

Ambrey Archaeology Ltd

Historic building recording of Ford Cottage, Stourport road, Charlton, Hartlebury

Project AMB289

WSM81741 (Event No)

Planning ref No: 24/01862/FUL

Version 1

Date: 25th July 2025

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Summary

A Level 2 archaeological building recording was undertaken by Ambrey Archaeology of Ford Cottage, Charlton, Hartlebury (NGR 383347 271013).

It was carried out on behalf of Andy Spreadbury who intends reinstatement of a derelict dwelling (Ford Cottage), the erection of side and rear extensions, the construction of a garage and the construction of a bat roost building for which permission has been granted by Wychavon District Council.

As Ford Cottage is shown on the First Edition Ordnance Map it is a non-designated heritage asset of archaeological significance and therefore a programme of archaeological building recording was required. A Written Scheme of Investigation for the project was prepared by Ambrey Archaeology and approved by Wychavon District Council.

The recording was undertaken in June 2025. The first floor of the cottage was not accessed due to safety concerns.

Ford Cottage stands in a partially wooded plot in the hamlet of Charlton, located close to a fording area on the Titton Brook about 1km north-west of the larger village of Hartlebury in northern Worcestershire. The cottage has been uninhabited since the mid-1970s but was reroofed in about 2004. It stands about 3m to the south-west of a steep bank.

A building is shown abutting the bank on the 1838 tithe map of Hartlebury. By the time of the Ordnance Survey First Edition map the building had either been modified or demolished and replaced with one farther from the bank and with a number of smaller outshot buildings, which is the current Ford Cottage. Over the turn of the 20th century some of the outshot buildings were demolished and the remains of one survives at the site to the immediate south-east of the cottage. Fragments of a possible oven and wash house boiler survive in the footprint of this building.

1. Introduction

This document describes the results of a Level 2 archaeological building recording carried out by Ambrey Archaeology of Ford Cottage, Charlton, Hartlebury (Figure 1, NGR 383347 271013).

It was commissioned by John Middleton of Nick Joyce Architects on behalf of Andy Spreadbury who intends reinstatement of a derelict dwelling, the erection of side and rear extensions, the construction of a garage and the construction of a bat roost building for which permission has been granted by Wychavon District Council (WDC; Planning reference: 24/01862/FUL).

A heritage consultation response (HCR) prepared by Aidan Smyth, Archaeology and Planning Advisor to WDC (dated 9th December 2024) stated that Ford Cottage is shown on the First Edition Ordnance Map and it is therefore a non-designated heritage asset of archaeological significance and therefore a programme of archaeological building recording was required, commensurate with the requirements of Historic England level 2. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the project was prepared by Ambrey Archaeology (AA 2025) and approved by WDC.

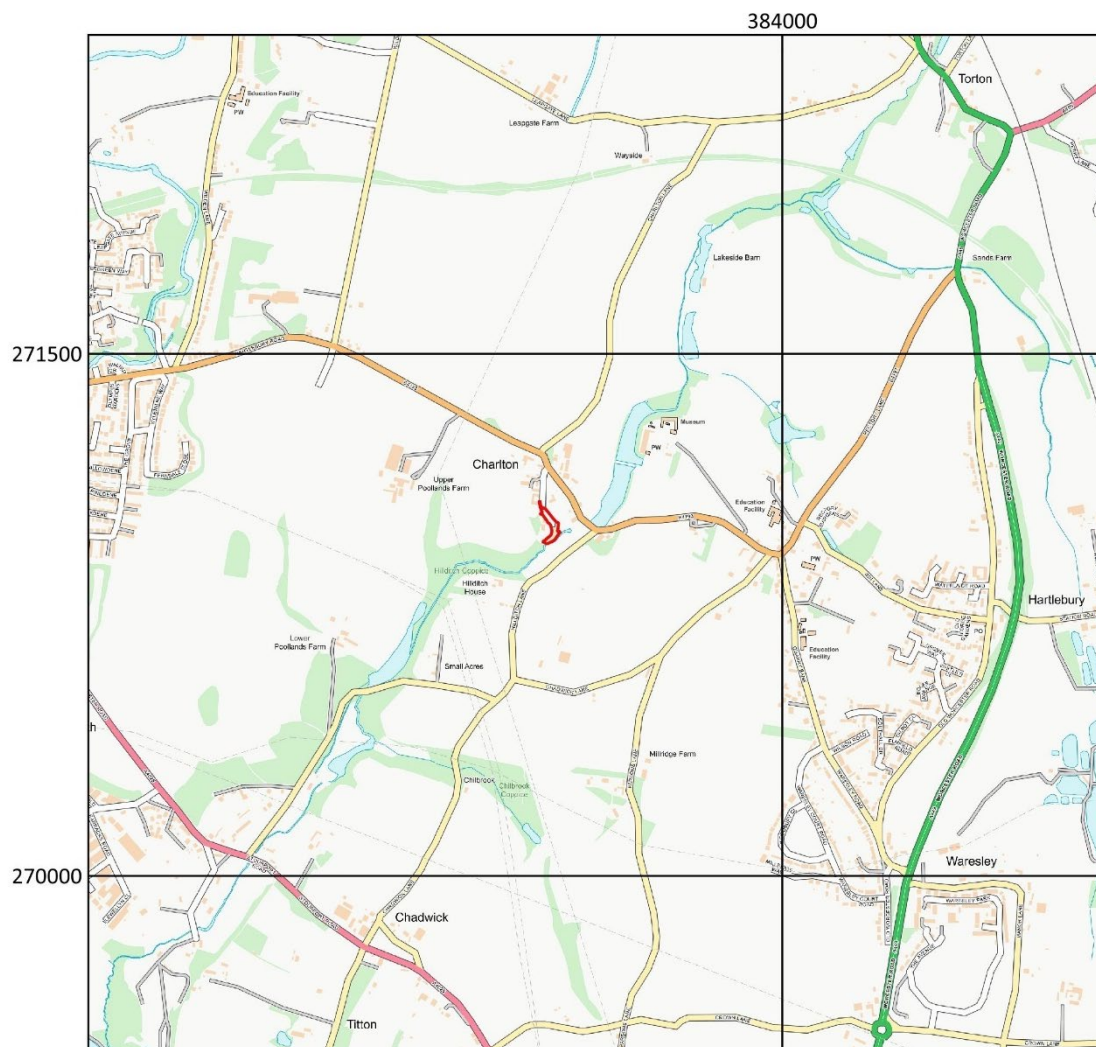


Figure 1. Site location

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2. Objectives

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists defines the aims of building recording as 'a programme of work intended to establish the character, history, dating, form and archaeological development of a specified building' (Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures, CIfA 2014).

