

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF
AT MOORHOUSE FARM,
LOWER FERRY LANE,
CALLOW END, WORCESTERSHIRE

WSM 37315



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June - July, 2007

Mike Napthan MIFA
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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken in June-July 2007, by Mike Napthan Archaeology, in response to the construction of a domestic extension at Moorhouse Farm. The site presently forms part of the garden of the former farm house, which is partially of 17th Century timber-framed construction. The house lies in an isolated position, east of Callow End on a slight rise on the edge of the flood plain of the River Severn. Previous archaeological observations in the area have been fairly limited in scope, with the exception of a watching brief on flood-relief works to the north of the property. This project produced a small scatter of Roman artefacts from a location some 200m to the north of the present site. The present site is listed as a possible medieval moated site on the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record. The attribution appears to be entirely erroneous as no proper visual inspection of the site had been made and neither of the two cartographic sources quoted in the Brief show any evidence of a moat in this area; nor does the present topography suggest the former presence of a moat.

The watching brief was undertaken over three days during the excavation of foundation trenches for a small extension. The deposits exposed consisted of cultivated garden soils directly overlying natural alluvial sands and gravels. The only cut features related to modern services, drainage and a shallow soak-away. A single sherd of late 17th or early 18th Century stoneware jar was recovered from the topsoil. Earlier land-use of the development site itself appears to have been primarily agricultural. There were no indications of medieval activity on the site.

The house itself is of architectural merit and has a number of features of historic interest including a 17th C timber oriel window and a massive, ornate contemporary chimney.

In conclusion: the development has had no impact on buried remains, and the potential for buried archaeologically significant deposits in the immediate area appears to be slight, although the standing building is of considerable architectural interest.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Mike Napthan Archaeology at Moorhouse Farm, Lower Ferry Lane, Callow End, (NGR SO84084947) and is based upon a brief supplied by Mike Glyde of the WCHEAS Planning Advisory Service (June 2007). The planning reference is MH/07/0529. The works are being

undertaken for Dr D and Mrs L Robinson (the Clients), who reside at Moorhouse Farm

- 2.2 The project design (by Mike Napthan, MIFA: 12th June 2007) was prepared in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching briefs* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994) and *Archaeological Guidance Paper 4: Archaeological Watching Briefs: (guidelines)* issued by English Heritage. This report represents a summary of the findings of the watching brief

3 Aims

- 3.1 The purpose of an archaeological watching brief is to gain information about the archaeological resource within a given area or site. These aims were achieved through pursuit of the following objectives:

- i) to define and identify the probable nature of archaeological deposits on site, and date these where possible;
- ii) to attempt to determine the likely nature of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible from documentary and cartographic sources
- iii) to determine the likely impact of the development on the archaeological resource.
- iv) to address the following research objectives;

- the location, dating and character of the postulated moated site
- the nature of post medieval domestic and agricultural activity in the vicinity

4 Methodology

- 4.1 Searches were made at the Worcestershire County HER, Worcester Family History Centre, Worcestershire Record Office for documentary sources, published sources, cartographic sources and aerial photographs. No material directly relevant to the present site was identified, but cartographic sources including the Tithe Awards plan (Fig 3) and the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey indicate that the development area has long been part of the curtilage of the farm-house. The ownership of the property has not been traced, but the occupants have been identified, as far as possible from 1950 back to 1791, by use of Trades Directories and other sources.
- 4.2 The site of the new extension was mechanically stripped of topsoil, and the exposed sandy subsoil observed by the archaeologist. The new foundation trenches were cut to the top of the underlying gravel, again under archaeological observation. Due to un-seasonal river flooding of the site it was necessary to re-excavate trenches that had collapsed as the flood waters were pumped away. At an early stage in the watching brief it became clear that the material being removed from the trenches was certainly in situ alluvial sands and gravel to within 0.5m of modern surface levels, and that there was little further potential for buried deposits or artefacts. A total of three site visits were made on the 27th/28th June and 5th July 2007. The site record was primarily photographic, consisting of 59 digital photographs presented on the enclosed CD ROM.

