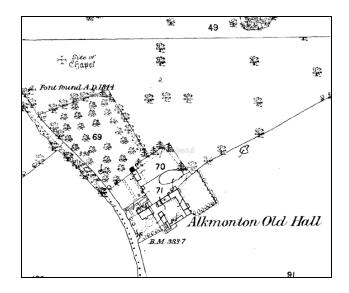
Old Hall Farm, Alkmonton, Derbyshire

Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief



Old Hall Farm as identified on $1^{\rm st}$ Edition OS Map of 1880

Report 2010/42

August 2010

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Archaeological Research Services Ltd

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Executive Summary

In May and July 2010 Archaeological Research Services ltd were commissioned by Mr & Mrs P Harris to undertake an Archaeological Watching Brief at Old Hall Farm, Alkmonton, Derbyshire during internal renovation work to the building and realignment of external walling.

The Watching Brief established that underground archaeological remains survived at Old Hall Farm with a possible medieval floor level and post-medieval drain and storage pit left in-situ below the new floor level. The fabric of Old Hall Farm contains elements of its Medieval origin with various modifications and additions charting its development through the years.

1. Introduction

1.1. This report presents the findings of an archaeological watching brief undertaken at Old Hall Farm, Alkmonton, Derbyshire on internal ground works undertaken during the lowering of several ground floor levels within the building by approximately 0.25m. The watching brief had been requested by the Development Control Archaeologist for Derbyshire City Council on any internal and external ground works and was undertaken by Archaeological Research Services Ltd on behalf of Mr & Mrs Harris during 24th to 26th of May and on 27th of July 2010.

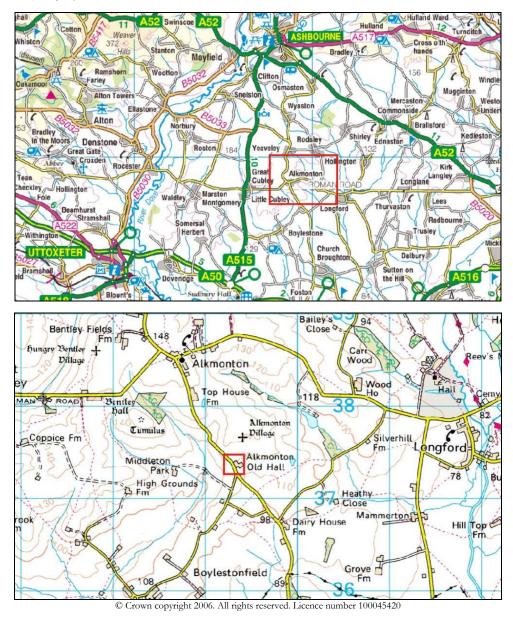


Fig. 1 Location of the development site.

1.2. Old Hall Farm is a Grade II listed building of red brick construction dated to the mid C18 with C19 and C20 alterations (ref no. 81231). A large field to the immediate north-east of the farm contains the remnants of the deserted medieval village of Alkmonton (Scheduled Monument SM 29934). The farmhouse stands

on the former site of the medieval manor house of Alkmonton, as indicated by the presence of a moat to the east of the farm (Derbyshire Historic Environment Record 16303).

2. Location, Land Use and Geology

- 2.1. Old Hall Farm is centred off Ashbourne Road 1.4 km south of the village of Alkmonton at Ordnance Survey NGR SK 19353 37311 at a height of 118.5m OD. The topography of the surrounding land is naturally undulating and under pasture.
- 2.2. The solid geology of the site consists of clays from the Mercia Mudstone Group formed in the Triassic period. No superficial geology is recorded for the site (British Geological Survey, 2010).

