



Owlet End

The Close, Clifford Chambers, Warwickshire

Proposed new dwelling south of

Owlet End

The Close, Clifford Chambers, Warwickshire

Archaeological evaluation

NGR: SP 1966552444

Site code: CC18a

OASIS ID: 110archa1-329725

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one ten archaeology

6 Elm Close, Pebworth, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, CV37 8XL

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Front cover; Owlet End, view to the north-east

SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation was carried out during September 2018 at land south of Owlet End, The Close, Clifford Chambers, Warwickshire, CV37 8HS during residential development of the site.

The OS 1886 map also shows Owlet End situated at the north-west end of the village on the floodplain between the main road and the River Stour. The historic core of the medieval village lies further to the south-east. Analysis of the fabric of the building suggests that it was constructed during the late C17 and subsequently divided into three cottages by 1886.

The results of the excavation from the field investigation on the south side of the house were negative. The stratigraphic sequence of deposits recorded comprised river gravels (Second Terrace) overlain by layers of undated relict subsoil and more recent topsoil. The evidence suggesting an earlier open rural environment with little or no human activity before the late C17 and the lack of any residual finds from before this date supported this interpretation.

An evaluation carried out on the north-west side of Owlet End in connection with a separate application for residential development identified a ditch aligned north-east to south-west producing some sherds of Roman-British pottery and a large quantity of animal bone. The evidence suggested contemporary occupation nearby.



Fig. 1; site location (circled in red)

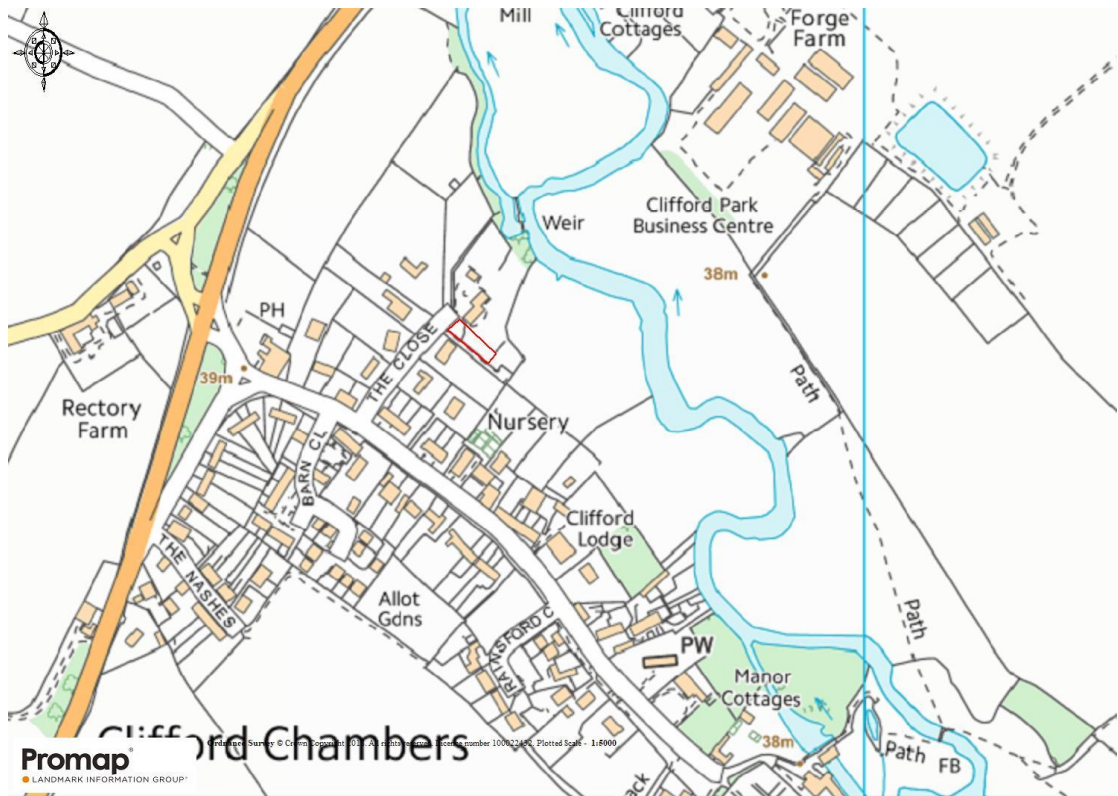


Fig. 2; study site (outlined in red)