5 Historical background

- 5.1 The Domesday entries for the parish of Powick give the earliest description of the parish: *“the church of Westminster held three hides in Poiwic: in demesne are two caracutes and sixteen villains, and five bordarers, with ten caracutes; there are four men servants and one maid and three coliberti, paying three sextaries of honey, and 45d. and one mill for the use of the hall; there are twenty acres of meadow, and from a certain rent, 30s. It is worth 20l.*

There is one priest, having one caracute and two herdsmen and five bordarers, with two caracutes. There were eight radmen...having among them ten caracutes, and several bordarers and servants, with seven caracutes. What they held was worth an hundred shillings: these radmen mowed one day in a year in the lord's meadow, and did what service he ordered them. Urso holds the lands which Alward and Saulf, Bricmer and Alwin held, and has seven caracutes and twenty two bordarers, and fourteen men servants; the whole was worth 9l. 5s. Gislebert Fitzturoid holds what Alwi and Retelbert held, and there are in demesne two caracutes and seven bordarers and three men servants, with one caracute, and a mill of 16d. it is worth 43s. Walter Ponther holds what Godric held, and has there half a caracute and one villan and six bordarers, and two men servants, with two caracutes: it is worth 25s. A certain foreigner called Artir holds what Edward held, and has there one caracute and two herdsmen” (Nash 1781-2 p263)

- 5.2 Seven manses of land in Powick were confirmed to Pershore Abbey by King Edgar's charter, 972. Powick was given with many other Pershore lands by Edward the Confessor to Westminster Abbey. The manor of Powick was given by Herbert Abbot of Westminster (1121–40) to the priory of Great Malvern, Henry I confirming the grant. The estate was confirmed to the priory by Pope Honorius III in 1217. The priors continued to pay a rent of £24 13s. 4d. to the Abbots of Westminster as overlords till the Dissolution. In 1545 the reversion was granted to Edward Lord Clinton and Ursula his wife. They sold it with Hanley Castle to the king in 1547. It remained in the Crown till 1590, when it was bought by Henry Bromley of Holt. It descended with Holt till 1649, when it was sold by Henry Bromley and his wife Beatrice to Thomas Lord Coventry, the present Earl of Coventry being the current owner (VCH, 1924, 186).
- 5.3 The Beauchamps of Elmley probably held the manor of Beauchamp Court in demesne until about 1269, when on the death of William Beauchamp it passed to his third son Walter. In 1269 3 carucates of land in Powick and Bransford were settled on Walter and his wife Alice de Toeni. In 1276 Walter paid 10s. for his lands in Powick. Walter, who was mentioned in his father's will in 1268 as a Crusader, was a steward of the royal household and in 1300 had a grant of free warren in his demesne lands of Powick. He also had a chantry in the court of his manor here. He died in 1303, succeeded in turn by his three sons Walter (of Alcester), who died in 1328–9, William, who with his wife Joan in 1334 settled the manors of Powick and Bransford on themselves and their heirs, and Giles. Eventually the whole estate passed to the Lygons as heirs of Anne, Lord Beauchamp's second daughter. Her son Richard Lygon held it on his death in 1556, and the manor has since descended with Madresfield (VCH 1924, 186-7).
- 5.4 Pixham stands on the Severn bank, and there was a horse ferry over the river. There were brick works by the river, where in 1906 extensive remains of early pottery were found. The manor of Pixham was apparently included in Powick in 1086. The names of Richard and Simon de Pixham occur as landholders in Powick in 1276, but the manor is not mentioned till the Dissolution, when with 'Powick Messor' it was in the hands of the Prior and convent of Great Malvern. It was leased with the capital manor to Richard Berde in 1541, and in 1546 was granted in reversion to Thomas Wymbish and his wife Elizabeth Lady Talboys, who in the same year had licence to alienate it to Lord Clinton. He sold Pixham to the Crown in 1547. It was bought from the Crown in 1599 by William Lygon of Madresfield with which manor it has since descended. Prior's Court or the Rectory Manor, was surrendered by the Earl of Lincoln to the Crown in 1576. This manor had been leased by Thomas Dereham, Prior of Great Malvern (c. 1533–8), to William Staple and Joan his wife and their sons. Richard Cupper bought their lease about 1573 and kept a court here from 1577 to his death about 1586. He conveyed the manor to Richard son of John Cupper. Another deed, however, states that John Cupper purchased the rectory and manor of Powick from John Wellesburne and others, and that they passed to his eldest son Thomas with contingent remainder to his younger sons Vincent and Richard. Richard