3. Methodology

The survey takes the form of a Level 2 historic building recording as defined by Historic England 2016 *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice*. A Level 2 survey is intended to create a **descriptive** record of the building and will comprise an introductory description followed by a systematic account of the building's origins, development and use.

The building survey was undertaken by Elizabeth Connolly of Ambrey Archaeology on 23rd June 2025.

Prior to fieldwork, a search of historic assets within 250m of the site was provided by Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (HER), search ref #1723395. Online sources including TheGenealogist.com were also accessed.

Recording was undertaken using pro-forma recording sheets and photographs were taken with a Nikon D3200 SLR camera. Additional aerial images were taken with a Mavic Mini 2 UAV.

On the advice of the client, the first floor was not accessed during the survey for safety reasons. Photographs which had been taken by another contractor during an earlier visit to the site were referred to and used in this report with the client's permission (photos not taken by the author are captioned in blue text).

Provision has been made to upload the digital archive of the project via OASIS (OASIS Id: ambreyar2-535671).

4. Location, topography and geology

Ford Cottage stands in a partially wooded plot in the hamlet of Charlton about 1km north-west of the larger village of Hartlebury in northern Worcestershire. The confluence of the Severn and the Stour is 3km to the west at Stourport on Severn.

The cottage has been uninhabited since the mid 1970s but was reroofed in about 2004.

The site is located close to a fording area on the Tilton Brook. The ground rises immediately to the north and the cottage is partially built into an embankment. Bedrock at the site is Helsby sandstone formation with no superficial deposits mapped (BGS 2025).

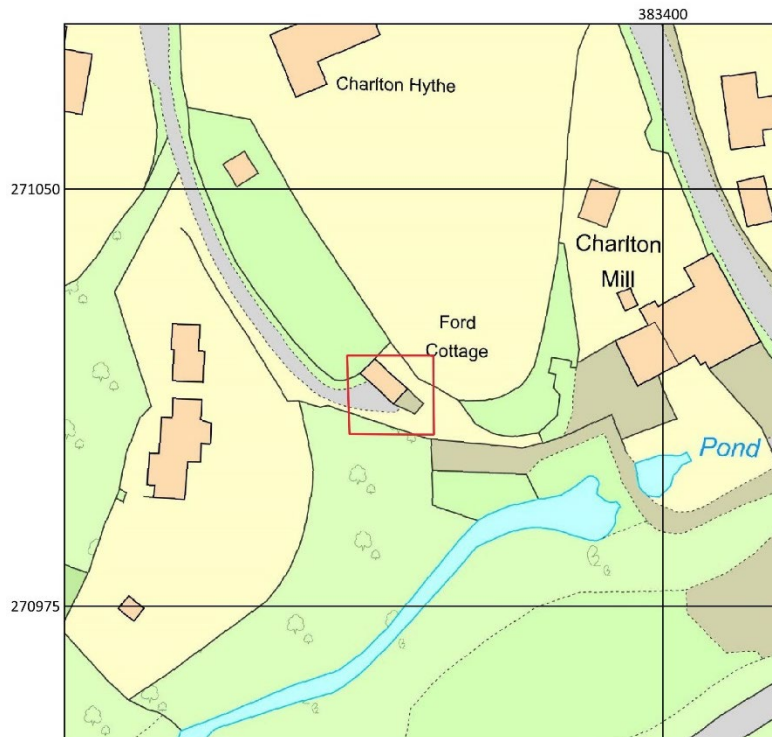


Figure 2. Site location

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5. Archaeological background and historic context

5.1. Hartlebury

Hartlebury was one of the chief residences of the Bishop of Worcester during the Medieval period and the manor was said to have been given to Aelhun, Bishop of Worcester by Burgred King of West Mercia in about 850. It is mentioned as being among the lands belonging to the bishop in the Domesday Survey of 1086 (VCH 1913).

The parish was large, with 17 hamlets including Charlton in which the recorded building stands.

Hartlebury was originally part of the forest of Ombersley which was disafforested in 1229, giving the bishop more control of his lands and revenues.

The house was converted to a castle during the Anarchy (1138-1153) and in 1268 the Bishop received a licence to crenellate, which may have led to the excavation of the current moat. A stream draining to the Severn at Stourport-on-Severn was dammed to form the moat around the castle and a number of ponds. The present building of Hartlebury was begun in the late 14th century and much of the fabric of the great hall of the castle is of that date. During and after the Civil War the castle was damaged and neglected. However, during 1675-83 it was rebuilt by Bishop Fleetwood as a family house in sandstone, retaining but modernising the great hall.

Pleasure gardens associated with the castle and estate were created in their basic form by Bishop Hough who became bishop of Worcester in 1717. Their creation involved partially filling in the moat. 18th century illustrations show a formal garden in a sunken area south of the castle which had been laid out as an Italian Garden in the 19th century but which is now mainly lawn.

The area of the Registered Park and Garden (see section 5.2) is reduced from the original size of the park, the conjectured boundaries of which are (WSM47926) and shown on Fig 3.

5.2. Designated assets in the vicinity

The western boundary of the Hartlebury Conservation Area comes within about 15m of the site boundary.

