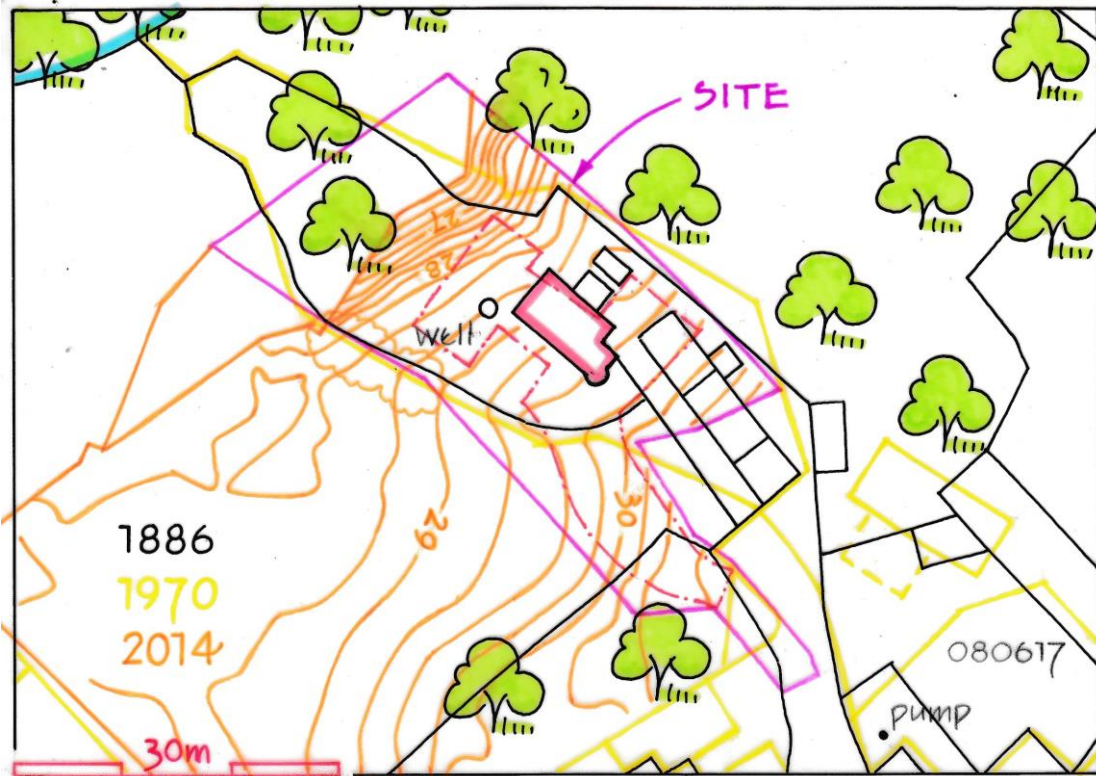


Fig. 3; Site plan showing historical development of the site and the outline (red) of the excavated area