3. Aims of the Project

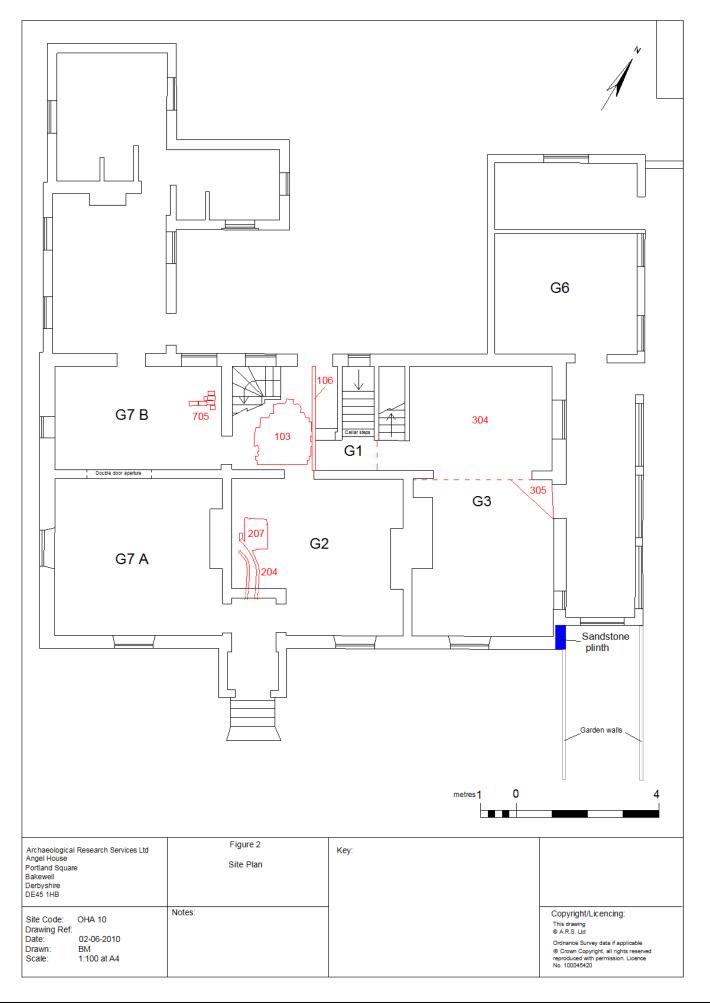
The project was an archaeological watching brief and the aims of the project were as follows:

- To observe all groundworks for the presence of archaeology
- To alert all interested parties to the possible destruction of archaeological features.
- To fully record and excavate any archaeological features encountered.

4. Methodology

- 4.1. Excavation was undertaken within a triangular footprint of rooms situated to the southern element of Old Hall Farm, the floor level in these rooms was to be lowered by approximately 0.25m to facilitate the renovations being undertaken. All excavation was undertaken using hand tools and was observed by an archaeologist to ensure that no archaeological remains were disturbed without being full recorded.
- 4.2. Any features or structures were to be fully cleaned and recorded in accordance with the standards stipulated by the Institute for Field Archaeologists (IFA).
- 4.3. Any features or structures were to be photographed, recorded and where possible fully-excavated. All the contexts were recorded on pro-forma sheets and a context register was maintained.
- 4.4. Photographs were taken using a 35mm SLR camera with black and white print film, and colour transparency, as well as with a digital camera (7.1 megapixel resolution).

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5. Summary of Results

5.1. The fabric of Old Hall Farm displays the development of the building through the materials observed in its construction, re-used timbers in the roof construction, blocking in of various window and door apertures, addition to old wall lines and the various extensions added. An interesting feature which may be part of the early construction of the building is located externally at the south-east corner. This consists of large worked sandstone blocks 0.76m x 0.95m with a second course 0.33m x 1.47m (Fig. 3) which could have been used as a plinth for a timber-framed building. In the construction of timber framed-buildings a sill formed of wooden members running horizontally round the building was set on a plinth of stone, flint or brick (Brunskill. 1985: 48). Stone blocks of a smaller and less defined form were also observed in the western elevation, but it is uncertain if they are contemporary with the former stone plinth.



Fig. 3: Sandstone plinth at the south-east corner of Old Hall Farm. Facing west. Scale 1m

5.2. **Room G1**

- 5.2.1. Entrance hall, room G1 was situated centrally to the north of the building; within the main rectangular footprint of the two-storey Old Hall Farm. Entered from the outside through a door in the northern elevation, G1 connects to G7B at the west, G2 to the south and down a short corridor to the east into G3 (Fig. 2). The initial floor covering within G1 consisted of red and green floor tiles laid in a chequered pattern; they measured 0.025m thick and 0.16m square and were set into a bed of cement mortar (101).
- 5.2.2. Re-deposited reddish/brown clay (102) underlay (101) and was 50mm thick, which when removed, exposed the remnants of a brick paving floor surface (103) extant to 1.8m x 1.6m (Fig. 4). The irregular sized brick used in the paving generally measured between 95/8" x 45/8" x 11/4" and 91/2" x 41/2" x 21/4" laid on bed with a weathered and worn surface, which suggested the floor remains may have been located in an area of heavy use, possibly within a kitchen, workshop, stable or barn. The brick floor (103) was laid and bedded on a medium gravely sand

layer 40mm thick, which overlay made ground of greyish compacted sandy clay heavily included with angular pebbles at the limit of excavation. Floor (103) had been truncated by the later construction of internal walls of room G2 to the south and G7B to the west, along with the construction of a dog leg type staircase in the north-west corner of room G1.