The Registered Park or Garden of Hartlebury Castle (Grade II; NHLE ref 1000884) is recorded within 250m of the site. Hartlebury Castle itself, a Grade I listed (NHLE ref 1215570), is located outside of the 250m boundary of the search area and is one of several listed buildings which form a group about 340m to the north-east of the site.

Charlton Farmhouse Listed Grade II (NHLE ref 1288086) is located about 120m to the north-west of the site.

It is described in the listing as an *early 19th century farmhouse, built of brick with a low pitched slate roof and two rear stacks. The house is of three storeys with a dentilled brick cornice three windows: glazing bar sashes under plastered heads with keystones; 9-pane sashes to second floor; central entrance with swept lead canopy supported on cast iron decorative work, six raised and fielded panel door (upper two glazed) under radially glazed fan-light.*

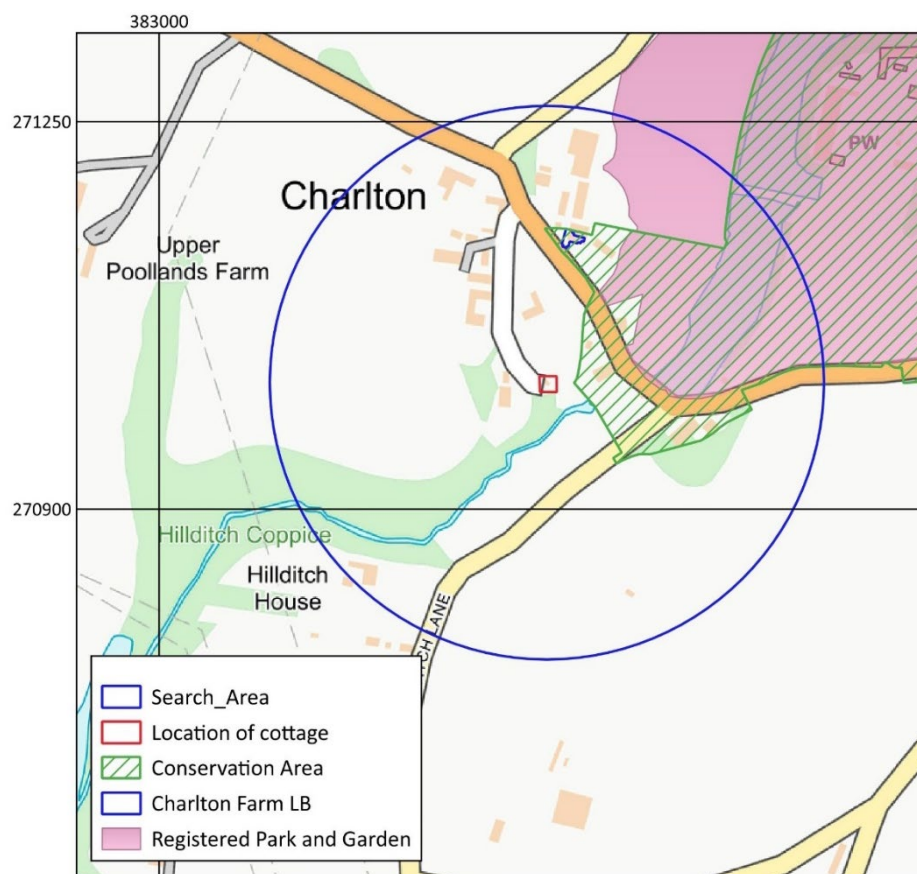


Figure 3. Designated assets in the vicinity of Ford Cottage

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5.3. Non designated assets

The site lies within the conjectural boundary of the Medieval park associated with Hartlebury Castle (WSM47926). The fishponds and moat associated with Hartlebury Castle are considered to be of national significance (WSM07074).

There were two mills in the parish at Domesday, one of which was a fulling mill (VCH 1913). The conjectural location of a Medieval mill is in the area of a number of buildings to the east of the site (WSM08125; marked on the tithe and OS first edition maps in the location of Charlton Mill, where cider was milled in the early 20th century, but had been operated as a saw mill in the 19th century. Known at this time as Hartlebury Saw Mills, it was damaged when Hartlebury Pool burst its banks. It states in the HER file that the mill was idle after this as the pool was too low to work the engines. A 19th century house called Charlton Mill (WSM42534) is located close to the site of the mill.

There are several farmsteads in the vicinity of the site, including Charlton House (WSM61764); Charlton House Farm (WSM61655); Charlton Farm/Bakewell Farm (WSM61654) and Rock Lodge (WSM61765), all dated to the 19th century or earlier.

5.4. Map regression and census

On the 1838 tithe map (Fig 4) of the parish of Hartlebury, a building is shown in the location of Ford Cottage as a simple rectangle numbered 434. In the apportionment which accompanies the map and identified as 'A Cottage' owned by George Hallen Esq and occupied by John Broom who had a garden close by. The small plot numbered 435 which adjoins the cottage to the north-west is a garden owned and occupied by George Harris. The line of the bank is visible immediately to the rear of the cottage to the east.



Fig 4. Extract of 1838 tithe map of the parish of Hartlebury

On the Ordnance Survey first edition of 1884 (Fig. 5) the building is shown at a distance to the south-west of the bank and at a slightly different orientation. This may be a more detailed representation of the location of the building or the cottage shown on the tithe map may have been demolished and a new cottage built in its place. As depicted on the first edition map, the cottage is shown with four smaller buildings abutting it to the south-east. A dotted boundary is shown leading from the

rear of the second building to the south-east and a short path leads towards the two eastern buildings from the bank. A dotted boundary leads from the south-eastern corner of the buildings to the plot to the east.