INTRODUCTION

Location and scope of work (Figs. 1 & 2)

This document details the results of an archaeological evaluation during 6th September 2018 at land south of Owlet End, The Close, Clifford Chambers, Warwickshire, CV37 8HS at the request of AP Francis Builders Ltd. Outline planning permission had been granted (planning Ref: 17/03164/OUT) for the erection of a detached one and half-storey dwelling with access to the south of the existing building conditional on a programme of archaeological work comprising initially of an evaluation, the work to be carried out in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The proposed development lies within an area of archaeological potential. In December 2017 an assessment (Hillman, 2017) was carried out at the property in connection with an earlier proposal to erect a pair of semi-detached dwellings on the site, north-west of the existing house. The assessment established that Owlet End lies in an area where a series of medieval monuments are recorded. The deserted medieval settlement of Clifford Chambers (MWA9043) lies to the south-west of the development site whilst similar remains are also located approx. 350m west of Clifford Chambers Bridge (MWA1330 & MWA5638). There is therefore potential for medieval archaeological features and deposits to survive within the site including those pre-dating this period, that may be adversely affected by the proposed development.

The results of the evaluation would be used to determine the likely nature, extent, preservation and importance of any archaeological remains, and how these may be affected by development of the site so that an appropriate mitigation strategy can be implemented.

Geology and topography

The parish of Clifford Chambers lies a mile and a half south of Stratford-upon-Avon, mainly to the south-west of the River Stour which forms part of its boundary. The parish was on the extreme north edge of the county; it was surrounded by Warwickshire on three sides, and in 1931 was transferred to Warwickshire. It is very irregular in shape, is 1,725 a. The narrow part of the parish projecting east across the river for about two miles along the north side of Atherstone parish presumably represents the part of Ailstone in Clifford parish. In

the southern corner of the parish the hamlet of Wincot lies partly in Clifford, the parish boundary running through the buildings at Wincot. Neither of the hamlets has ever included more than a few houses, and the hamlet of Willicote (in Quinton parish) which extends into the south part of Clifford probably did not include any houses in Clifford parish until the C18 (VCH, 1965).

The parish lies on flat and gently rolling ground reaching 85m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) at the highest point, on the south-east. The short north boundary is formed by the River Avon, and the River Stour runs along the east boundary for a short distance and then crosses the parish and forms part of the west boundary. The river has been diverted to form a moat near the manor house. The southern part of the parish is crossed by a stream, the Marchfont brook, that runs into the Avon at Weston-on-Avon. The parish lies mainly on the Lower Lias, with gravel and sand beside the River Stour.

Owlet End is situated at the north end of the village, between the main road and the River Stour which marks the northern boundary of the property. The proposed development site which lies to the south of Owlet End comprises approx. 600m² and is at approximately 39m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) and currently consists of garden. Geology maps indicate an underlying geology comprising gravels of the Second Terrace of the River Avon (BGS, 1974).

Archaeological and historical background

Clifford village, on the gravel beside the River Stour, was probably formed by the 10th century. Wells sunk into the gravel and sand on which the village is built provided an adequate water supply for Clifford. The earliest settlement was perhaps concentrated at what was later the south-east end of the village around the church and manor-house, where the wide village street suggests that the houses were grouped around a green. The Manor House was built in the 15th century, beside a moated site. It was a simple house of four bays built of close timbers filled with brick. Several houses in that part of the village were built in the 16th and 17th centuries.