5.2.3. Paving brick floor (103) was also truncated by a north-south brick wall (106) along the eastern side of the floor. The wall is made of roughly laid plain bricks in a single veneer, bonded with a cement mortar. Wall (106) was revealed to a height of 0.14m and continued below the limit of excavation (Fig. 5). The location of wall (106) indicates that it predates the present arrangement of doors within the building as it is aligned within the doorways (Fig. 2)



Fig. 4: Brick floor (103) in room G1 with (106) in the foreground. Facing east. Scale 1m.



Fig. 5: Wall (106) and brick floor (103) in room G1. Facing south. Scale 1m & 2m

5.2.4. Directly to the east of wall (106) a corridor 2.6m in length connected the entrance Hall G1 to room G3, off this corridor access was attained down steps into a double vaulted cellar and by an adjoining staircase to an upstairs bedroom. Excavation to the east of (106) was undertaken into made ground of building debris which continued below the limit of excavation.

5.3. **Room G2**

- 5.3.1. Room G2 was situated centrally to the south of the building measuring 4.8m x 4.4m. It was accessed from G1 and also from a brick built porch and small entrance hall on the south elevation which enabled access to rooms G2 and G7A. The floor cover within this room consisted of 0.16m square red floor tiles 0.025m thick which were laid onto a friable sandy cement mortar bedding layer 0.07m thick (201).
- 5.3.2. Underlying (201) made ground existed to a depth of between 0.11m to 0.15m and comprised compact sandy reddish brown clay with rare inclusions of plain handmade red bricks, plus brick and stone fragments (202). At the western extent of the room and within (202) at a depth of 0.17m a brick structure was revealed, provisionally identified as a drain (204) and a rectangular brick pit (207) (Fig. 6). In the south-east corner of G2 three sherds of pottery were recovered from (202) in close proximity to each other. Identified as slipware and dated to the later 17th or early 18th century, they are of considerable local interest (see pottery report, Appendix II).
- 5.3.3. Feature (204) was identified as a curved drain which had been truncated at its north-western extent by a foundation trench cut during the later construction of the western wall of room G2 (Fig 6). The fill of the drain was consistent with made ground (202) which when excavated revealed the drain had been constructed within a cut into very compacted yellowish red sandy clay (203) with approximately 40% inclusions of angular and rounded pebbles. (204) was extant to one brick in height, 0.13m in depth and 0.17m in width with a base of compacted ground (203) from which three post-medieval pottery sherds were recovered. (204) continued its course to the south, through the foundations of a later constructed wall connected to a southern entrance hall, (204) then continued south below the floor level of the entrance hall (Fig. 2).
- 5.3.4. Pit (207) measured 0.82m x 0.65m and was roughly constructed with hand-made plain red brick 9" x 43/8" x 21/4" to 91/4" x 4" x 21/4" bonded with cement mortar. The fill within (207) consisted of an ash deposit (209) which had become compacted in small areas and contained small finds of clay pipe stem and small animal bone. When fully excavated (207) was 0.3m deep with a brick-lined base. Evidence of mortar on the upper surface of (204) and (207) suggest they were truncated and originally stood to a greater height. The curving of drain (204) to avoid pit (207) to the east suggests the drain post-dates (207) while the construction of pit (207) with a brick base suggest a storage purpose.