granted his interest to the Crown about 1585. The manor of the rectory was said in the 16th century to be greater than the manor of Powick. It may after this time have passed with the rectory and is now in the possession of the Croome Estates, having been property of the Earl of Coventry (VCH 1924, 187).

- 5.5 Callow End appears to have been a relatively recent settlement, as the hamlet was not mentioned by name by early county historians including Nash (1781-2), nor marked on early mapping. The principal residences were Beauchamp's Court (described by Laird as "*once the residence of the ancient family of Beauchamp, of Powick, now represented by the noble house of Lygon. It is now, however, nothing more than a farm house, one wing of the original plan being the only part ever finished of the present building*" (Laird, 1814, 170). Priors Court, (of circa 1500) to the south west of the present property was described by Nash as "*Priors Court, so called because it belonged to the Priory of Great Malvern, is now the property of George William, Earl of Coventry*" (Nash 1781-2 Vol II 266). Pixham, to the south, was the only other major landholding in the vicinity - "*Pykeham or Pixam belonged formerly to Lord Clinton who exchanged it with the crown for other lands in the reign of Edward VI. With the crown it remained till 42 Eliz. when that queen sold it to William Lygon for £130 3s 4d.*" (Nash 1781-2 Vol II 266).
- 5.6 The earliest occupants of Moorhouse Farm to be traced by the present project were Messrs Lacon and Francis, listed in the Universal British Directory of 1791. A Samuel Lacon (but no Francis) was listed as a Powick resident in Grundy's Worcester Directory in 1794; this volume does not specify addresses within the parish. The earlier 19th C trades directories largely overlooked the rural areas, and the next certain inhabitant of Moorhouse was Ann Jolly, a farmer, listed in Bentley's Directory of 1840-41. It is possible that she was the widow or daughter of James Jolley (sic) listed as a Powick farmer in Lewis's Directory of 1820, but his precise address was not given. The next known farmer was one E. Lakin in 1849, and it is likely that that the farm was then predominantly used for stock - at a sale in 1849, Mr E. Lakin of Moor House Farm, Powick, sold 51 shorthorn cattle; cows averaged £22 and bull calves £13 (Gaut, 1939, 280). The next identifiable inhabitant was Thomas Williams, farmer, present at Moorhouse in 1851 (Lascelle's Directory), he was apparently succeeded by Henry Williams, present in 1854 (Kelly's) and 1862 (Slater's Directory). In 1863 the house was occupied by William Turner, a farm bailiff (Kelly's Post Office Directory 1863), and it appears that the farm was subsequently managed by an absentee farmer or estate manager. There are no appearances of Moorhouse Farm in any of the Trades Directories from 1863 to 1905, strongly suggesting that the house was either empty or more probably occupied by farm labourers, who would not generally be named in the directories. It is probable that the relatively unspoilt condition of the building reflects a long period of benign neglect, whilst other farmhouses were much "improved" by the Victorians.
- 5.7 In 1905 the house was occupied by Joseph Brooks (Littlebury's 1905), but shortly afterwards it was taken on by John Cubberley (Kelly's 1908). By 1912 Charles Cubberley was the farmer, and he then appears regularly in the Directories as the farmer until at least 1950 (the latest readily available source). In 1950 the publican at the Coventry Arms, Powick was one Harry Cubberley, presumably Charles' son. The occupants since 1950 have not been traced.

