

*An Archaeological Watching Brief at  
Castle Farm, Greenway, Rock,  
Worcestershire*

*A report for Mr & Mrs Greenhalgh*

April 2005

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**Project: PJ 134**

**WSM 34268**

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# 1. Project Background

## 1.1. Location of the Site

The present village of Rock is laid out back from the parish church along an un-adopted road known as Greenway, off the B4202 Abberley to Clows Top Road. The village is around 7 kilometres to the west of Stourport on Severn (NGR SO 7510 7070). Castle Farm is located around 2 kilometres to the east of the village core, further along Greenway. (Figure 1).

## 1.2. Project Details

A planning application was presented to Wyre Forest District Council for the conversion of a barn into a dwelling (WF/0247/99). The planning process determined that the proposed development site may affect a site contained on the Worcestershire Historic Environment record (WSM 04410). The HER is based on a description of the site of Abberley Castle from documentary sources (un-referenced), which suggest that Castle Farm may be the site of the castle, which was the seat of the Toden family during the later medieval period (WHEAS 1999). Consequently, it was determined that there may be buried remains associated with the site of the castle that may be disturbed during the development. As a result, the Planning Archaeologist, Worcestershire County Council, placed a 'watching brief' planning condition on the application, for which a brief of work was written (WHEAS 1999).

## 1.3. Reasons for the Watching Brief

The archaeological watching brief has been suggested as the appropriate response to the threat posed to the potential archaeological site by the development process. This would involve the excavation of foundation trenches and service trenches for the proposed extension and removal of accumulated soil from around the building.

A watching brief is defined as:

*A formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be in a specified area on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed (IFA 1999).*

A watching brief at the site was proposed in order that a record of any archaeological remains or deposits encountered during excavations associated with the development may be made and placed into context using our current archaeological knowledge of the area.

## 2. Methods and Process

### 2.1. Project Specification

- ❑ The project fieldwork conforms to the Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief (IFA 1999).
- ❑ The archive conforms to the standards and guidelines established by the Archaeological Data Service.
- ❑ The project conforms to a brief prepared by the Planning Advisory Section, Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service (WHEAS, 1999) and for which a project proposal and detailed specification was produced (Mercian Archaeology (2003).
- ❑ Mercian Archaeology adhere to the service practice and health and safety policy as contained within the Mercian Archaeology Service Manual (Williams 2003)

### 2.2. Aims of the Project

The watching brief aimed to:

- ❑ Use the results of the archaeological work to produce a report highlighting: -
  1. The survival and location of any archaeological deposits.
  2. Make an analysis and interpretation of all identified natural and cultural deposits
- ❑ Based on the above, establish the significance, survival, condition and period of the archaeological remains and place them within context at local, regional or national level where relevant.

## 3. The Documentary Research

### 3.1. The Topography

The underlying solid geology of the area around the development site is of carboniferous mudstones and shale with sandstone. The overlying drift geology is slowly permeable soils of the Badsey Association and Rivington Series (Soil Survey of England and Wales; 1:250,000 Sheet 3, 1983).

The economic development of the area has focused on exploitation of the natural resources of the Wyre Forest for timber, charcoal, stone quarrying and mineral extraction. The area has developed a mixed pastoral and arable agricultural subsistence base.

The modern parish of Rock is extensive with the Dowles Brook forming the southern boundary and the county boundary marking the limits to the north.

### A Brief Archaeological Overview

The place-name Rock derives from the Old English *ak*, meaning ‘oak’ (Reiss, undated). The Domesday Survey makes no reference to Rock and the main manor was Alton (also Alwinton) at this time. The area that is now within the bounds of the parish of Rock had five manors namely Alwinton, Linde, More, Holim and Stilldene (Ibid). Most of the area of the parish was held, with lands further afield, by Ralph de Toeni (also Todeni). Rock is first mentioned in 1210-1 (VCH IV, 320-27).