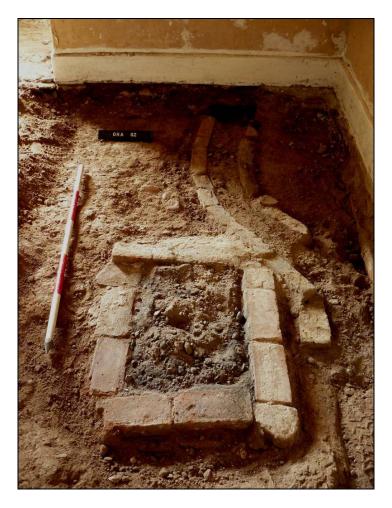


Fig. 6: Drain (204) and pit (207) prior to removal of fill. Facing east. Scale 1m

5.3.5. There is a possibility that (203) which was cut by the construction trenches of (204) and (207), may have been a rough floor surface. When excavated to the limit of excavation at a maximum depth of 0.4m below present floor level, (203) did not contain the same quantity of angular pebbles. Because of the interest and uncertain nature of (204) and (207) they were protected and preserved *in-situ*.

5.4. **Room G3**

- 5.4.1. Room G3 was situated at the eastern extent of the main building, extending its full width measuring 7.5m x 4m. It was accessed by a central door in the east elevation and also from the corridor of G1 (Fig. 2). The floor cover (301) within this room consisted of a concrete screed which extended 3.3m from its southern extent and abutted tiled flooring which covered the rest of the floor space in G3. The maximum depth of (301) was 0.12m.
- 5.4.2. Underlying (301) was made ground (302) which consisted of loosely compacted clayey sand with occasional red brick fragments. (302) was excavated across the room to a depth of 0.13m (limit of excavation), and no features or deposits of archaeological interest were encountered in this room.
- 5.4.3. Removal of the tiled surface (301) at the northern extent revealed a shallow lens of coarse sandy stone debris (303) overlaying the double vaulted roof (304) of a

- cellar (Fig. 7), which was entered through a doorway and down steps at the western extent of the corridor in G1. The vaulted roof was constructed of red brick laid on side orientated north to south; it extended east to west across the room and 3.2m south from the northern wall to finish adjacent to two pillars, which represented the opening of two rooms into one larger unit.
- 5.4.4. Adjacent to the outer doorway of the east elevation a row of red bricks (305) were laid to headers on bed, orientated diagonally from the door jamb (Fig. 2). The bricks were bedded onto fragmented red brick and cement mortar; they formed a triangular platform filled internally with very compacted sandy clay (Fig. 8). The nature of (305) is unknown; there is a possibility that it was constructed prior to the insertion of a doorway.



Fig. 7: Room G3, top sections of vaulted cellar roof (304) exposed below (301). Facing north. Scale 2m



Fig. 8: Room G3, triangular platform (305). Facing north. Scale 1m

5.5. **Room G7**

- 5.5.1. Room G7 was situated at the western extent of the rectangular footprint of the building, extending its full width measuring 7.5m x 4.7m. Formerly two separate rooms they had been connected by the opening up of an internal dividing wall in the position of a former blocked up doorway. The rooms were identified as G7A to the south and G7B to the north (Fig. 2).
- 5.5.2. The floor of room G7A was of wood construction and had been removed prior to the commencement of the watching brief, this had been supported by east to west orientated sleeper walls (701) spaced 0.43m apart which had also been mostly removed (Fig. 9). Constructed using hand-made plain bricks generally measuring 9½" x 45%" x 3" and occasional floor tiles, the sleeper walls stood to a maximum height of 0.28m.



Fig. 9: Sleeper walls (701) which supported wooden floor in Room G7. Facing east

- 5.5.3. The ground surface (702) underlying wall (701) was 0.47m below the level of the removed floor and therefore did not require excavation. A loose thin spread of dust (703) overlay (702) from which small finds of pottery, animal bone and glass were recovered. One sherd of pottery identified as 18th century and three sherds as 19th century (see pottery report, Appendix II). Removal of (703) exposed a very compact matrix of sandy clay, rounded pebbles, fragments of red brick and coal, with areas overlain by an uneven friable lime mortar screed (Fig. 10). Although disturbed, (702) could be identified as a floor level sited at a lower overall height than any floor levels exposed within other rooms.
- 5.5.4. There is a fireplace within G7A which has been raised to the higher floor level and built within the aperture of a larger earlier fireplace (Fig. 10). Fireplaces in rooms G2 and G3 also have smaller fireplaces built into larger apertures of earlier fireplaces, but their hearths are consistent with the modern floor level approximately 0.47m above the one in room G7A