In 1086 the parish was called simply Clifford, from the ford where the road to Stratford crosses the River Stour; the name Chambers was added by the C14 after the manor had become attached to the office of chamberlain of Gloucester Abbey. The hamlet of Ailstone, which formed part of Clifford manor, was from the C16 usually described as partly in Clifford and partly in Atherstone (Warks.).

The mill in Clifford in 1086 was probably the one east of the village on the Stour standing close to the manor-house. From the 13th century the demesne included two mills, perhaps both on the same site.

An archaeological assessment of the site and the surrounding area (Hillman, 2017) showed that the proposed development lies within an area of archaeological potential. The earliest recorded evidence of human activity is suggested by the discovery of a Roman coin in a garden on the Crunden Road (MWA1617). The village is mentioned in Domesday (1086) as Clifford indicating a Saxon settlement had been established before the Conquest. An Anglo-Saxon trackway (MWA8635) is located to the north of the site. The deserted medieval settlement of Clifford Chambers (MWA9043) lies to the south-west of the development site whilst similar remains are also located approx. 350m west of Clifford Chambers Bridge (MWA1330 & MWA5638).

EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

Aims of the work

The objective of the evaluation was to determine the date, character, quality, survival and extent of the archaeological deposits within the application area likely to be threatened by the proposed development in order that an informed decision on their importance in a local, regional and national context could be made. This information would inform the basis of a mitigation strategy.

Sample size and scope of fieldwork

The evaluation comprised a single trench approx. 15m long and 1.50m wide focusing on the area comprising the footprint of the development, principally the proposed building footprint.

Fieldwork methods and recording

The archaeological field work and post-excavation was carried out in accordance with standards and guidance for archaeological field evaluations produced by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA, 2014). All deposits were excavated removing the overburden under close archaeological supervision and investigated for archaeological features. Plans and sample sections of the trenches were made and recorded during excavation.

RESULTS: GENERAL

Soil and ground conditions

Conditions were generally dry during excavation, the deposits showing little moisture retention. Despite the concentrated root penetration excavation was relatively smooth throughout the trench being made through alternate layers of topsoil and underlying subsoil leaving a clean and visible surface within the natural substrate (gravel).

Reliability of field investigation

The area of investigation was characterised by a significant amount of root penetration associated with the earlier use of the site as an orchard. The degree of truncation appears to be consistent across the proposed area of investigation.

Distribution of archaeological deposits

No archaeological deposits were encountered during the trial trenching. Instead a sequence of three stratified deposits were recorded comprising natural gravel sealed by a homogenous layer of relict subsoil which was in turn overlain by the modern topsoil. Truncating the surface of the gravel were a series of tree boles associated with the previous use of the site as an orchard.

Presentation of results

The results of the excavation (below) are described from the earliest to the latest deposits. The trench was attributed context numbers with a numerical value equivalent to the number of the trench.