There is little written regarding Todeni, but it appears his enclosure was at ‘Beitone’, which he reserved for himself when granting his holdings of the Wyre Forest to the Abbey of St Evroul (VCH VI, 322). The Todeni *castle* is said to have been inherited by Alice Todeni from her brother Robert in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, the castle is referred to as ‘Colewente’ (Comely, personal note in HER file WSM 04410). Work by Mr S. Comely during the 1980’s indicated that the site of the Todeni castle was thought by some to be close to Abberley Hall, some 4 kilometres to the south. However, Comely indicates that antiquarian Habington describes the location of the castle as, ‘*heere is a parcke on a mighty hyll overlooking the paryshe of Abberley which lyeth underneathe in a botome. Whereof the baron Thony was Lord and Patron*’ (ibid), and suggests this is not the site near Abberley Hall as it is not on a mighty hill or overlooking Abberley Parish. Comely further suggests that the description fits the site at Castle farm, Rock and refers to ‘old maps’ showing the site as ‘The Castle’ or ‘Mickle Castle’. A further link between Rock and the Todeni’s is that Roger Todeni built rock church in 1162 and is reputed to be interred there.

The Worcestershire Historic Environment Record refers to a previous owner of Castle Farm, Mrs Nott, ‘visiting foundations to the north-east of Castle farm some years ago’ (WSM 04410) and that Mr Nott had reported finds of building material, pottery and millstones in the area (WSM 10340).

A further archaeological mystery was presented by Mrs Greenhalgh of Castle Farm. Plate 3 shows a photograph of the previous Castle Farm around the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century just before it was demolished. The site of the farmhouse is unclear and it was hoped the results of the watching brief might shed some light on the former location of this building.

### 3.2. The Cartography

In 1836 the Tithe Commutation Act was passed by Parliament, resulting in an extensive survey of land across England in order to produce a series of Tithe Apportionment Maps that relayed information about land ownership and use, aimed at converting the commutation of tithe in kind to land taxation (Hoskins 1972, 37). Casle Farm came under the auspices of Rock Parish, for which a map and apportionment was produced in 1843 (Not reproduced). The map shows the subject building within a complex similar in layout today except that the current farmhouse is not shown, suggesting it had not yet been built. The plot is referred to as ‘the Castle House, buildings and rickyard’. The owner was Emma Nott and the occupier is recorded as James Nott. The reference to Castle House and the lack of the depiction of any structures that do not exist today, indicates that the house is actually one of the buildings shown, meaning that one or more of the current farm buildings was built over the site of the former house. The ‘L’ shaped field to the east of the farmhouse is named ‘Castle Field’. (WRO : BA 1572; x 760/531)

This was proven by the location of an estate map dating to 1826. The map, which is re-drawn in Figure 2, makes a clear distinction between domestic and agricultural building and shows that the former farmhouse occupied the north-east corner of the site, where a cowshed now stands. The plan also shows the building, which was the subject of the watching, brief within the complex. (WRO: BA 3164 r705: 423, parcel 24).

Only the small-scale 6” to 1 mile 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map of 1884 was available at the Worcester Records Office. Again, this was limited in detail and was not reproduced, although the map shows the present farmhouse for the first time.

The more detailed 25” to 1 mile 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map of 1903 shows the site in similar configuration as today (Figure 3).

The road (Greenway) configuration to the north of Castle Farm is interesting as it has a fairly straight line to the west, but abruptly curves and then reverse curves in the opposite direction to the east of the site. The topography suggests that the reverse curve may follow the contour line of a slope, but the opposite curve is inexplicable and may have been determined by earlier cultural features (perhaps a defensive ditch?). This is further discussed below.

#### Cartographic Sources Used

Source	Reference Number
Map of the castle estate, Rock (1826)	Worcester Records Office BA 3164 r705: 423, parcel 24
Tithe Apportionment and Map of Rock (1843)	Worcester Records Office BA 1572; x 760/531

Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 6" (1884)	Worcestershire Historic Environment Record print-out
Ordnance Survey 2nd Edition 25". Worcestershire Sheet XIII.16 (1903)	Worcester Records Office

Other sources used are referenced within the report.

### 3.4. The Fieldwork Methodology

The watching brief was undertaken between 10<sup>th</sup> May 2004 and 15<sup>th</sup> March 2005.

The photographic survey was carried out using digital format. A 1-metre scale was used where possible.

Proforma Record Forms were used to record the site stratigraphy in tandem with site notes to produce the final record contained within this report.

