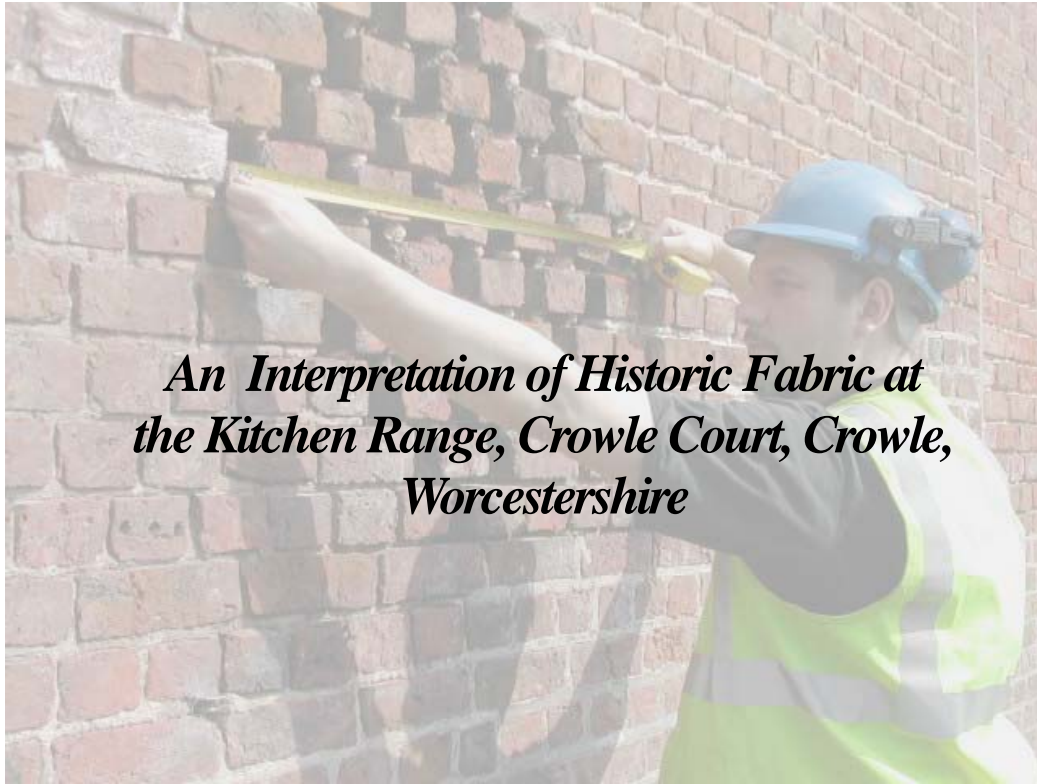


Mercian Archaeology

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*Archaeological Recording at
Crowle Court, Crowle, Worcestershire*



*An Interpretation of Historic Fabric at
the Kitchen Range, Crowle Court, Crowle,
Worcestershire*

A Report for Nick Joyce Architects

August 2006

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Project: PJ 168

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1. Project Background

1.1. Site Location

Crowle Court lies just to the north-west of St John the Baptist Church in the village of Crowle, which is situated on the northern side of the A442 Worcester to Stratford-upon-Avon road, around 1 kilometre to the north of Broughton Hackett. The site lies some 7.5 kilometres to the east of Worcester (NGR SO 922 559).

1.2. Project Details

The moated manorial site of Crowle Court is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 30049) and is listed on the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (WSM 07872).

Crowle Court was demolished around 1880 other than part of a former kitchen range, which stands in a semi-derelict state on the north-western side of the central moated platform. A programme of consolidation and restoration is now in progress.

During stripping loose masonry from the structure, an unusual component of walling was discovered, which was previously concealed by surrounding stonework.

Mercian Archaeology were requested by Nick Joyce Architects, to carry out an assessment of the recently exposed stonework and make a record a roof tile, a stone moulding and a timber knee brace, which were found by contractors during clearance of rubble prior to the commencement of consolidation works.

The fieldwork was carried out on 14th August 2006, consisting of a photographic and sketch drawn record of the revealed stonework and associated features.

2. Methods and Process

2.1. Aims of the Project

The archaeological project aimed to:

1. Record the fabric of the north-east corner of the former kitchen range by digital photography, sketch drawings and written description.

2. To comment on the construction and any phasing noted.
3. To offer an interpretation of the fabric.
4. To record the recently discovered roof tile, moulded stone and timber brace in a similar way.

3. The Background

3.1. A Brief Archaeological Overview

There is documentary evidence to indicate that Crowle was an Anglo-Saxon settlement and manorial centre from the 9th century. The best readily available background can be found in the Victoria County Histories: Worcestershire.