Fig. 10: Room G7A, Floor level (702) and fireplace. Facing east. Scale1m & 2m

- 5.5.5. Room G7B is situated north of G7A. The rooms were originally connected by a doorway in the dividing northern wall of G7A which had been bricked up and an aperture to facilitate double doors had been constructed at this location. The floor level of G7B was approximately 0.45m higher than the floor level of G7A. This was excavated as within the other rooms by a depth of 0.25m, room G7A required a fill to raise the floor to the required level, leaving floor (702) *in-situ*.
- 5.5.6. Removal of a concrete raft 2.6m in length to the west of the room and red tiled floor to the remaining area revealed made ground (704) of clay and building debris. The limit of excavation was reached within (704) were a small feature of red brick (705) was exposed *in-situ* to the eastern extent of the room. (705) consisted of plain red brick 8³/₄" x 4¹/₄" laid on bed and orientated east to west and probably represent the remains of a floor level (Fig. 11).

5.6. Garden Wall Foundation Trench

5.6.1. A foundation trench was excavated to facilitate the realignment of an external wall situated approximately 7m from the south-west corner of Old Hall Farm (Fig. 13). The trench measured 2.4m in length x 0.6m depth x 0.5m maximum width and was excavated entirely into made ground, this comprised limestone hardcore (0.2m depth) overlaying a compacted dark brown earth (0.1m depth) which overlay a reddish/brown clay matrix heavily included with crushed and fragmented red brick (maximum 0.35m depth) (Fig.12). No archaeological features, deposits, buried land surfaces or small finds were identified within this trench.



Fig. 11: Brick feature (705) in room G7B. Facing west. Scale 1m



Fig. 12: Foundation trench for realignment of external wall. Facing west. Scale 2m

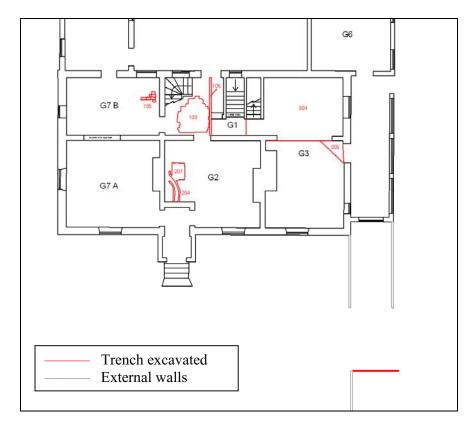


Fig. 13: Location of wall foundation trench.



Fig. 14: Straight joint lines in the brickwork of the north elevation.

6. Discussion

- 6.1. The sleeper brick walls for a raised floor were identified in room G7. These walls abutted the level of the raised fireplace suggesting that the raised floor and the revised fireplace were constructed at the same time. The fireplaces are all of classic Victorian modification inserted within a blocking of a former and larger fireplace of an earlier date.
- 6.2. The drain (204) in room G2 is built to avoid an existing brick-lined pit (207) which may have been used for storage, (perhaps coal or wood?). Storage of ash fill (209) would not have been the original function of (207), but it may have been utilised for this when in the mid 19th century ash was generally used in privies to eradicate some of the odours associated with them. Therefore there may be an association between pit (207) and drain (204).
- 6.3. The brick paved floor along with the pit and drain suggest a location outside the main living quarters of the farm house which prior to its phase as one unit may have consisted of separate units as can be identified by straight joint lines in the brick work observed on the north elevation (Fig. 11).
- 6.4. The brief supplied for the watching brief by the Development Control Archaeologist for Derbyshire City Council states that Old Hall Farm stands on the site of the former medieval manor house as represented by a moat to the east of the farm. The sandstone plinth observed at the south-east corner of the building functioning as a foundation level may be a surviving and *in-situ* element of the medieval house based on its stylistic design which is indeed of a medieval appearance.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1. There is possible evidence of a medieval house on this site which may have been incorporated into the construction of the 17th to 18th century farm house, such as the surviving sandstone plinth, this may also be contemporary with the floor level in room G7A.
- 7.2. The original fireplaces were reduced in size in order to accommodate smaller fire grates. This would have coincided with the modification of the chimney stacks, often adding ceramic pots to the chimneys as occurred at Old Hall Farm. This practice was commonly undertaken in the 19th century (Brunskill. 2000: 96).
- 7.3. The watching brief has confirmed that there are surviving archaeological features within the fabric and below ground level of Old Hall Farm, the potential to expose further archaeological evidence relating to its medieval origin or later is high.