The methodology adopted and the favourable working conditions meant that the aims and objectives of the brief could be fully met and the fieldwork was successfully concluded.

## 4. The Watching Brief

The watching brief was carried out inside and to the south of (rear) the subject building following the progress of the ground workers. The former use of the building is unknown, but it may have been a small workshop or fodder processing house.

Inside the building the clay floor was excavated as part of the under pinning procedure. The natural clay-marl was identified immediately below the line of the former floor of the building. There were no finds or indications that the levels below the floor were disturbed by cultural activity. It was not clear if the clay of the floor was in fact the actual floor surface and it is assumed that a tile or flag floor had been lifted from the floor at some time in the past, possibly several years ago.

The external work involved removal of over 1 metre of accumulated soil from around the southern and western sides of the building. It became clear how much accumulation or build up was around the building as two ground floor windows buried by the material build up were uncovered (Plate 1).

The foundations of the building were of crushed and broken stone rubble in a shallow cut into the natural clay-marl. . Over the natural was a thick deposit of red clay containing a few fragments of 20th century clay roof tile and un-dateable brick. The deposit also contained some broken window glass, broken ceramic field-drain, coal fragments and some degraded timber. The western section of the excavated area demonstrated that this deposit had been purposely placed in order to level the area, which naturally sloped up to the south. This was also apparent, as a Dutch barn had been constructed on the flat platform created by the levelling

(Plate 2), probably during the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (although the levelling may have been a little earlier).

There were no significant archaeological deposits or finds located during the watching brief.

## 5. Discussion of the Physical and Documentary Evidence

The watching brief determined that there were no significant archaeological features or deposits within the development area. There were no significant finds within the material excavated from around or within the subject building and the evidence suggests that the majority of the built-up earth at the rear (south) of the subject building, had been purposely deposited. It seems logical to suggest that the material had been used to level the natural slope to the north in order to create a level platform for the construction of the adjacent mid to late 20th century Dutch barn.

The suggestion that the site of the Toden castle is located at Castle Farm may be described as inconclusive from the known and available documentation. Mr Comely suggests that a former castle on the site of Castle Farm was the seat of the Toden family because Habington is describing the site of their stronghold as, 'on a mighty hill overlooking Abberley', that a water diviner had located 'buried walls' during his divining (Comely, personal note in HER file WSM 04410) and that subsequent test pits by Mr Comely himself had uncovered random stone, interpreted as foundations (ibid). Unfortunately, no plans, photographs or finds are recorded which would support this suggestion. The size of the parish of Rock, with several manors, gives rise to the possibility of more than one castle in the area, in fact there are several moated sites known to exist within the immediate area.

There are, however, tenuous pieces of evidence that suggest that the farmstead were the site for 'a' castle: The reference to 'castle' in the place name Castle Farm; there is an 'L' shaped field adjacent to the east of the farm buildings known as Castle Field; there is also a Little Castle Orchard recorded on the opposite side of the Greenway (Figure 2) and a Castle Bank Coppice to the south adjacent to the brook. Whilst this seems suggestive evidence of the former site of a castle, it should be noted that there are many instances where the 'castle' prefix is used, but there has been no castle. For example, Castle Street in Worcester was so named as the gaol located there resembled a castle and Worcester Castle was on the opposite side of the city; Castle Green, which overlooks the Ironbridge Gorge at Coalbrookdale is so named as a timber-framed building juts out from the landscape 'like a castle', rather than having any links with a true castle. Of course this is not always the case and the evidence here, being a spread of 'castle' field-names, tends to support the former site of a castle in the vicinity.

It should also be noted that castles have taken on different form from their introduction into the British landscape by the Normans after the conquest to their demise in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The earliest castles were generally of earthen defences topped with timber palisades and a



tower on the 'motte'. Many motte and bailey castles developed into stone castles as they became a permanent landscape feature, other stone castles were built to replace earlier less permanent structures and many so called castles were actually simply fortified manor houses set within a wet or dry moat. So it must be borne in mind that any remains at Castle Farm may be simply of ditch and mound rather than masonry remains. However, it is evident that there has been extensive use of random stone within the current buildings at Castle Farm and it cannot be ruled out that any castle on the site was of similar construction.