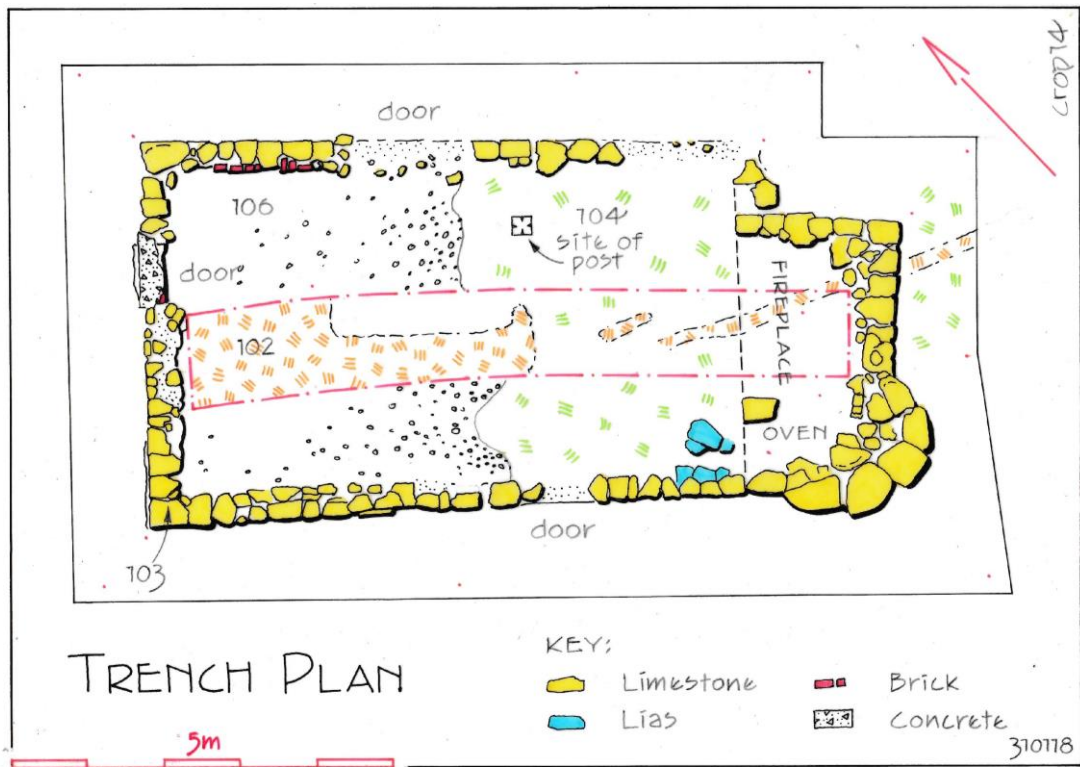


Fig. 4: plan showing remains of former cottage

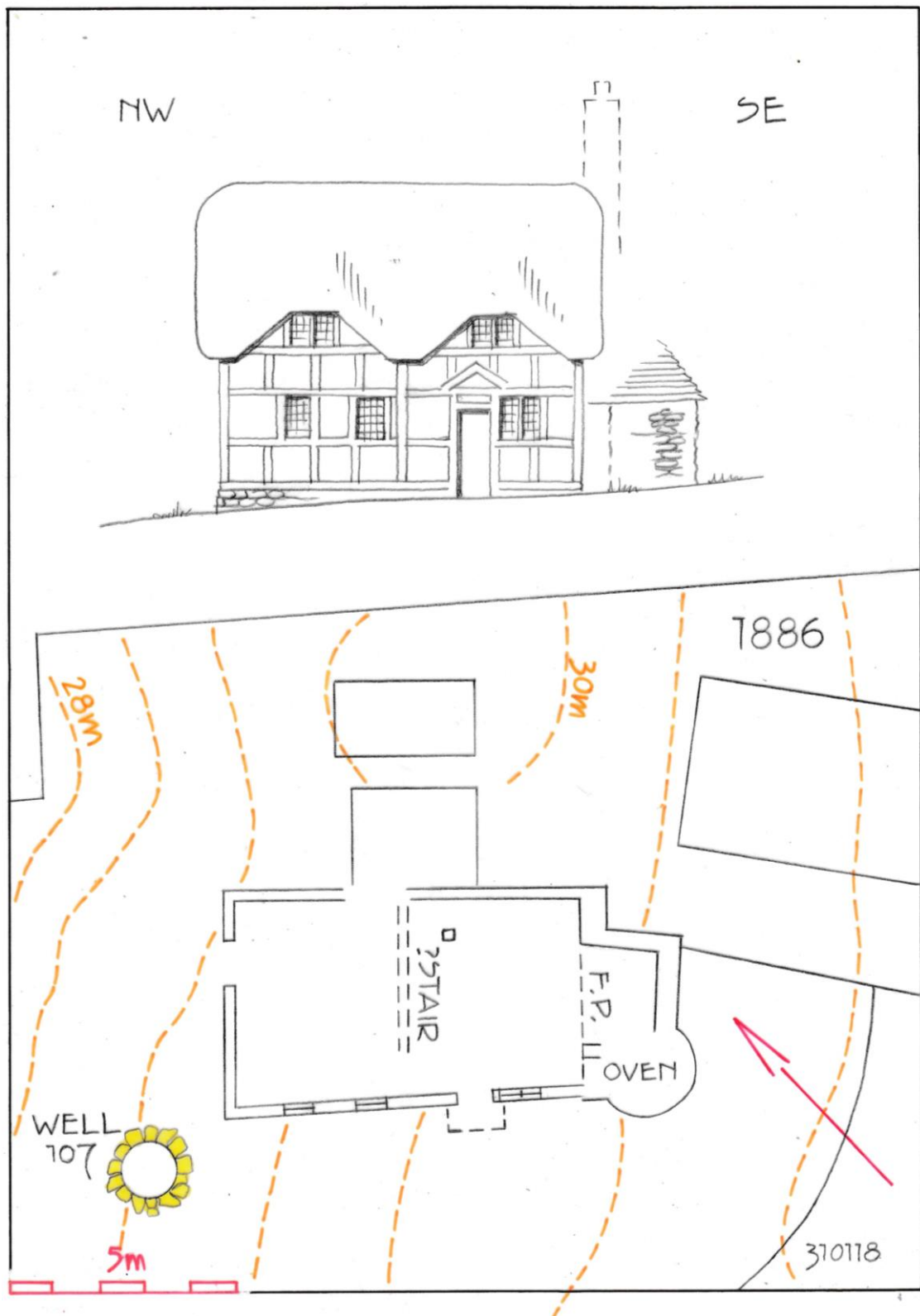


Fig. 5; Restored plan and elevation based on the cartographic and photographic evidence

footings are consistent with door openings. A fireplace and oven were at the east end. The relationship between layer 101 and the building was removed during the construction of a gravel path around the exterior of the building where the area had been reduced to the level of the natural clay.

Context 104 (post-hole) filled by 105

A 0.20m square post-hole (104), 0.30m deep was recorded in the eastern bay near the north end of the central frame. This was filled by the undated deposit 105 which was equivalent with the overlying topsoil layer.

Context 106 (floor layer)

Overlying the natural clay at the north-west end of the inside of the building (103) was the layer 106, consisting of a mid-light greyish-brown, silty-clay. This was equivalent in composition and colour with the subsoil layer 101, albeit for a greater component of small to mediums-sized pebbles and some clay mottling probably resulting cultivation when the building (103) was being used as a vegetable plot. This layer tapered off towards the centre of the internal floor area. The north-eastern half of the building comprised mostly clay (102). Both layers were sealed by the vegetable garden topsoil which filled the interior of the building.

Context 107 (Well)

Situated approx. 3m west of the former cottage (103) were the remains of a well, constructed within layer 101. Only the upper few courses of fabric, comprising limestone was exposed indicating an internal diameter of about 0.90m and an external diameter of approx. 1.20m. The remainder of the structure was filled by a deposit equivalent with the overlying topsoil layer (100) which sealed the feature.

The Finds

All the finds were recovered from the topsoil layer (100) within the area outlined by wall 103. These included fragments of C19 domestic ceramics; blue and white, stoneware, a possible egg-cup base. Also, a fragment of clay-pipe stem, green bottle-glass, clay-pipe stem and a doll's leg. These finds will not be retained.