8. Publicity, Confidentiality and Copyright

- 8.1. Any publicity will be handled by the client.
- 8.2. Archaeological Research Services Ltd will retain the copyright of all documentary and photographic material under the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act (1988).

9. Archiving

9.1. Within two months of the completion of the project the site archive will be deposited in accordance with the procedures set-out in "Procedures for the Transfer of Archaeological Archives" (2003) with the relevant Museum, which in this instance is;

Derby City Museum and Art Gallery

The Strand Derby DE1 1BS 01298 24658

The accession number for this archive is DBYMU 2010-20

10. Statement of Indemnity

10.1. All statements and opinions contained within this report arising from the works undertaken are offered in good faith and compiled according to professional standards. No responsibility can be accepted by the author/s of the report for any errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by any third party, or for loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in any such report(s), howsoever such facts and opinions may have been derived.

11. Acknowledgements

11.1. Archaeological Research Services Ltd would like to acknowledge all those involved in the successful outcome of the project. In particular Archaeological Research Services Ltd would like to thank Mr and Mrs Harris the owners of Old Hall Farm, Steve Baker the Development Control Archaeologist for Derbyshire City Council, and also the team of contractors on the ground from P.M. Harris Ltd.

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Appendix I: Context Register

Context / feature No.	Context Description	Max Dimensions (mm.)	Depth (m)	Colour	Small Finds No.	
Room G1		7				
101	Red & green floor tiles with bedding layer	Across room G1	0.06m	-	-	
102	Redeposited clay	Above 103	0.04m	Reddish brown	-	
103	Brick floor tile	1.8m x 1.6m		-	-	
104	Sandy bedding layer for 103	Below 103	0.04m	Yellowish brown		
105	Made ground of clay and angular pebbles	Below 104	To the limit of excavation-	Grey	-	
106	Roughly constructed single skin brick wall, brick size	-	unknown	-	-	
107	Made ground of building debris to east of 106		Unknown To limit of excavation	-	-	
Room G2						
201	Red floor tiles with bedding layer	Across room G2	0.095m	-	-	
202	Made ground of compacted sandy clay with rare inclusion of red brick and brick and stone fragments	Across room G2	0.1m to 0.15m	Reddish brown	Pottery 14-16	
203	Made ground of very compacted sandy clay with 30% inclusions of poorly sorted angular pebbles	Across room G2	unknown	Yellowish red 5YR 4/6	-	
204	Arced red brick drain, truncated to single course with 203 as its base	1.38m x 0.27m	0.13m			
205	Steep sided cut of drain 204.	4.20 0.27	0.42		D 45.40	
206	Fill of drain 204, loose sandy clay, similar to made ground 202	1.38m x 0.27m	0.13m		Pottery 17-19	
207	Truncated rectangular brick pit	0.8m x 0.61m	0.3m			
208	Steep sided cut of pit 207					
209	Ash fill of pit 208	0.8m x 0.61m	0.3m	Grey	Clay pipe stems 1-9 Animal bones 10-13	
210	Cut of foundation trench for western wall of room G2					
Room G3						
301	Concrete & tile floor with bedding layer	Across room G3	0.12m max			
302	Made ground of clayey sand with occasional red brick	4.2m x 4m	Unknown To limit of			
	fragments		excavation			
303	Made ground of stone debris above 304	3.2m x 4m				
304	Red brick roof of double vaulted cellar	3.2m x 4m				
305	Triangular brick platform					
Room G7A						
701	Dwarf brick walls running east to west across the room,					
702	supports for raised floor joists Floor level of compacted	4.7m x 4.3m			Animal bone 20	
	sandy clay with 70% inclusions of rounded pebbles, fragment of red brick and coal. Uneven areas of friable lime mortar screed				Pottery 21-24 Glass 25	
703	Loose thin spread of dust	Across the room	Less than 20mm			
Room G7B						
703	Concrete & red tile floor with bedding layer	Across room G7B	0.12m max			
704	Redposited mottled clay and building debris	Across room G7B	0.13m	Dark reddish brown and greyish brown	Pottery 26	
705	Small section of red brick, laid on bed into 704					

Appendix II: Pottery Report

Early modern and recent pottery from Old Hall Farm, Alkmonton, Derbyshire (OHA10)

C.G. Cumberpatch BA PhD Freelance Archaeologist

Introduction

The pottery assemblage from Old Hall Farm Alkmonton was examined by the author on 21st June 2010. It consisted of twelve sherds of pottery from four contexts. The details are summarised in Table 1.