The physical evidence on the ground may assist in indicating a possible location of a former castle. As noted above, The Greenway takes a wide arc adjacent to the east of the Castle Farm complex. This may be that the road was cut using the topography to provide the easiest route, alternatively it may be that the road skirted an obstacle that was extant at the time the road developed and it may be that this was the defensive ditch of a castle bailey. This would place the heart of the castle somewhere within Castle Field, but this could only be proven by methodical archaeological evaluation.

Although the watching brief returned only negative results, the background work was able to locate the site of the original farmhouse. The image of the former farmhouse shows it to be a three storey double pile timber-framed structure with close studding and wattle and daub panels. The structure is likely to date from the late 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century with 17<sup>th</sup> century additions and later alteration with partial underbuild in stone and brick and an external brick chimneystack (Plate 3). The cowshed in the north-eastern corner of the farmyard complex now sits in this position and it is possible, although not inspected, that the cowshed contains some stonework within its fabric from the underbuild of the former farmhouse.

## 6. Conclusion

*The results of the archaeological watching brief demonstrate that there was no significant archaeological remains or deposits located within the development area. The physical evidence indicated that the site was levelled with a deposit of clay to the rear of the subject building during the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The levelling process appears to have been carried out so that a Dutch barn could be built close to the existing farmyard complex. It has been noted that the road adjacent to the north-east of the farm complex follows an artificial curve and this may respect the line of a former defensive ditch of a former castle on the site. It cannot be determined from the evidence if this was indeed the manorial seat of the Toden family, as suggested by former work on the site. The work, although producing negative evidence from the watching brief, was able to identify the site of the original Castle Farm house, which dates from around the 16<sup>th</sup> century and was demolished around a century ago. The site is now contained below a cowshed in the north-east corner of the complex, this may include upstanding fabric from the early farmhouse.*

## 7. Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the clients Mr and Mrs Greenhalgh for their interest and hospitality. Thanks are also due to the ground workers who carried out the excavations at the site; Mike Glyde, Planning Archaeologist, Worcestershire County Council and the staff of Worcester Records Office.