Environmental data

None of the deposits exposed during the excavation proved suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling.

DISCUSSION (Figs. 6-9)

Although limited in scope, excavation revealed no evidence to indicate settlement before the post-medieval period. Instead it confirmed the cartographic sources (OS 1886) which showed that the development area contained earlier structures, possibly a former farmstead. The outline of a former cottage was marked by the remains of a dwarf wall (103), showing the location of a former building orientated north-west to south-east, approx. 10.50m long and 5m wide. Three gaps in the footings are consistent with door openings and the disposition of gravel within the internal floor deposit (106) in the western part and wear at the south part where the surface of the clay natural was exposed, suggests a frame separating the two bays. A square post-hole (104) in the eastern bay near the north end of the central frame may be associated with a staircase. The masonry footings of the fire-place take up much of the east wall and the circular south-east corner is all that remains of the oven, some lias paving survives near it. A concrete step at the north end of the west wall provides evidence for an inserted doorway. Evidence of further structures immediately east of the cottage and a porch attached to the north-east side which were also surveyed at the time, were not observed.

The cottage was known to have been occupied by a Caroline Tarplee during the C19. A late C19 photograph (Appendix 2) survives showing the front of the cottage with Caroline Tarplee, born in 1828 and living until she was 97, and her niece Lizzie Meakins in her pinafore and lace-up boots. Besides features of social interest, like the caged canary near the front door, enough of the frame is shown to allow comparison with other buildings in the village to suggest a possible C17 construction date. The best example is along Middle Lane, number 7 on the Historic Environment plan (Fig. 6), which is also on a small irregular plot of land well away from Main Street.