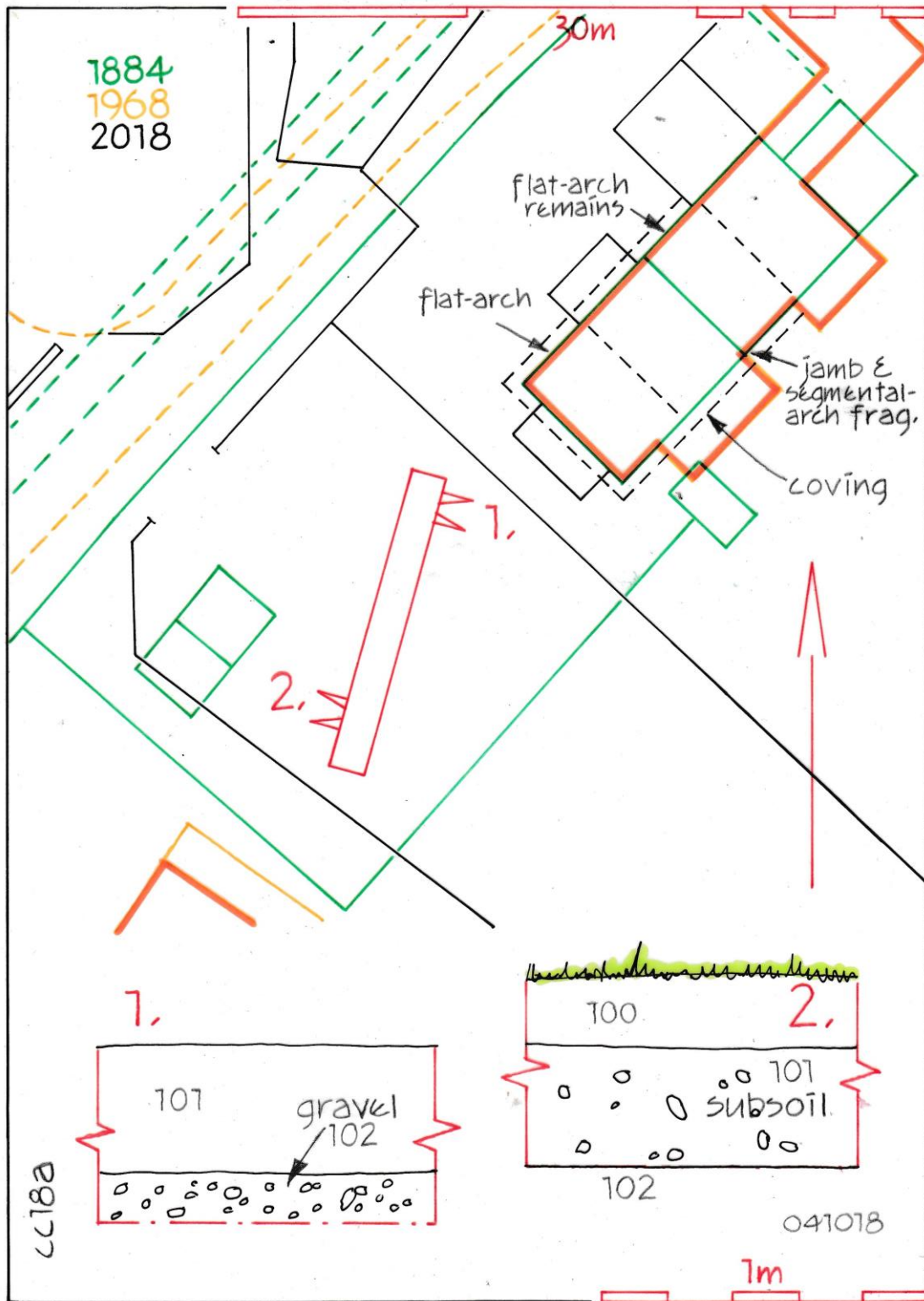


Fig. 3; trench plan & sections

RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS (Fig. 3)

THE TRENCH

The surface of the natural gravel (context 102) was encountered throughout the trench at a level height of 17.36m AOD. This was truncated by a series of irregular shaped features along the length of the trench which were each filled by a single undated deposit of mid-greyish-brown, sandy-silt with a small component of small to medium sized rounded pebbles. These features were interpreted as natural in origin representing tree-root boles probably associated with the former use of the site as an orchard. Sealing these features was a homogenous layer of undated relict subsoil (101) consisting of a dark greyish-brown, sandy-silt. The deposit was approx. 0.20-25m throughout the trench and was in turn sealed by the modern topsoil (100), a 0.25-30m thick layer of dark-greyish brown loam. Both deposits were heavily disturbed by root activity.

FINDS

No finds were recovered during the excavation.