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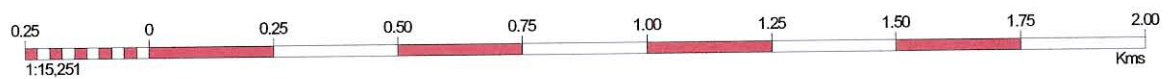
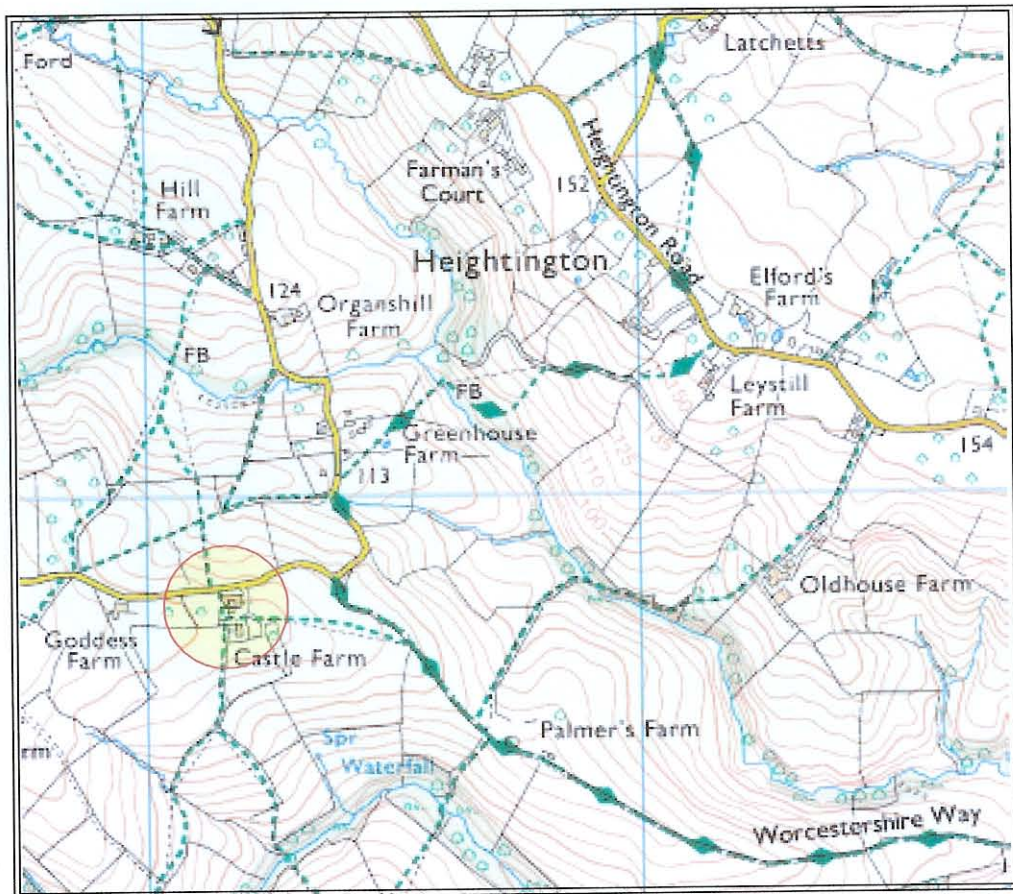
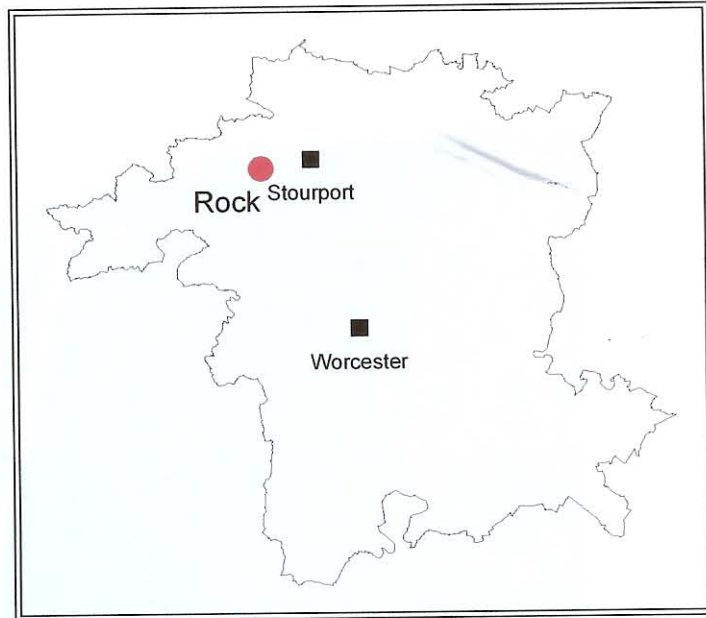
**Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Section (WHEAS 1999)** *Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief at Castle Farm, Greenway, Rock, Worcestershire*

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# Figure 1: Location of the Site