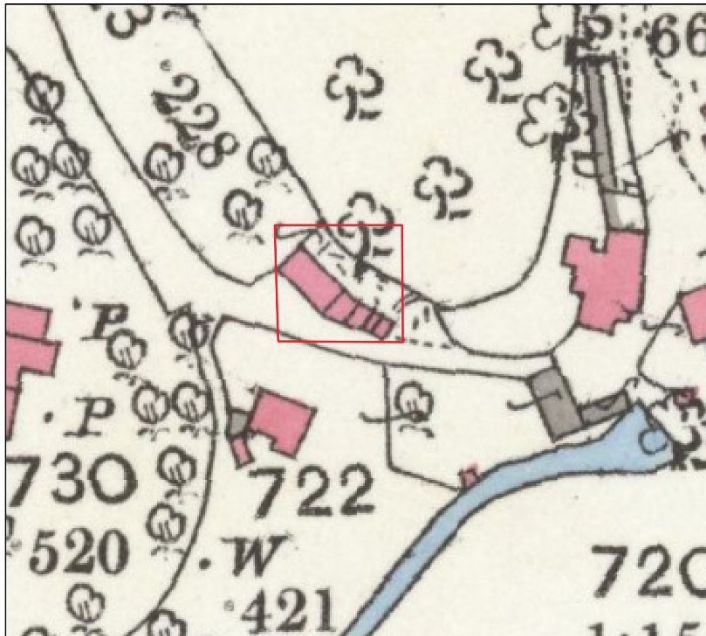


Figure 5. 1884 First Edition Ordnance Survey map

By 1903 (Fig. 5) the cottage is shown as irregular in plan, with no boundaries shown between the main building and what may be the first two abutting buildings to the south-east, as shown on the first edition map. There is a gap between the cottage and a smaller building to the south-east, which seems to have the footprint of the final abutting building as shown on the first edition.

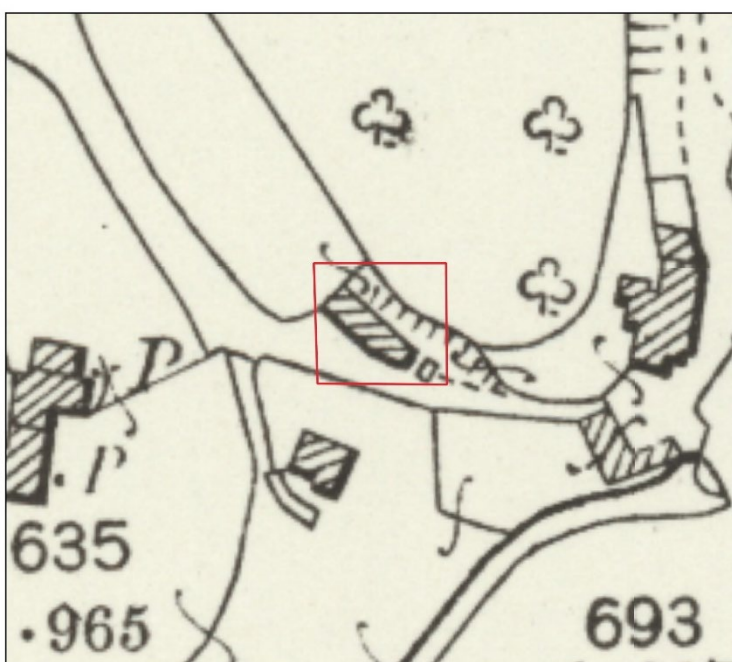


Figure 5. 1903 Ordnance Survey map

On the 1927 Ordnance Survey (Fig. 6) there appears to have been no change to the layout of the building

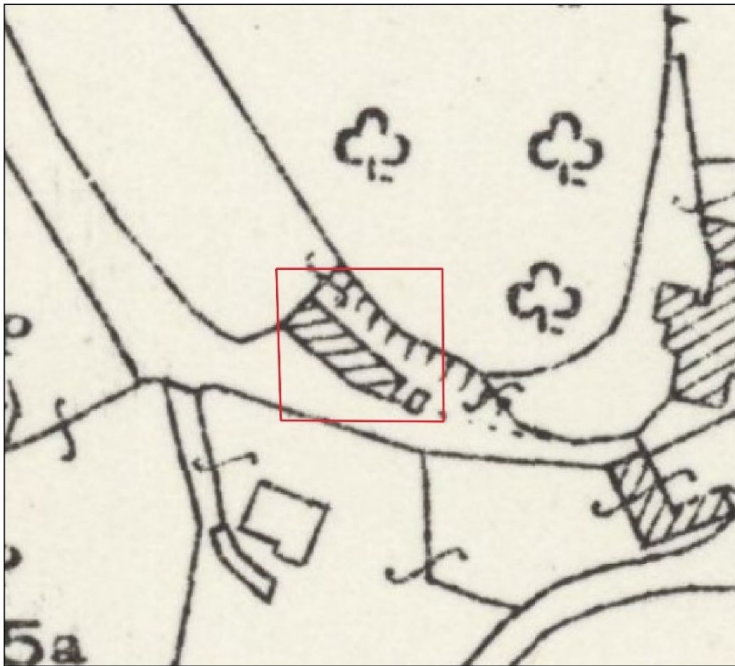


Figure 6. 1927 Ordnance Survey map

On the 1972 Ordnance Survey, the cottage is marked as Ford Cottage (Fig 7), the general outline of the building is as it is shown in 1927 but the ancillary building to the south-east has been demolished.