6 Archaeological background

- 6.1 The only documented archaeological fieldwork in the immediate area was a watching brief in 2004 on the Callow End Flood Alleviation Scheme, Powick (WSM33640) An archaeological watching brief was undertaken in July and August 2004 to the north of the present property. The pipeline passed through an area where cropmarks had been identified by aerial photography. A feature cut through by the trenching produced a substantial amount of pottery dating to the 2nd century AD. A possible

boundary ditch was exposed in plan nearby. The pottery recovered consisted of large sherds of Severn Valley ware, Malvernian ware and Samian vessels. The trenching continued through the area of the cropmarks but did not reveal any more features or artefacts (Goad, 2004 ; WSM33640).

- 6.2 The cropmarks previously identified in the area of the flood plain to the east of Moorhouse Farm consist of WSM06059 described as “Possible Romano-British Occupation Area East of Moorhouse Farm Callow End, Rectangular enclosure, linear feature Two adjacent enclosures & additional ditches”. WSM15750 is described as “Cropmarks, E of Moorhouse Farm, Powick - one main ditch line as cropmark, but other slighter features just visible. Cropmarks have also been identified to the south of the farm: WSM11391 “Cropmarks. Dating unknown”, and to the south-east: WSM15749 “Extension of cropmarks to N (WSM06059), one ditch line with possible small enclosures off this”. It is highly probable that most of these cropmarks relate to historic drainage ditches and stock enclosures, but the presence of Roman pottery to the north of Moorhouse Farm suggests some form of occupation site, probably linked with the much more extensive Roman site recorded to the north of Kempsey church, immediately across the river.
- 6.3 The Kempsey site (WSM 02125) was reported by Jabez Allies as producing Roman pottery, brooches, bones and a coin of Nero from “burial cists” dug out of the gravel beds in 1835-36 (Allies 1840). The reported Roman “camp” earthworks (VCH 1924, 422) around Kempsey Church (described on the Worcestershire HER as a “hill-fort” -WSM 02113) have been investigated by four separate professional excavations, all of which have proved largely negative (a total of 1 Iron Age and 7 Roman sherds have been recovered from the four excavations, and all of the sherds were unstratified). It has been suggested (Napthan 2005) that the earthworks are more probably related to the enclosure of the documented monastic site and later Bishops residence.
- 6.4 The postulated moat observation (WSM07777) is discussed in detail below (Para 8).

7 Observations

7.1 *Natural deposits*

- 7.1.1 The natural deposits consisted of a fine compact brown alluvial sand with underlying gravel lenses and beds at variable depths. The site lies immediately adjacent to a slight promontory of higher ground which lies to the north and west of the garden area. The promontory has the appearance of being a low gravel terrace. The remainder of the garden, including the house, lies within the margins of the Severn floodplain
- 7.1.2 A light brown sandy subsoil overlay the natural sands and gravels - this material appeared to consist of a mixture of alluvial sand and organic material leached from the overlying topsoil
- 7.1.3 The natural deposits were present across all of the observed trenches at a depth of circa 0.25-0.35m below current surface levels. It is particularly significant in view of the postulated “moat” that there was no increase in the depth of made ground on the edge of the former “pond”. This was observed in a previously excavated “soak-away pit” approximately 10m to the south west of the new extension (Fig 3).

7.2 *Modified natural deposits/topsoil*

- 7.2.1 The topsoil was a dark grey-brown cultivated sandy clay loam up to 0.35m in depth. The artefacts observed were almost all modern, including drainage pipe, plastic and machine made roof-tile. The only item of interest recovered was a single bodysherd from a late 17th or more probably early 18th C Nottingham stoneware jar (County Fabric Series fabric 81.3).