Location of the site at Castle Farm,  
Greenway, Rock, Worcestershire

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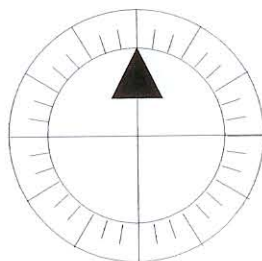
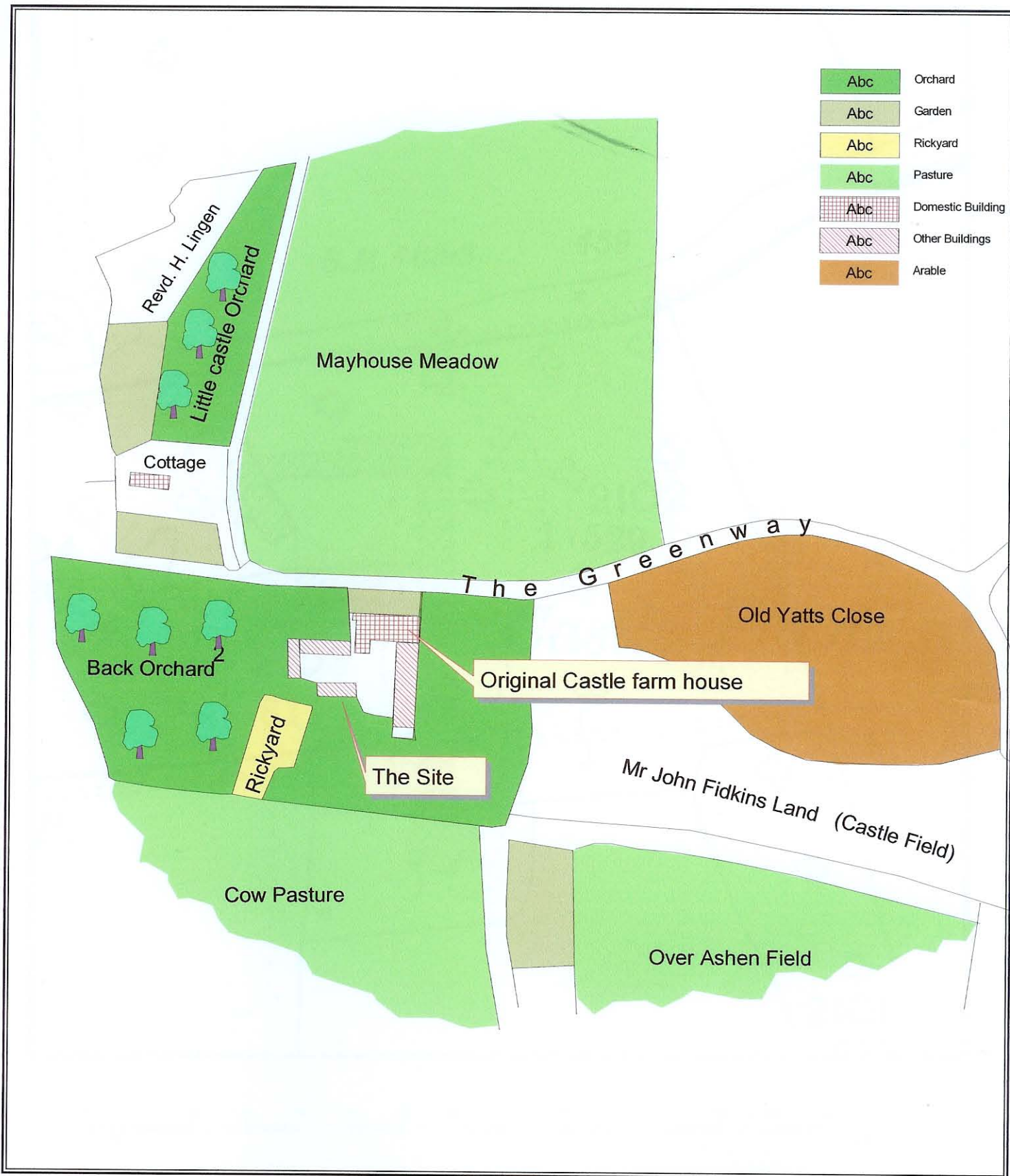


Figure 2: Extract from a Map of the Castle Estate, Rock (1826)



The Castle Estate map of 1826 shows the position of the former farmhouse where a cattle shed now stands. Scale unknown