The field immediately south of Caroline Tarplee's Cottage is conspicuous on early OS maps by its lack of orchard which proliferate around the settlement and the spread of orchards, a significant element of the setting at the end of the C19, is clear. By the middle of the 1950s many orchards to the east of Main Street had been cleared and some of this land was developed with new housing in the 1960s.

St Michael's Church and Crothorne Court are at the north-east end of Main Street and the numerous 'black and white' buildings are strung along the road to a cluster of old dwellings around Kennel Bank, on the river side just

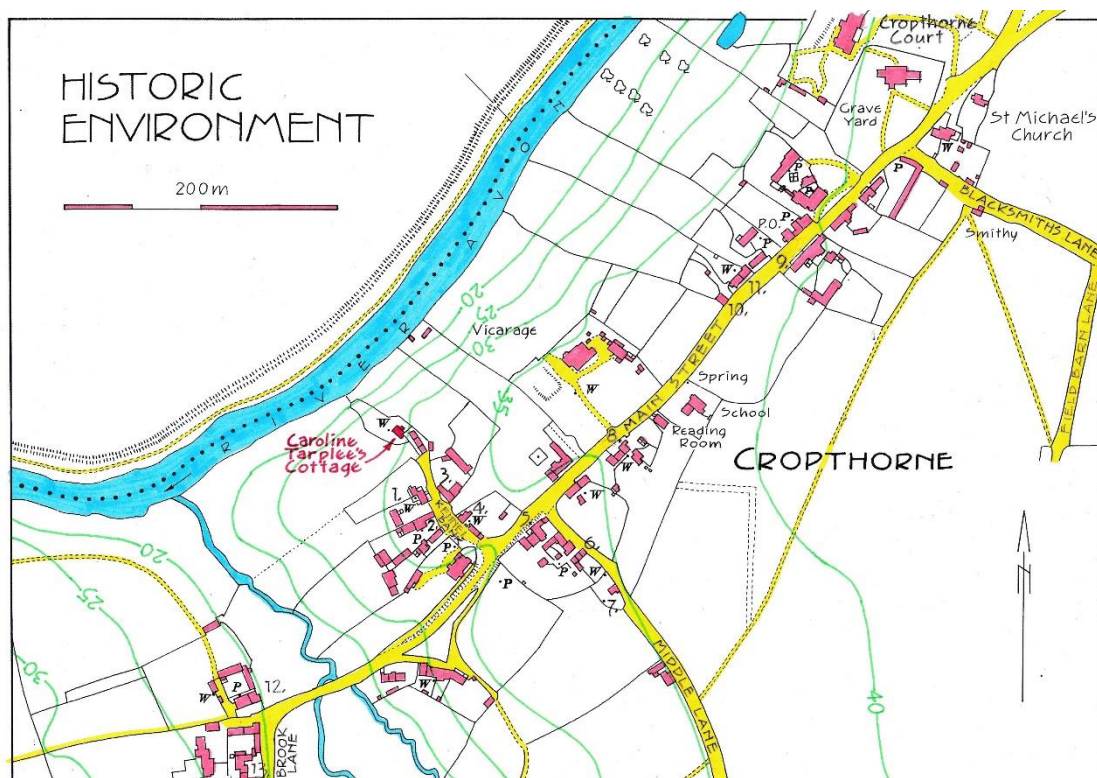


Fig. 6; Historic Environment, nos.1-11; illustrations showing architectural context, based on 2nd Edition OS 1904. **Caroline Tarplee's Cottage** is coloured red

beyond the knoll near the south-west end of the village. Kennel Bank is so named after the cottages of the Kennel-men who raised and trained the Court Beagles.

Part of these dwellings is shown on an old photograph of Caroline Tarplee's Cottage. The timbers of the square panels are notably slender compared with the timbers of CT's and may be C19 but styled in a traditional idiom. These are completely lost after decades of continually changing topography, and the west end and structures to the rear of CT's are replaced by carefully tended lawn and raised beds along the new boundaries which have no historic precedence. The footings of Caroline's cottage only survive as they were retained and enhanced to form a raised vegetable garden. This appears to have happened by 1927 when old boundaries had been swept away and the vegetable garden occupied an isolated position in the middle of a new plot of land, this plot is also shown on the 1970 OS. The cottage is sited just below the brow of the knoll with a fine prospect northward and westward of the meadows of the neighbouring parish of Fladbury and the Vale of Evesham beyond. Numerous timber-framed buildings, later updated with brick infills or rebuilds, survive in the village and are useful as comparisons with the house remains in the garden of Avondale House.