8 Discussion

- 8.1 The Worcestershire HER has a record described “Moat?, Moorhouse Farm, Powick” record number WSM07777. It reads “*Possible Moat. A visit in 1996 produced the following note. Previously well-kept. Not entirely circling the site and no access allowed. Now planted with trees encircling. Said to have had banks heightened to prevent flooding and reported to be a conservation area Polygon based on 1st ed OS map field boundary that surrounds the farmhouse*”. The identity of the original observer is not given. This record is hard to reconcile with the present topography of the site (Fig 3), and it is certainly unclear how the “moat” could have been viewed without access being granted to the property. If the observer had approached along the drive they may have mistaken the depression of a former pond (in the area of the present stables and front drive) as an element of a “moat”, but from the same observation point it would be clear that on the eastern side of the drive the ground is significantly lower, part of a very wide paleo-channel in the floodplain that could not possibly be mistaken for an artificial feature. To the west and north-west of the house the ground levels rise abruptly (approximately 1.7m) to the area of the present ménage, and there is a further “promontory” of higher ground to the north of the house under the orchard.
- 8.2 There is indeed a small bank along the eastern and south-eastern boundaries of the garden (where they dip down into the palaeo-channel), but the bank is relatively recent - post dating the late 19th C brick privy building, and with soil banked up around the stems of the hedgerow and trees. The purpose of this bank was clearly demonstrated during the present project, when it served to (temporarily) hold back the rising flood waters from the front part of the garden. The evidence of the 1840s Tithe Award also indicates that there were formerly farm buildings extending across the present line of this bank (Figs 2 and 3). It is interesting to note that these buildings were removed between 1840 and the 1880s, apparently during the period that Moorhouse ceased to be a farmstead.
- 8.3 The brief for the present project suggests “*The proposed extension is likely to affect deposits relating to the medieval moat which once surrounded the original building on this plot. The extent of the moated site is shown on the 1st ed OS map, which is broadly comparable to the current garden boundary. The 1840 tithe map for Powick also clearly shows the presence of the moat. Although the extension is not likely to extend over the former moat ditch, it may affect deposits of archaeological interest relating to former medieval structures within the moat platform.*” (Brief for MH/07/0529, 8th June 2007). It should be noted that neither the 1840s tithe map nor the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey show any evidence of a moat (see Fig 2). The presence of an irregular pond to the west of the present drive is marked on the 1840 map only, but there is no indication that the feature was even slightly linear. There is another, triangular, pool on the southern boundary of Plot 1028 (Tithe Awards plan), but this lay some 100metres away, along the present drainage ditch, and therefore seems an extremely unlikely contender for the opposite leg of a “moat”. The 1840 pool (now largely infilled) may clearly be seen by the informed observer to be a continuation of the palaeo-channel to the east.
- 8.4 Neither the historic cartographic sources, the topography or the geology (which is free draining alluvial sands and gravels) are suggestive of any form of moat at this location, and there seems to be no justification for the “observation” on the HER record, nor the additional “sources” quoted in the brief. The present project might well have been justified on the basis that the house is partially 18th Century, and has a very fine 17th C timber-framed wing, but it is clear that the 1996 observer did not get close enough to see it.

9 Conclusions

- 9.1 The site proved to be almost entirely archaeologically sterile; this is not unusual in a rural context, even as here in close proximity to standing buildings of the 17th and 18th Centuries. Rural waste disposal commonly involved distribution of household waste with the farmyard dung, and therefore primary waste disposal features are relatively uncommon in rural contexts. It is clear that the buildings did not formerly extend further at the western end of the house. The present main block of the house appears from external inspection to be 18th C in date, though this may mask earlier structures. The eastern wing is clearly late 17th C, judging from its external timber framing, fine quality oriel window and massive stone and brick chimney block. No internal inspection was made. No evidence was seen for occupation of the site prior to the later 17th C, and this would seem plausible given the location of the house. Extensive reclamation of the floodplains for farmland was very uncommon before the mid 17th C, and it is likely that the surrounding land was hay meadow or “moorland” grazing in the medieval period. The local landowners were prominent in agricultural improvements in the 18th C “*the most skilful drainer I know...is the present Earl of Coventry: his part of the country was a morass not half a century back, and is, at this present time (though formerly a Moorish soil) perfectly dry, sound for sheep , and other cattle*” (Pitt, 1813, 192).
- 9.2 The present house is a fine example of its type, and relatively unusual as it retains a well preserved oriel window and a very substantial 17th Chimney with a massive stone base and fine early-mid 17th C brick shafts. The preservation of many of the 18th C and earlier features may be attributed to the neglect of the building in the second half of the 19th Century; where buildings have been regularly maintained and “improved” over generations little original fabric is likely to have survived. The building would no doubt repay detailed internal inspection.
- 9.3 The present development appears to have had no detrimental impact on any buried archaeological remains, and it appears improbable that any significant archaeological deposits have been lost through truncation, as there is almost no residual artefactual scatter in the topsoil, and due to the low-lying situation there has been a historic need for raising of ground-levels rather than reducing them.