Reference WRO: BA3164 r705:423  
Parcel 24

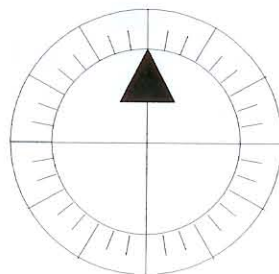
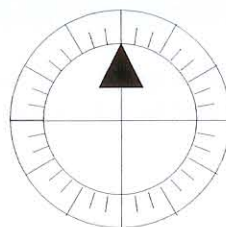
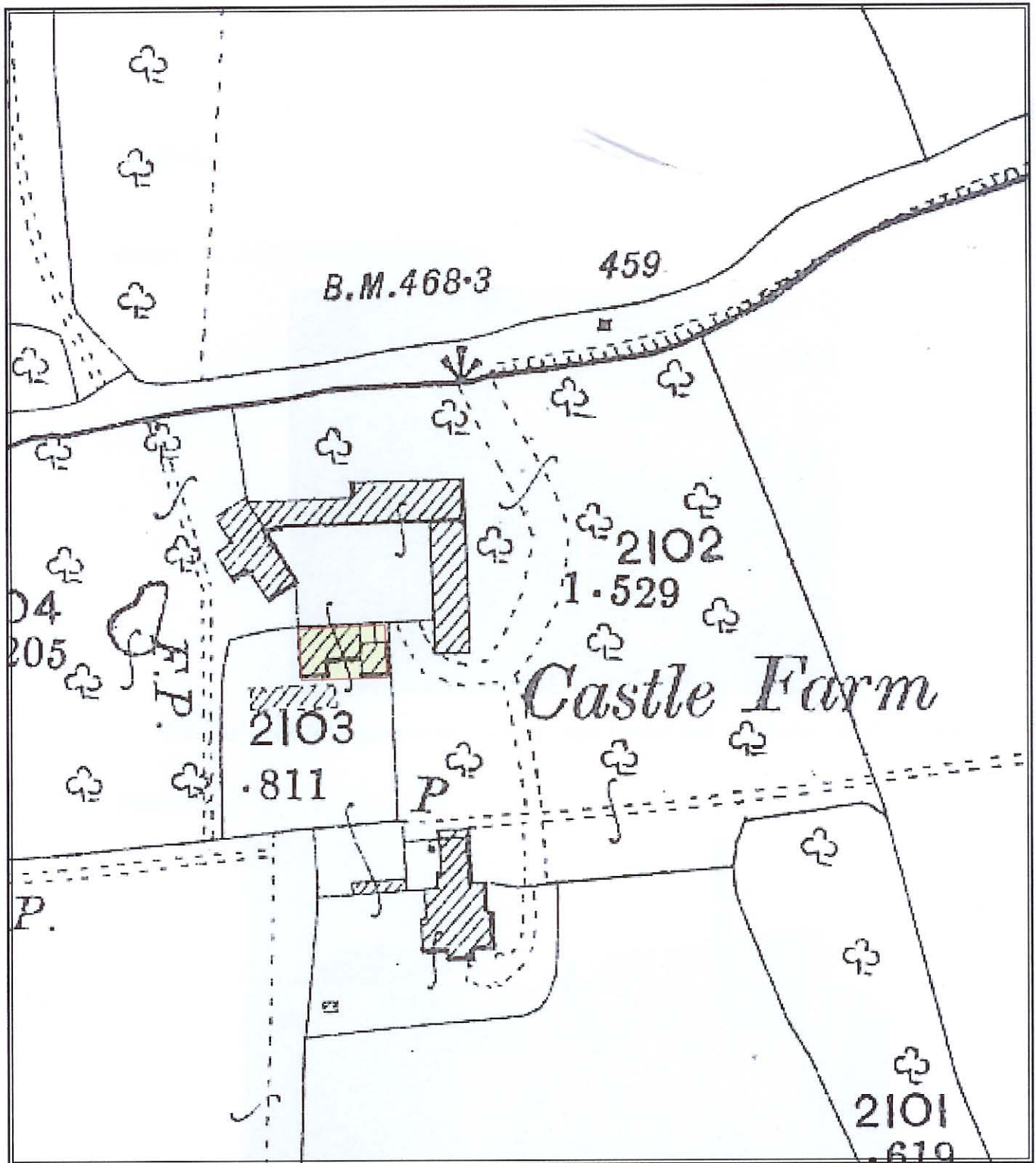


Figure 4: 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey (1903)



The 2nd edition map of 1903 with the area of the watching brief highlighted. The late 19th century constructed farmhouse (present building) is shown to the south of the farm buildings.

# Plates

## Plate 1



*The level of build up against the building, note the bricked up window (scale 1 metre)*

## Plate 2



*Work in progress. Note the Dutch barn (left). It is proposed that the dumped material was to facilitate a level platform for its construction*

# Plates

## Plate 3



*The former Castle Farm house, taken around 1900 before its demolition (kindly supplied by Mrs Greenhalgh)*

## Plate 4



*Dumped material over the natural slope (shown by line) (scale 1 metre)*