It is thought that the moated site dates from the 13th century and by the 14th century had become a place of retreat for the Priors of Worcester. The diary of Prior Moore, who took Crowle as his retirement home in the 16th century, refers to ‘the manor house, stables, kennels, dovecote, tithe barn and a gatehouse’. There are also references to ‘the great hall, a dormitory for five people, four other chambers and a kitchen’ (Marches Archaeology 2000).

The courthouse and outbuildings, apart from the kitchen range, were demolished around 1880. Plate 1 below shows a copy of one of a series of photographs of Crowle Court taken in 1862 by Benjamin Brecknell-Turner. The detached kitchen stood to the rear of the house and cannot be seen in the photograph.



Plate 1: Crowle Court in 1862 (after RPS Collection at NMPFT/Science & Society Picture Library: Picture number 2003-5001-2-77856-112)

The first edition Ordnance Survey map shows the kitchen range with a small projection in the north-east corner (see Plate 2 below)

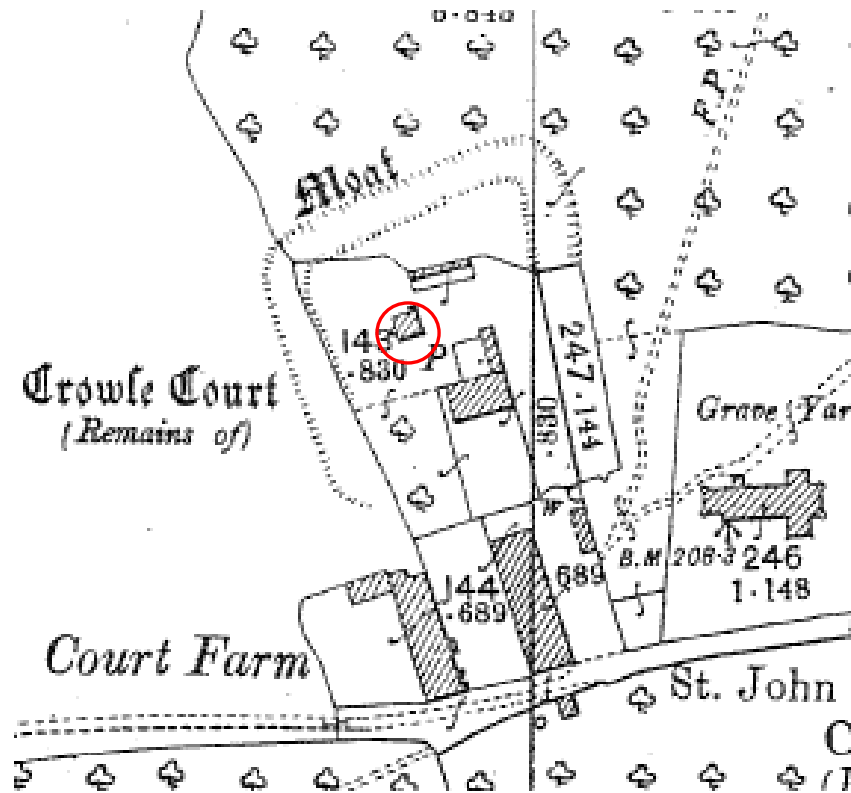


Plate 2: Extract from the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1884 (scale unknown). The kitchen range is circled.

4. The Record

The Roof Tile

During stacking of roof tiles to be re-used in the restoration, it was noted that one of them was stamped on the lower face.



Plate 3: *Stamped roof tile (Scale 25 centimetres)*

The single nibbed flat roof tile is stamped with a circular motif with six segments. The orange-fired clay fabric is sanded on the upper face and may be categorised according to the Worcestershire County Fabric Series as Fabric 2a. The tile was probably made at Worcester after 1467, when the Worcester City Ordinance laid down rules to standardise tile making, including the requirement to stamp (Fagan 2004).

The Moulded Stone



Plate 4: *Stamped roof tile (Scale 25 centimetres)*

The moulded stone retrieved from the debris that had fallen at the north-east corner of the kitchen range was inspected by Dr Richard Morriss, a specialist in worked stones, who made the following observations: -

The grey sandstone block has a roll and fillet moulding on one angle, flanked on one side by a hollow and fillet and to the other side by a hollow. This form of moulded stone was frequently used to frame a door or window aperture in the 13th and 14th centuries. The precision of the cutting of the fillet on the roll suggests a likely date in the region of circa 1220-1260.

The Timber Brace



Plate 5: *Knee-brace from a timber-frame*

The section of timber-framing identified during clearance of the site represents a knee-brace, which would have been pegged between a post and the tie-beam of a timber-frame truss. It is understood that the brace is to be scientifically dated by English Heritage and the results will be presented as a separate dendrochronological report.