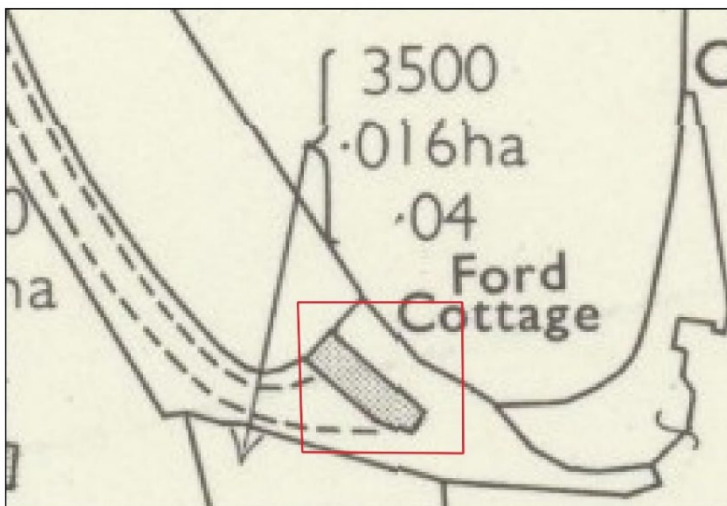


Figure 7. 1972 Ordnance Survey map

6. Building recording

Ford Cottage is located in a valley, surrounded by trees, immediately to the south of a bank with banked up earth to the rear. A public footpath leading to a crossing of the Tilton Brook passes to the south-west of the cottage.

The recorded building is a brick-built cottage rectangular in plan, with a gable roof and of two storeys with a chimney to the north-west. Although it has been unoccupied since 1974, the roof was tiled in the last 20 years with flat ceramic tiles and curved ridge tiles.

Plans and elevations presented below are from Nick Joyce Architects DRG Nos-2529-01B & 2529-02

6.1. Exterior

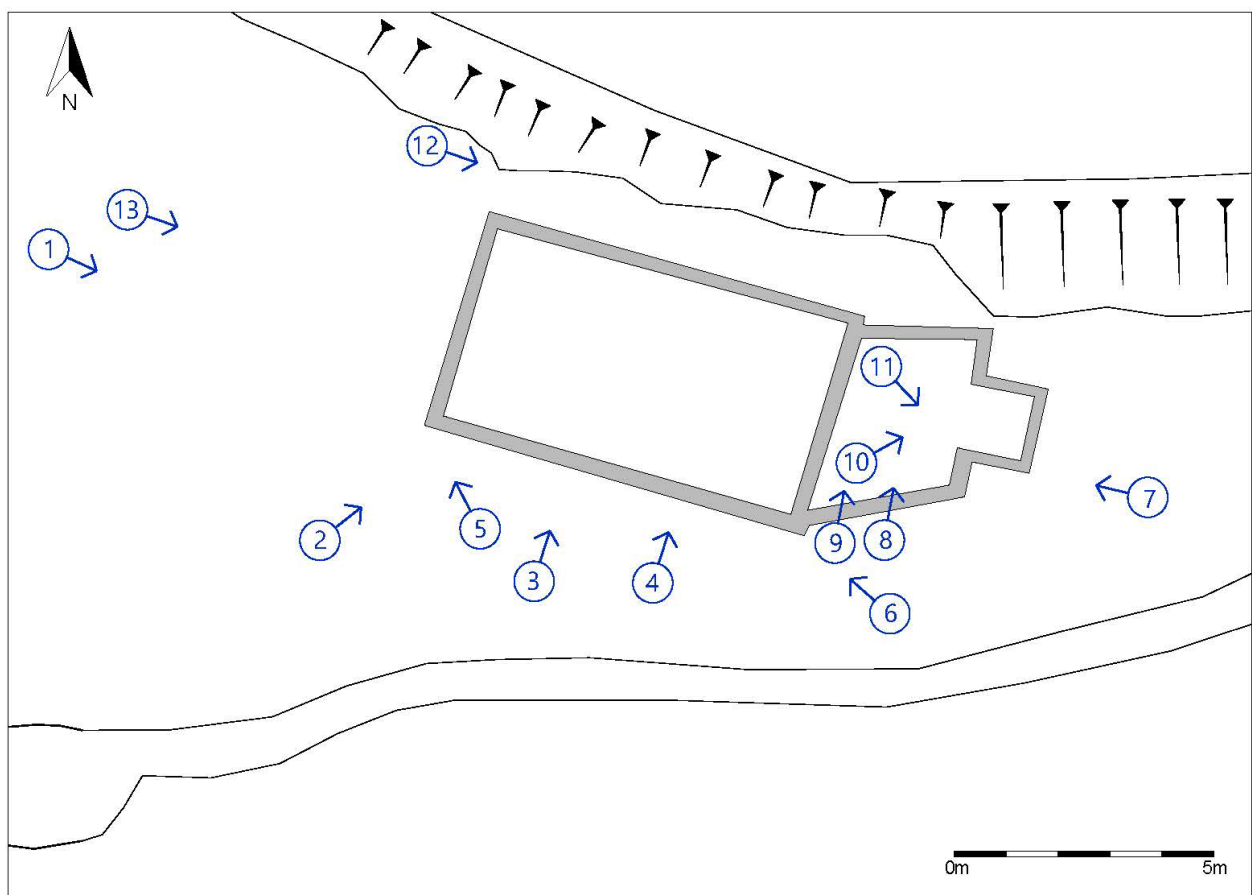


Figure 8. Plan of the exterior of Ford Cottage, with photo directions

North-west (principal) elevation (Plate 2, Fig. 9)

On the ground floor a central doorway has a segmental arch of brick headers on sides with flat headers over (Plate 3). The doorway is filled with a boarded door which is ledged to the interior. The windows are boarded up with plyboard with parts of the brick arches visible. On the left hand side flat headers are visible and on the right hand side the upright headers are visible with flat headers over.

There are two windows to the first floor, both also covered with plyboard.

There is brick dentilling beneath the eaves. The first floor windows are both directly beneath the eaves with no arch, and both interrupt the dentilling (Plate 4).

The rainwater goods are cast iron with a hopper head collecting rainwater directly from the roof in the left-hand corner of the elevation (Plate 5).

Parts of former electrical fittings survive on the right-hand corner of the elevation, including a ceramic insulator (Plate 6).



Figure 9. South-west elevation

South-east gable and former building to the south-east (Plate 7, Fig. 10)

A doorway, centrally placed in the south-east gable, is covered with a large sheet of ply.