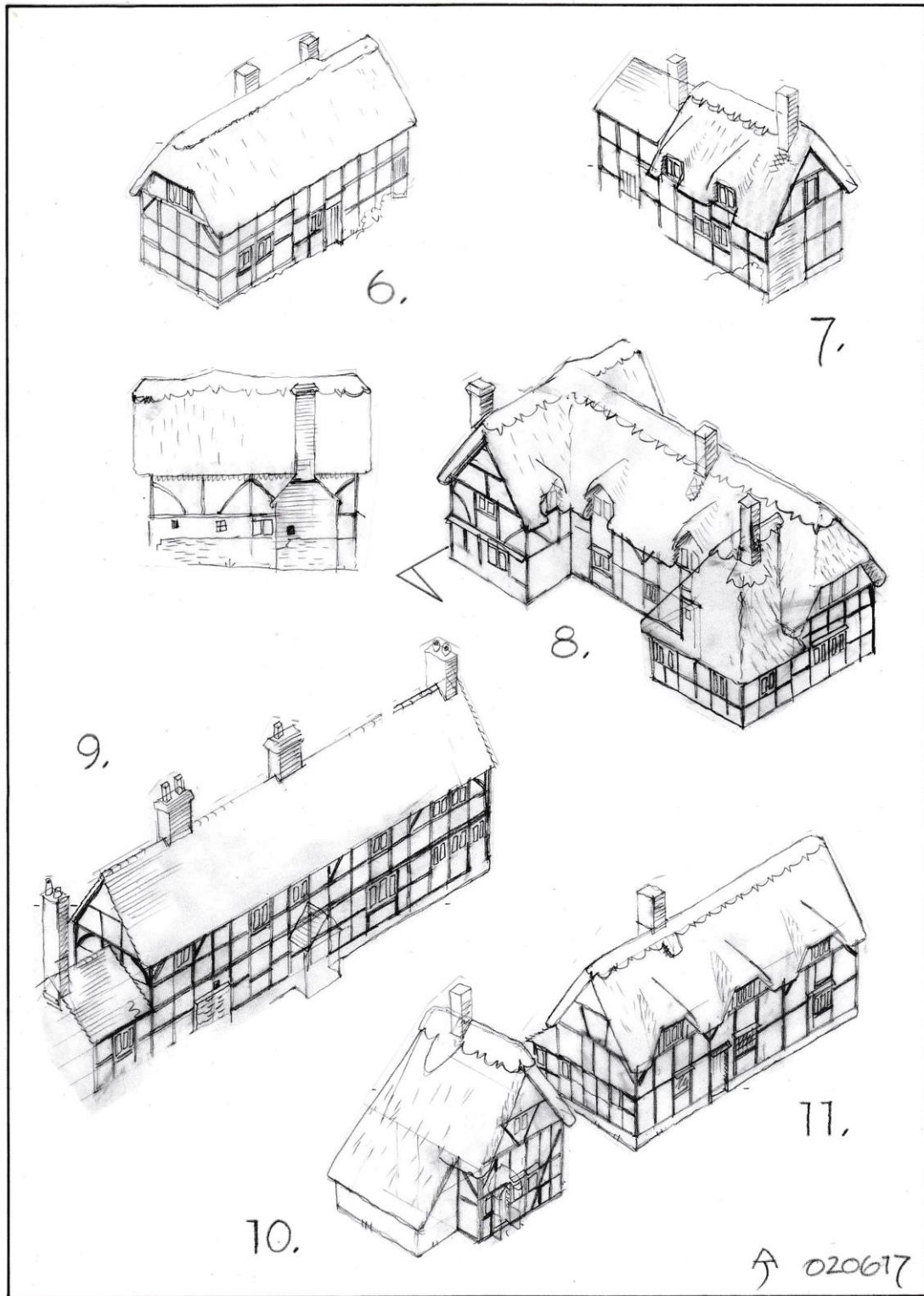


Fig 8; Architectural context; sketch views of buildings 6-11

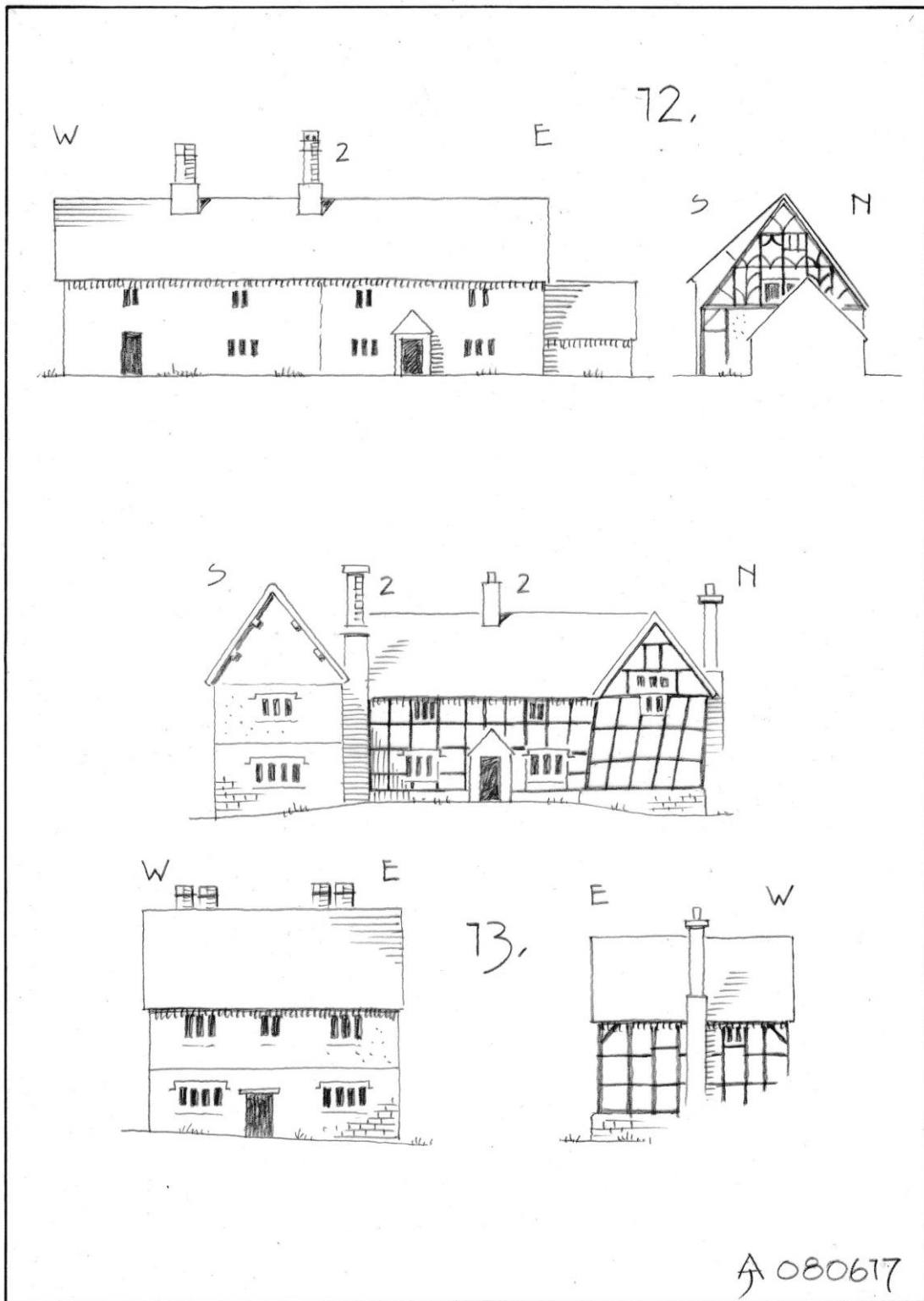


Fig 9; Architectural context; sketch elevations of buildings 12 & 13

Archive Location

A digital copy of the report will be deposited with OASIS at the Archaeology Data Service (ADS)

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Plate 1; View of site from south-west