The North-East Corner of the Kitchen Range Fabric

The upstanding remains at Crowle Court consist of a rectangular structure interpreted as the former kitchen range of the court, located to the north of centre of the site (Plate 2 above).

The ruinous structure (now undergoing consolidation) is constructed of coursed rubble lias stone with red and grey sandstone generally used for architectural features (quoins, cills, lintels, mullions etc), though a section of one mullion on the northern elevation is carved from limestone. The southern elevation is of a single thickness of ashlar sandstone blocks with an internal skin of brick and tile.

There is a substantial chimney place, which forms part of the west wall. This is built with an external brick-stack of thin hand made bricks, probably dating to the mid-17th century.

The structure is complex and needs no further comment here (see Plates 8-15 below).

This analysis comments only on the fabric and phasing at the north-east corner of the structure. A sketch phase plan is included below (Figure 1).

Phase 1

The northern elevation appears to be part of the original kitchen block structure, although its relationship with the opposite southern elevation, which is of ashlar stone blocks, is unclear. The elevation is 94 centimetres thick and stands to a height of 2-metres, although there has been some rebuilding (Plate 4 below).



Plate 4: *Northern wall (right) butted by eastern wall (left), scale 2 metres*

The sandstone quoins are complete at the north-western corner, tying the northern and western elevations, suggesting they are contemporary (in the main). The sandstone quoins on the opposite north-eastern corner are however, broken by a straight butt joint between the eastern elevation and the northern elevation, indicating the eastern elevation is a later wall. This is further evidenced by a pair of putlog holes low in the eastern elevation, whereas there are none corresponding within the other three elevations (Plate 5 below).



Plate 5: *Putlog holes in the lower face of the eastern elevation, scales 1-metre.*

Phase 2

The eastern wall extends to the north past the northern wall, although now dilapidated in this corner and probably now terminates on the line of the southern side of a former doorway to this elevation. The northern extension of this wall (to the north of the doorway) has now gone. This indicates that a further stone structure once stood to the north-east, attached to the upstanding structure at the north-east corner.

Phase 3

The eastern wall appears to have been cut into (rather than cut through) for the insertion of an east-west wall, with a doorway located against the eastern elevation. The quoins of the eastern door reveal can be seen within the remains of the fabric (plate 6 below).



Plate 6: *Western reveal of doorway in east-west wall, exposed during renovation work*

A slightly raised platform in the lawn to the east appears to correspond with the outline of this second building. There are indications that the inner face was plastered and a remaining fragment of plaster suggested it was a two-coat plaster around a centimetre thick, the base coat being greyish with some hair inclusion, with a pure white lime render topcoat.

Phase 4

Unfortunately, the north-eastern corner has been subject to rough repair and consolidation in the past, including the re-use of stone. Three fragments of lias show evidence of burning; suggesting they came from a former hearth (Plate 7 below), other stone used includes flat slabs used on end.



Plate 7: *Burnt stone re-used in repair to north-eastern corner. The stonework below is the face of the Phase 4 repair to the wall*

The evidence suggests that when the second structure was demolished, the north-eastern corner of the kitchen, which then became detached, was repaired and consolidated using masonry from the demolished range. The face of this repair can be seen on a slightly different line to the original (2nd phase) eastern elevation.

Statement of Confidence

Unfortunately, the interpretation of the north-eastern corner of the upstanding building has to be a little speculative due to the random nature of the Phase 4 repair/consolidation to the corner, which must have taken place after demolition of attached buildings. The western reveal of the doorway identified within the fabric of the north-eastern corner is clearly in-situ, indicating the location of an adjoining east-west wall, but why this has been cut into the eastern elevation, rather than butted against it and tied in is unclear. There is a possibility that it is earlier than the eastern wall, but this relationship also makes little constructional sense. It is likely that there is preserved buried evidence that would reveal the nature of the fabric in this corner of the structure. Based on the above, there is a fair chance that the interpretation is correct.

5. Conclusion

A site visit was made to Crowle Court in August 2006 in order to record and interpret fabric at the north-eastern corner of the kitchen range, which was undergoing a programme of restoration/consolidation at the time. The fieldwork determined that there were 4 relevant phases of construction; the first phase northern wall was cut by a later eastern wall, which continued to the north and must represent part of an attached building to the north-east, which was later altered with the insertion of an east-west wall that was cut into the eastern wall, with a doorway butting the face. When this building was later demolished, the north-eastern corner, which would have been damaged during the demolition, was repaired and consolidated using masonry from the demolished building.

6. Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Nick Joyce of Nick Joyce Architects, Richard Morriss for his analysis of the moulded stone and site foreman Jake Etherton.

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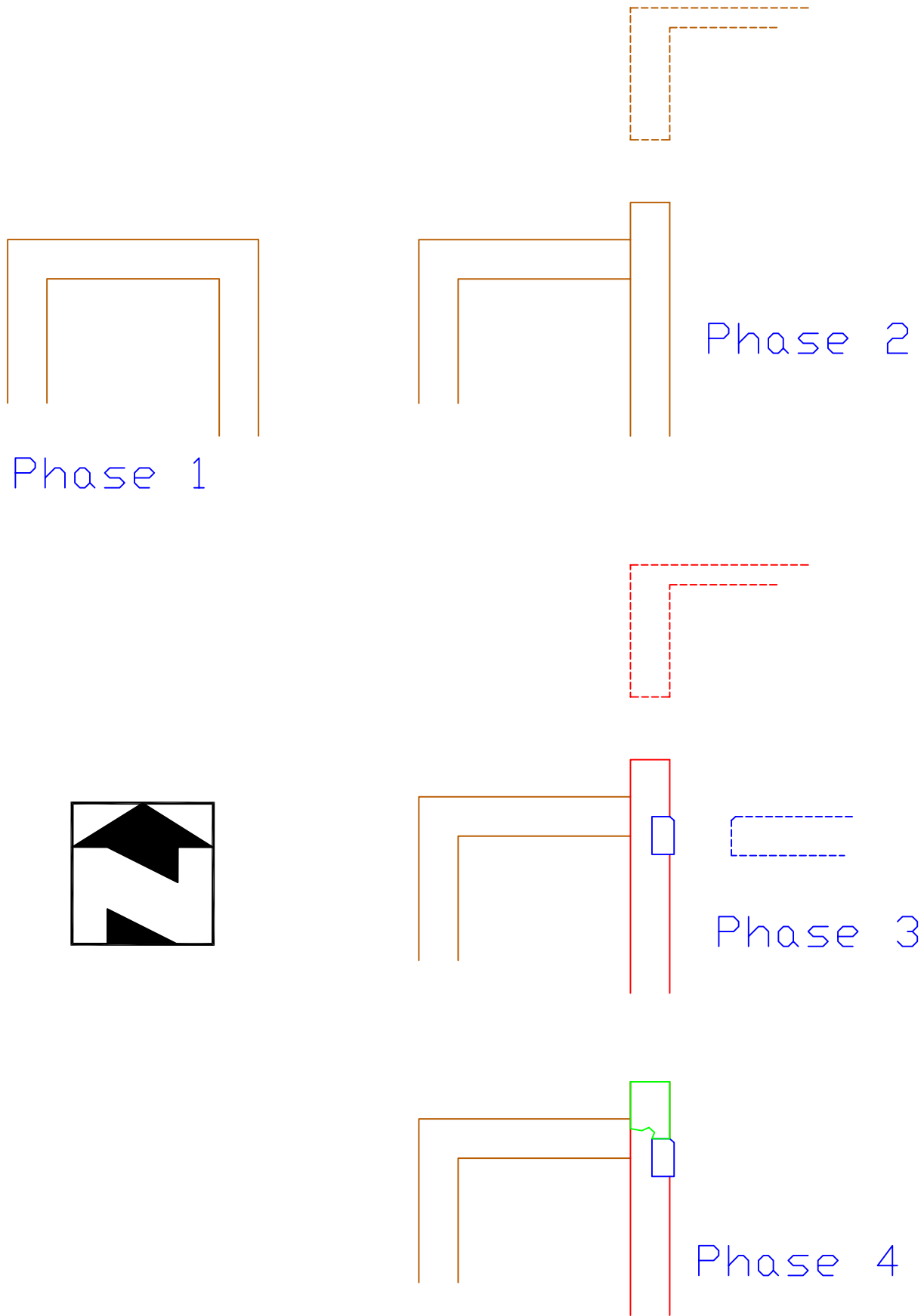


Figure 1: Sketched Phase Plan (not to scale; dotted lines - projected)

Plate 8:

North-east corner of kitchen looking north-west



Plate 9:

North-east corner looking west (scale 2 metres)



Plate 10:

Eastern elevation looking north-west



Plate 11:

Ashlar blockwork of the southern elevation, looking north-east (scale 2 metres)



Plate 12:

Internal north-east corner (left of centre) looking north-east



Plate 13:

Internal western elevation looking north-west (scale 2 metres)



Plate 14:

North-western corner looking south (scale 2 metres)



Plate 15:

The south-west corner looking north-east (scale 2 metres)