Early modern pottery

The most interesting sherds were those from Room G2, context 202 three sherds, most probably from the same vessel which date to the later 17th or early 18th century. Unlike many slipware dishes which were press-moulded, this example is wheel thrown and knife-trimmed externally. The elaborate decoration includes at least one word, written in trailed slip around the outer edge of the vessel although only the letter 'H' survived. Other sherds bore curvilinear patterns of trailed red-brown and brown slip with jewelling (small dots of slip applied to trailed slip lines) which formed parts of an elaborate but unidentified design. Vessels such as this have become associated with the name of Thomas Toft, one of the greatest of the exponents of slip trailing whose dated wares span the period between 1671 and 1689. Other potters who produced named and dated pieces include John Wright (1707), William Wright (1709) and James Johnson (1691) while others whose work is undated but of the same period include Ralph Simpson, William Taylor and William Simpson. It is impossible to attribute these sherds to a specific potter on the basis of a single letter, but they are clearly in the same style as the pieces more reliably attributed and belong to the same period. As such they are of considerable local interest and should not be discarded.

Recent pottery

The remaining sherds were of broadly 19th century type and are typical of the types of pottery one would expect as part of a domestic assemblage of this date. Cane Coloured wares were a good quality kitchen ware that were frequently decorated with slip bands and lines, sometimes alone and sometimes combined with broad while slip bands bearing the distinctive dendritic 'Mocha' decoration. The remaining sherds are typical later 19th century whitewares. The rim of a plate from Room G7b carries a border design typically associated with Willow, one of the commonest of transfer printed designs. A body sherd from the same context carries part of an elaborate transfer printed design with hand-painted detailing apparently part of a design showing people in Chinese style clothing making tea and smoking pipes.

Conclusion

Although small in size, the assemblage is of considerable interest, largely because it includes sherds of a distinctive kind of Slipware. While not unknown from other sites, these sherds are of considerable interest and would merit illustration in the final report. On completion, the pottery assemblage should, with the owner's permission, be deposited in an accessible local archive where it will be available for inspection in the future.

Table 1. Pottery from Old Hall Farm Alkmonton

Context	Room No.	Type	No	Wt	ENV	Part	Form	Decoration	Date range	Notes
202	G2	Slipware	1	36	1	Rim	Dish	Trailed and jewelled slip int w/ one letter 'H' surviving	c.1670 - EC18th	Wheel-thrown slipware dish or charger
202	G2	Slipware	1	43	1	BS	Dish	Trailed and jewelled slip design int; red-brown and brown slip on white slip int	c.1670 - EC18th	Wheel-thrown slipware dish or charger
202	G2	Slipware	1	42	1	Base	Dish	Trailed and jewelled slip design int; red-brown and brown slip on white slip int	c.1670 - EC18th	Wheel-thrown slipware dish or charger; knife-trimmed base
206	G2	Mocha ware	1	6	1	BS	Hollow ware	Blue Mocha tree on white slip ext on a cane coloured body	C19th	
206	G2	Whiteware	1	4	1	Base	Hollow ware	U/Dec	C19th	
206	G2	Whiteware	1	3	1	BS	Flatware	U/Dec	C19th	
	G7A	Cane Coloured ware	1	4	1	BS	Hollow ware	U/Dec	C19th	
	G7A	Slip Banded Cane Coloured ware	1	11	1	Rim	Hollow ware	Blue and brown slip bands ext	C19th	
	G7A	Slip Banded Cane Coloured ware	1	8	1	BS	Hollow ware	Brown and white slip lines ext	C19th	
	G7A	Slipware	1	4	1	Rim	Hollow ware	Small part of trailed slip ext	C18th	Small, flat-topped slightly everted rim
	G7b	TP Whiteware	1	17	1	Rim	Plate	Willow	M - LC19th	
	G7b	TP Whiteware	1	6	1	BS	Hollow ware	TP design w/ hand tinting; Chinese people making tea	M - LC19th	
		Total	12	184	12					



Fig. 12: Slipware pottery 1 of 3 from context (202). Scale 5cm



Fig. 13: Slipware pottery 2 of 3 from context (202). Scale 5cm



Fig. 14: Slipware pottery 3 of 3 from context (202). Scale 5cm