Evidence of a former smaller building to the immediate south-east of the cottage survives in the paintwork on the gable and courses of brick at ground level. The building had been single storey with a gabled roof. As well as the visible roofline, there are traces in the brickwork of where it had been fixed to the main building. From remnants of a wall surviving to the rear and projecting from the gable, it is clear that this structure had not been tied into the main building (Plate 8).

Steps lead up to the former building, comprising roughly coursed bricks, to a floor surface higher than that of the main building (about 0.40m high), covered with quarry tiles (Plate 9).

There is a low structure, probably an oven, with an arch in the rear of the building in the north-eastern corner (Plate 10 and see Plate 8). The structure is about seven brick courses high, and 5 to 6 courses long. The arch is a segmental arch of brick headers on the side, 2.5 bricks deep. The top of the structure is partly edged with timber and covered with quarry tiles, now grown over with nettles and moss. There is a blocked aperture in the south-east wall leading to a possible chimney. This appears to be a later feature than the possible oven described above as it partly obscures its arch.

A collapsed brick structure in the south-eastern corner of this building appears also to have had a central aperture, probably for a fireplace (Plate 11)

Further piles of bricks at the far end of the building appear to come from the former building which had partially collapsed in recent years (client pers. comm).

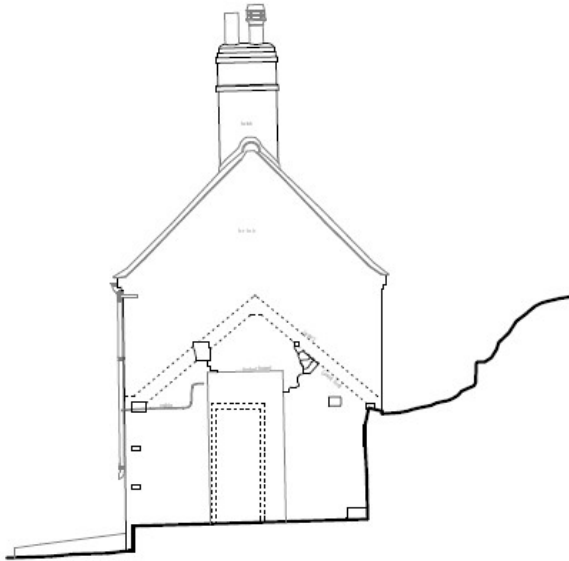


Figure 10. South-east elevation

North-east (rear) elevation

The rear wall of the main building is entirely blank (Plate 12, Fig. 11). There is brick dentilling all the way along under the eaves. Towards the north-eastern end, substantial blacksmiths' nails protrude from the wall.

The bank material builds up to the north-west. There is a bonded timber 4 courses up from the ground on the right hand side of the rear elevation.

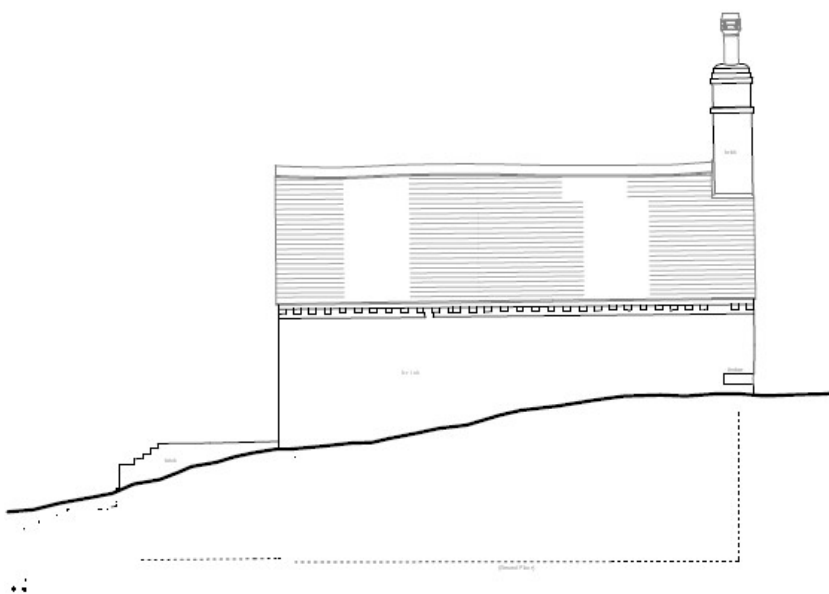


Figure 11. North-east elevation

North-west elevation (Plate 13)

The roofline of the gable suggests that it may have been roofed with heavy slates or thatch before being re-roofed with tiles.

The brick chimney is flush with the wall and has some string course decoration as well as two chimney pots, one of which is capped.

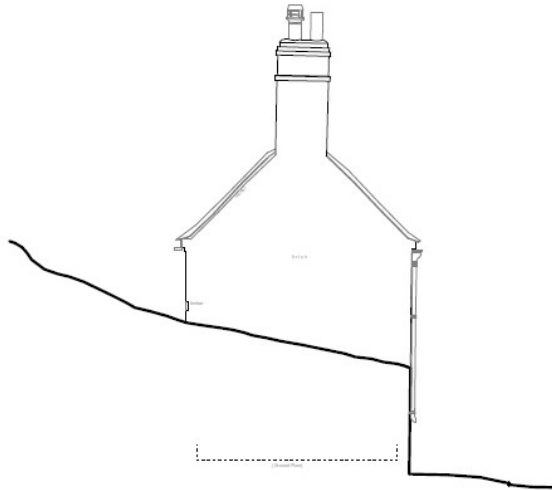


Figure 12. North-west elevation

6.2 Interior

Ground floor (Figure 13)