10 Bibliography

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11 **Acknowledgements**

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Figure 1: Moorhouse Farm, Lower Ferry Lane, Callow End, Worcestershire - location

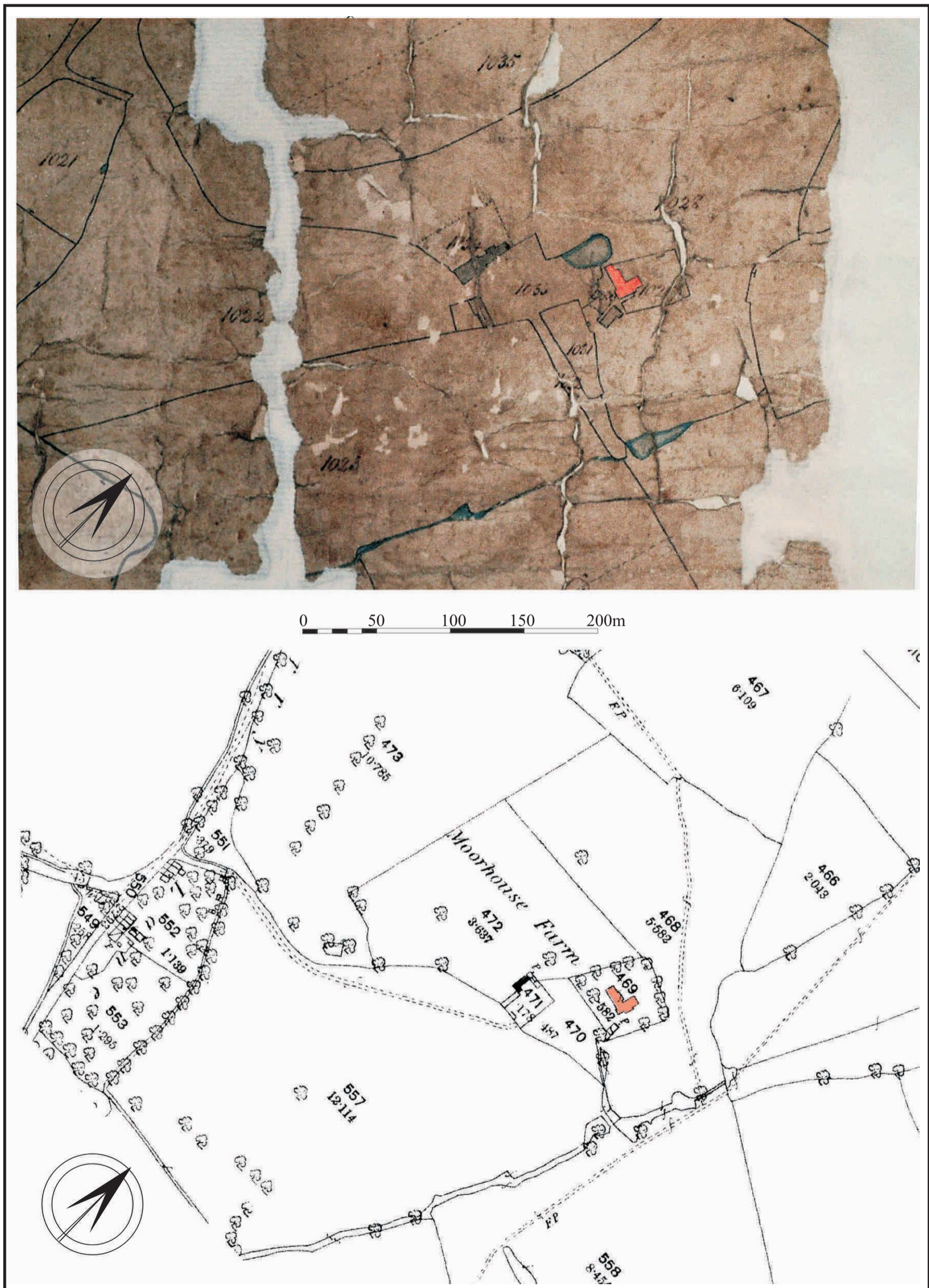


Figure 2: Moorhouse Farm, Lower Ferry Lane, Callow End - mapping from 1840 Powick Tithe Award Plan (above - nb. much damaged) and 1st Edition Ordnance Survey 1886 (below). Present farmhouse highlighted in red for ease of reference.

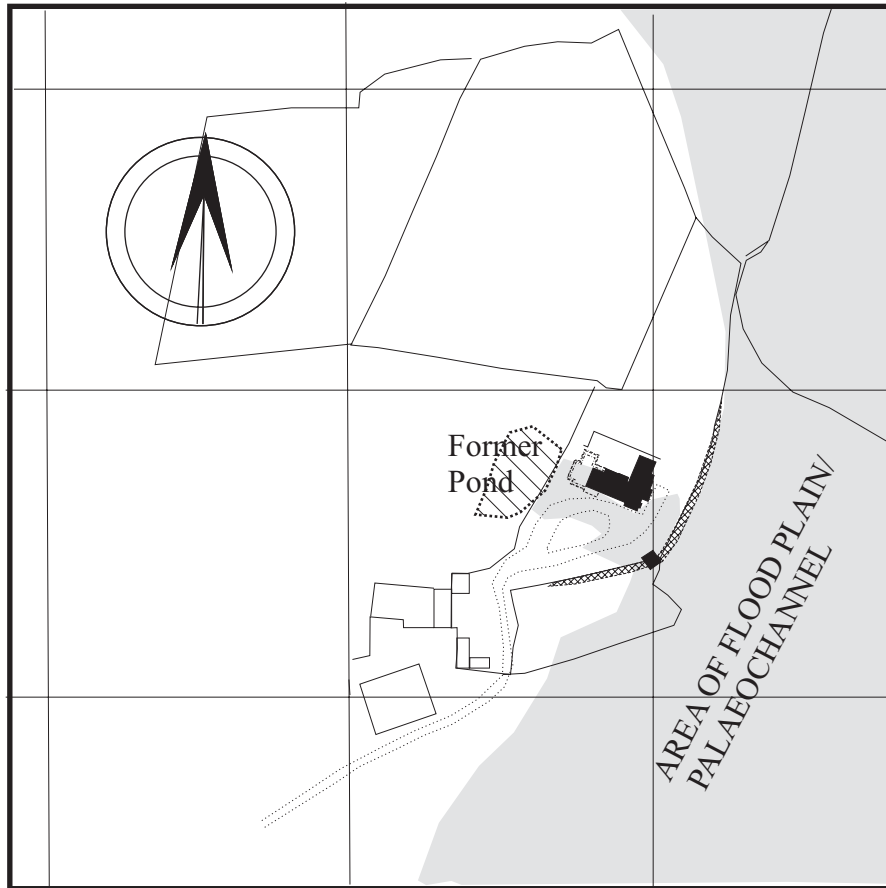


Figure 3: Moorhouse Farm: position of former pond (as shown on 1840 Tithe Award map) - note relationship to low lying areas, as revealed by approximate extent of June 2007 floods. Flood defence bank shown cross-hatched.