Environmental data

Palaeo-environmental evidence

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

DISCUSSION

Documentary sources indicate that a settlement was established at Clifford before the Norman Conquest, probably centred around the south-east end of the existing village where significant monuments are located including the medieval church and the former moated manor house. The maximum extent of the medieval settlement is mostly based on the evidence of outlying ridge and furrow and the OS 1884 map. Agriculture appears to have been mainly based around arable with some sheep and cattle.

The OS 1884 map also shows Owlet End situated at the north-west end of the village on the floodplain between the main road and the River Stour. Analysis of the fabric of the building suggests that it was constructed during the late C17 and subsequently divided into three cottages by 1884. The absence of a fireplace related to the construction of the late C17 building seems to indicate that it was not a dwelling when originally erected although the presence of a centrally placed doorway flanked by flat brick arch openings suggests a building of some status. Its original function may have been more rudimentary, perhaps a stable.

The results of the excavation from the field investigation were negative. The stratigraphic sequence of deposits recorded comprised river gravels (Second Terrace) overlain by layers of undated relict subsoil and more recent topsoil. The evidence suggests an earlier open rural environment with little or no human activity before the late C17 and the construction of the building. The lack of any residual finds from before this date supports this interpretation.

Recent investigation work adjacent to the north-west side of Owlet End (Cook, 2018) identified a ditch aligned north-east to south-west. Two small sherds of Roman-British pottery were recovered from the ditch fill including a large quantity of animal bone probably associated with food waste. The evidence suggests contemporary occupation nearby.

Summary of results

The results of the evaluation have shown that archaeological deposits are unlikely to survive within the proposed area of construction and that area is likely to have remained unoccupied until more recent times

Significance

The negative results of the evaluation suggest that there has little human activity within the area of the proposed development and the stratigraphic sequence of deposits suggests a continuous open rural environment. A lack of residual finds supports this interpretation. The presence of substantial root penetration within the trench is associated with the use of the site as an orchard which probably became established during the C18 or C19.

Impact of development

The impact of the development is likely to result from the foundations associated with the proposed construction of the new dwelling and the associated services. The results of the survey have shown that archaeological deposits are unlikely to be present with the proposed area of construction and that the impact will be negligible.

Recommendation

The results of the investigation have shown that archaeological deposits are unlikely to be present within the proposed area of construction and therefore no further work is recommended.

Archive Location

The physical archive will be deposited with the City Museum Services in consultation with the Collections Officer. The digital archive arising from the work will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS).



Plate 1; the trench, view to the NW



Plate 2; section a



Plate 3; section b

BIBLIOGRAPHY

British Geological Survey, 1974. *Geological Survey of England and Wales, Stratford-upon-Avon, sheet 200, solid and drift geology, 1:50,000.*

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Hillman, B., 2017. *Archaeological assessment and written scheme of investigation for archaeological evaluation at Owlet End, Clifford Chambers, Warwickshire*, Archaeology Warwickshire report.

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APPENDIX 1; OASIS

Project name	Proposed new dwelling south of Owlet End, The Close, Clifford Chambers, Warwickshire; archaeological evaluation
Project dates	Start: 06-09-2018 End: 06-09-2018
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	cc18a - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 10 - Orchard
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Targeted Trenches"
Development type	Small-scale (e.g. single house, etc.)
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	After outline determination (eg. As a reserved matter)
Country	England
Site location	WARWICKSHIRE STRATFORD ON AVON CLIFFORD CHAMBERS Owlet End The Close, Clifford Chambers, Warwickshire
Postcode	CV37 8HS
Study area	600 Square metres
Site coordinates	SP 19665 52444 52.16950346574 -1.712434030136 52 10 10 N 001 42 44 W Point
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 recipient	county museum
Paper Media available	"Plan","Report","Section"
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Proposed new dwelling south of Owlet End The Close, Clifford Chambers, Warwickshire; archaeological evaluation
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Cook, S
Date	2018
Issuer or publisher	one ten archaeology
Place of issue or publication	Warwickshire
URL	http://www.oasis.ac.uk
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