

SHEFFIELD MANOR

PROGRAMME OF EXCAVATIONS

A. Areas & Problems

The site may be considered for convenience as several areas each with its own problems. These areas are listed from West to East.

1. The Turret House and immediate environs. Questions to be answered are its relation to the rest of the Manor, the nature of the abutting walls, the slight possibility of its being half of a double gatehouse.
2. The Outer Courtyard Its bounds and any internal buildings should be sought. Resistivity and/or magnetic surveying would be desirable. The most likely feature would be the path to the main entrance of the Manor.
3. The West Front This important range of buildings probably included the main entrance as a central feature between two towers, though the entrance might have been towards either the North or South ends of this front.

At present the range can be subdivided into three:

- 3a The Long Gallery at the Northern end. Excavation should reveal the nature of its ground plan and of the later buildings within it.
- 3b The central section including the probable remains of one tower and the most probable site of the other tower and main entrance. The relationship of these buildings to the Long Gallery which may be set back from the entrance frontage needs to be settled.
- 3c The southern section between the tower and the remains in the Manor Lane frontage. Nothing is known here of the 16th century structures.
4. The North West (Wolsey's) Tower After clearance of modern debris excavation might reveal floor levels. As with all masonry restoration no stratified levels should be disturbed and clearance should stop when rubble has been removed.
5. Structures on Manor Lane Front These structures are being regouted and have been greatly defaced by 18th and 19th century tenements with cellars which are now filled with rubble. This block, with its smaller, more intimate, rooms is perhaps the most likely site for the earliest part of the Manor, but true excavation must await the standing remains being rendered safe and rubble being cleared. The mason must on no account destroy stratification by continuing regrouting below ground level. The cellars and floors may be cleared of rubble but all finds from the rubble should be inspected regularly by Museum staff.
6. The Inner Court Numerous buildings have been erected here since Elizabethan times, but nothing is known of the original buildings, if any. The most likely site for the Great Hall is from the main entrance, running into this court. Surface indications probably came from later tenements, some of which might be preserved if not masking earlier structures. There may originally have been ranges of buildings around the rest of the court.

This area is likely to be a fruitful site for excavation. Resistivity and magnetic surveying might offer guidance but complete excavation is essential.

7. Outbuildings on the East This area east of the main enclosure was probably devoted to outbuildings of minor importance. The area has been greatly changed and disturbed. There remains, however, one ruin that boasts a sawn off cruck. This needs clearing and preservation. Excavation might trace the other buildings.

B. Order of Excavation

Since the majority of the site (areas 2, 6 & 7) poses unknown or undefined questions, initial archaeological excavation should begin with known areas and then extend into unknown areas, by adding new pieces to the jigsaw. Each should aim at answering a definite question and at locating a specific feature.

Our regular duty will be the examination of any finds disturbed by the mason during the removal of surface rubble. In particular this will be the limit of activity in area 5 for some years.

As archaeological work proceeds after each season it will be possible to reclaim an area from weeds, bushes and rubble, foundations exposed can be regouted and gradually a large area now overgrown, will emerge.

The recommended programme for excavation is as follows:

1. Area 3b. Accounts of the original layout hinge upon the position of the two towers on either side of the entrance. This is the likeliest site. It is essential to locate the second tower and then the entrance. Remains at such an important point might indicate major building phases. The second part of this operation would be to examine the rooms behind the facade in the central W. front.
2. Area 3a. and
3. Area 3c. These areas would complete the excavation of the W. front and vastly improve the approach to the site.
4. Area 5. and
5. Area 4. By this time after several seasons work, the mason's work should have permitted access to some floors in these areas and excavation should be possible. This work could be fitted piecemeal into the next long phase.
6. Area 6. The excavation of the inner court which needs to be completely stripped will be a long process since the area is large and there has been a series of buildings.

The outlying areas, 1, 2 & 7 which appear to offer smaller problems, might be tackled over the same period for variety.

C. Timetable

Employing about 20 volunteers for a fortnight each year the phases of the excavation might be expected to take approximately 20 years.

Phase 1 - 2 years. Phases 2 & 3 - 5 years. Phase 4 & 5 - 3 years.
Phase 6 - 10 years.

This estimation is very approximate. Much will depend upon the complexity of the remains, but 20 volunteers each year are a minimum if the project is to be completed in 20 years.

D. The Mason

During stages 1-3 (The West Front) there would be no reason to disturb the mason from his present work on the buildings of area 5. Minor additional duties would be the preservation of any artifacts found among rubble in cellars and on floors and the examination of stone rubble cleared from areas in preparation for excavation. A further duty would be the consolidation of foundations exposed by excavation to prevent their destruction by winter frost and rains.

During stage 4 (the excavation of area 5) the mason should be able to work on area 4 to ensure its safety before its excavation in stage 5.

The last and longest stage entailing the stripping of the open areas would need the mason only for the regular task of consolidation of exposed structures and the majority of his time would be available for the standing ruins.

E. First Year

In preparation for Stage 1 it will be necessary to kill weeds, and remove bushes and rubble in area 3b, around the remains of the tower and over a strip 100' north of it. This might be done during the winter months.