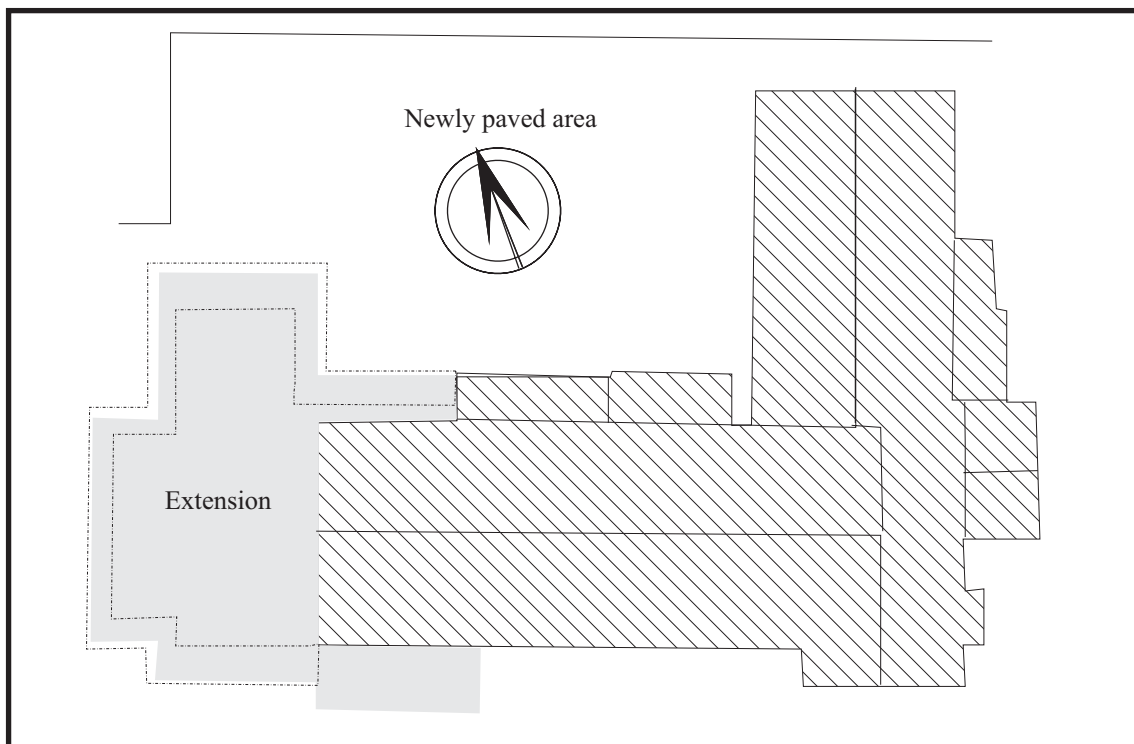


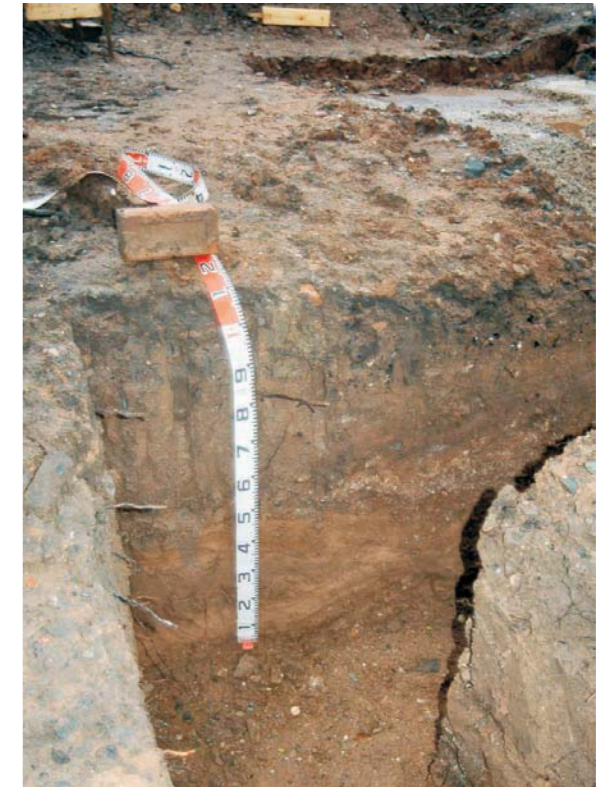
Figure 4: Location of observed foundation trenches (1:200) - outline of new extension shown in grey tone



Rear elevations, and newly paved area



17th Century oriel window with console bracket



Typical trench section



17th C Chimney stack on eastern elevation



South facing elevation



Area of new extension facing south

Figure 5: Moorhouse Farm, Callow End - selected site photographs