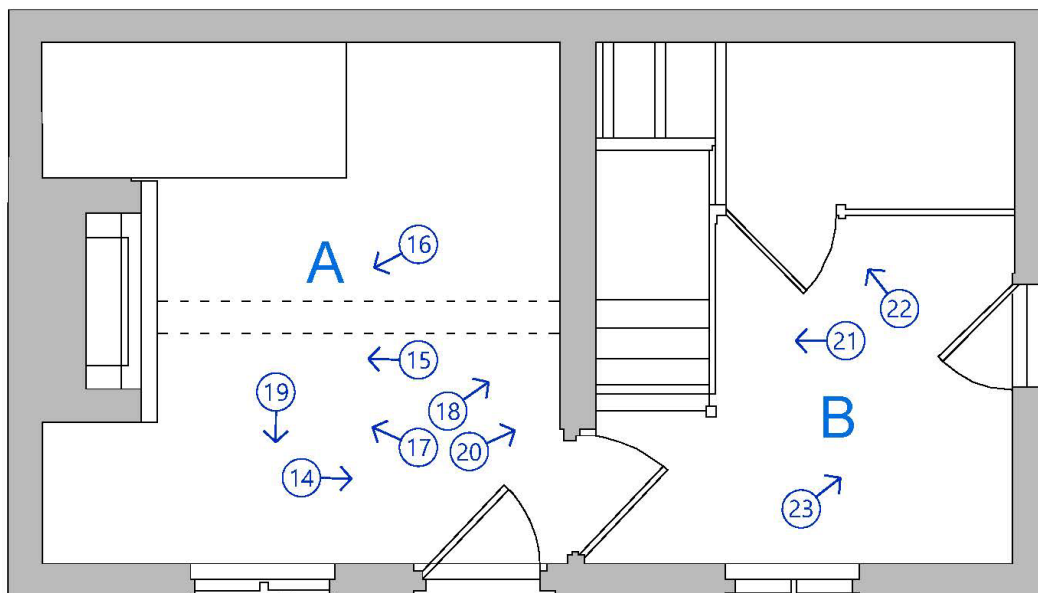


Figure 13. Plan of the ground floor of Ford Cottage, with photo directions

Room A to the north-west, appears to have been a sitting room. The ceiling is plastered and the floor is of quarry tiles. The front door which leads directly to the room is internally ledged and constructed of two large upright boards (Plate 14). There are remains of several locks on the door.

There is a cast iron fireplace with ovens and grates central in chimney in a brick squarish fireplace with a carved and moulded wooden mantel (Plates 15 & 16). A plate on the stove indicates that it was made or sold by L Watkins, Kidderminster.

A transverse beam crosses the ceiling, heavily covered in peeling paint (Plate 17). It is chamfered with stops at the east end (Plate 18) and enters the chimney breast at the west end. There is a hook in the soffit at the SE end.

A window in the south-eastern wall has timber surrounds which match those of the mantel above the fireplace in decoration (Plate 19). It is filled with a two light casement window, missing glass in the left hand light. The right hand light is a side-opening light in Crittal style metal frames.

The walls are of exposed brick behind partially surviving former wainscotting which is similar in style to the woodwork around the mantel and window. Above this is plastered and patches of former wallpaper survive.

A rectangular gap in the ceiling to the north of the fireplace may indicate the location of a former staircase. A light switch on the SE wall by a door to Room B is of Bakelite and plastic (Plate 20).

Room B, to the south-east may have been a former kitchen. A single flight of stairs with a simple hand rail and balusters leads from the north-western end of the room to the first floor. Instead of a newel post, a square post leads from the outside corner of the foot of the stairs to the ceiling (Plate 21). The floor, ceiling and windows are as Room A. The door from Room A is boarded and ledged on the inside of Room B.

In the northern wall, a door leads to a smaller room, the southern wall of which is a partition made of vertical boards, which was probably a pantry (Plate 22). A large shelf on a bracket was fixed to the north wall in this room.

A four panelled door to the south-eastern end of the house is nailed shut from inside using a bracket (Plate 23). The remnants of former electrics are fixed to the wall to above the door to the right.

As well as piles of tiles in the south-eastern corner there is a large porcelain sink in the centre of the room and a circular wash tub cover.

First floor (Figure 14)

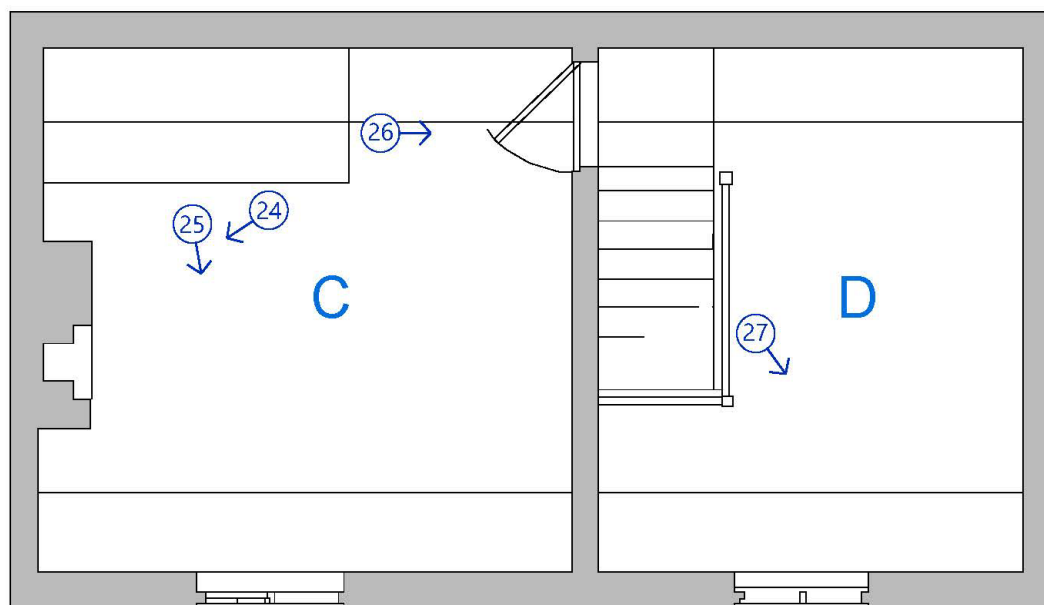


Figure 14. Plan of the first floor of Ford Cottage, with photo directions

The first floor comprises two rooms C and D, both with plastered walls and ceilings and wooden floors. There is moulded skirting at floor level in both first floor rooms. Laths are visible where the plaster has fallen away from the ceilings, which are slightly slanted in the rear and front and flat across the centre of the rooms.