Plate 2; View of site from north-west



Plate 3; View of site from south-east



Plate 4; Remains of fire-place and oven



Plate 5; Remains of oven



Plate 6; View of fire-place and oven from south



Plate 7; Detail of oven remains



Plate 8; Detail section of rear-wall



Plate 9; Remains of rear wall and detail of post-hole

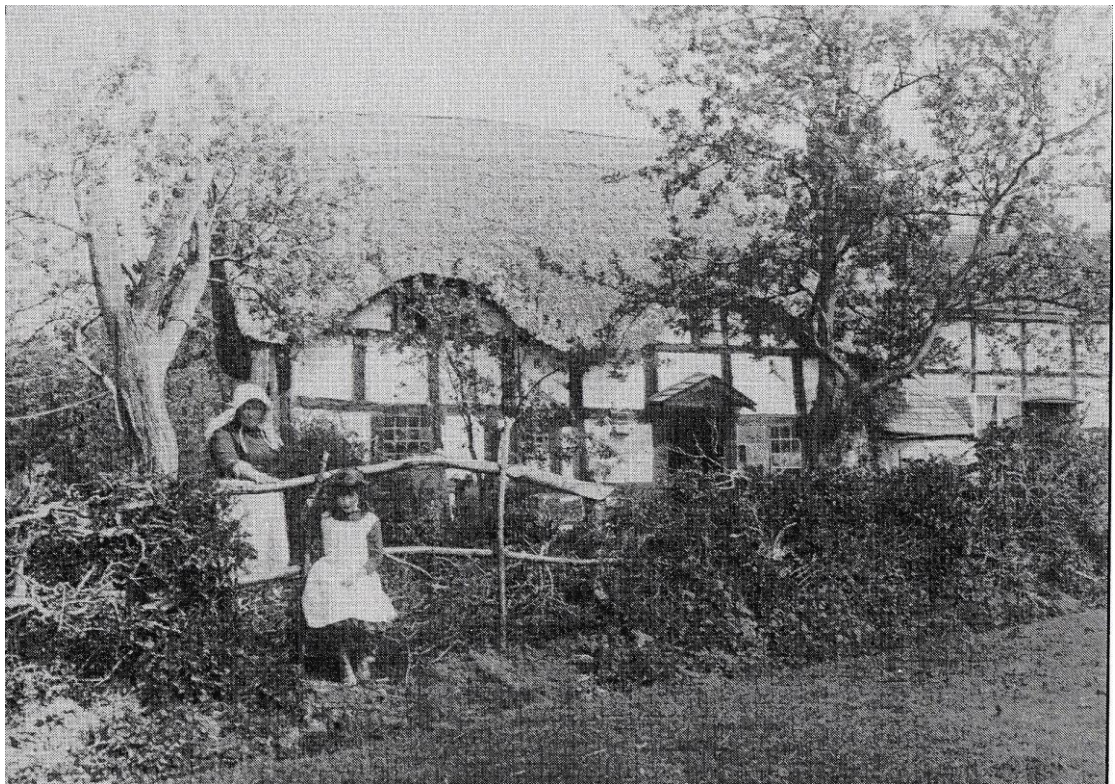


Plate 10; View from west of site during excavation



Plate 11; Assorted finds uncovered during cleaning of the footings

Appendix 1



Front view of Caroline Tarplee's Cottage, Crothorne

Appendix 2: OASIS

Project name	Avondale House, Kennel Bank, Cropthorne, Worcestershire; archaeological recording
Project dates	Start: 21-05-2014 End: 23-05-2014
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	AHC - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	WSM 57118 - HER event no.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	BUILDING Post Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Modern
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition
Country	England
Site location	WORCESTERSHIRE WYCHAVON CROPTHORNE Avondale House, Kennel Bank
Postcode	WR10 3ND
Study area	790 Square metres
Site coordinates	SO 9964 4487 52.101751952283 -2.005256379674 52 06 06 N 002 00 18 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 29.1m Max: 29.1m
Name of Organisation	one ten archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	one ten archaeology
Project director/manager	sean cook
Project supervisor	sean cook
Type of sponsor/funding body	Landowner
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	OASIS
Paper Archive Exists?	No
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Avondale House, Kennel Bank, Cropthorne, Worcestershire; archaeological recording

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