In [Room C](#) (Plate 24), a former fireplace is located off centre in the chimney breast. The window in the front wall is a 'Crittall style' metal framed casement, as on the ground floor (Plate 25). The two first floor rooms are connected by a door in the rear of the rooms. There is a step up from Room C to Room D (Plate 26)

The window in the front wall of [Room D](#) is of the same construction as elsewhere in the building (Plate 27).

7 Discussion

Ford Cottage is a well preserved example of a small rural workers' cottage which retains many late 19th century features. Although a building is marked at this location on the 1838 tithe map, its orientation and location seem subtly different on the 1884 Ordnance Survey, suggesting that a cottage at this location may have been demolished and replaced. If it had not been demolished it was certainly refurbished with good quality internal décor including a fine cast iron range. The building also had external buildings added at some point after its construction. The additions were not tied into the main structure and were built in an unusual plan, at variance with the layout of the main building, suggesting that they may have been built by an amateur builder, probably following the line of the bank.

No evidence was found of potential inhabitants of this building in the later 19th century, although its location may suggest that it may have been a home for labourers on local farms or who may have

worked at the nearby sawmill, or both. The remnants of the additional structures suggest that the family who lived here was relatively self-sufficient.

8 Acknowledgements

Ambrey Archaeology would like to thank the following for their help with this project: John Middleton of Nick Joyce Architects for commissioning the works, Andy Spreadbury for providing access and photographs of the first floor and Aidan Smyth of Wychavon District Council for monitoring the project

9 Sources consulted

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9.2 Cartography

1838 Tithe map of the parish of Hartlebury

1884 Ordnance Survey Worcestershire XIV.15 1:2500

1903 Ordnance Survey Worcestershire XIV.15 1:2500

1972 Ordnance Survey SO8271-SO8371-BA

Plates



Plate 1. Low level aerial photograph of Ford Cottage, view east



Plate 2. View north-east of Ford Cottage, scale 1m



Plate 3. Front doorway, view north-east, scale 1m



Plate 4. View north-east of front window and break in dentilling

Plate 5. View west of cast iron rain-water goods



Plate 6. Ceramic insulator on corner of front elevation



Plate 7. View west, scale 1m



Plate 8. View north in former outshot, scale 1m



Plate 9. Steps to former outshot, scales 0.40 and 0.50m



Plate 10. View north east to possible oven and blocked-up entrance/former structure, scale 0.50m



Plate 11. View south-east to possible former fire place, scale 0.40m



Plate 12. View east to rear of cottage, scale 1m



Plate 13. North-west gable of cottage, scale 1m



Plate 14. View south-east of front door in Room A, scale 1m

Plate 15. Cast iron range in north-west of Room A, Scales 1m and 0.50m



Plate 16. Cast iron range in north-west of Room A, Scale 0.50m



Plate 17. View north of chamfered beam in Room A



Plate 18. Stop in south-eastern part of beam



Plate 19. View south-west of Crittall style window, Room A, scale 0.50m



Plate 20. Plastic and Bakelite electrical fitting, Room A

Plate 21. View north-west of single flight staircase, Room B, scale 1m

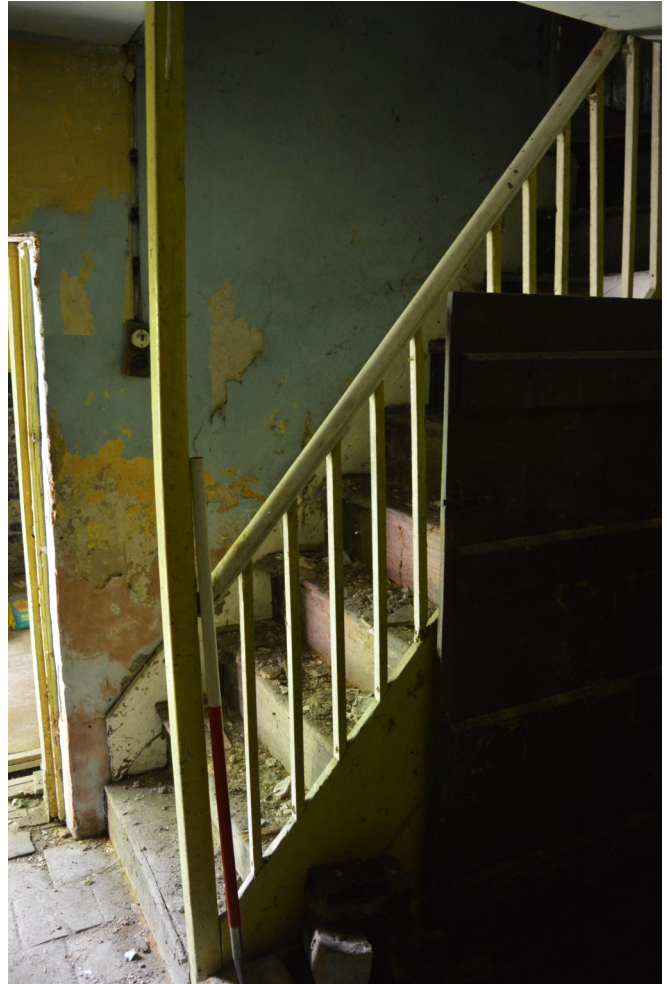


Plate 22. View north into cupboard/pantry, scale 1m



Plate 23. View east to door at south-east end of cottage, scale 1m



Plate 24. View west in Room C



Plate 25. View south in Room C



Plate 26. View east in Room C



Plate 27. View south in Room D