



Northamptonshire
County Council

Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological building recording
and desk-based assessment at
18-20 Benefield Road, Oundle,
Northamptonshire
November 2008



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November 2008

Report 08/187

Northamptonshire Archaeology

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**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY
NOVEMBER 2008**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING RECORDING AND DESK-BASED
ASSESSMENT AT 18-20 BENEFIELD ROAD, OUNDLE
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
SEPTEMBER 2008**

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QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	Joe Prentice		
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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Archaeological building recording and desk-based assessment at 18-20 Benefield Road, Oundle, Northamptonshire	
Short description	Desk-based and building assessment revealed that the two cottages had been originally built as one-up one-down structures, with the upper room contained within the eaves. At some stage during the nineteenth century the upper walls were raised to provide more head-room on the first floor. Probably at the same time the dividing wall between the two properties was replaced in brick. On the ground floor this has subsequently been replaced by modern brickwork and breeze blocks.	
Project type	Building recording and desk-based assessment	
Site status	Listed Grade II	
Previous work	No	
Current Land use	Domestic buildings	
Future work	Alterations to connect two separate buildings by the creation of internal door openings	
Monument type/ period	Post-medieval	
Significant finds	No	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	18-20 Benefield Road, Oundle, Northamptonshire, PE8 4ET	
Study area	Adjoining terraced houses	
OS Easting & Northing	TL 0357 8820	
Height OD		
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	ENDC	
Project brief originator	Lloyd Mills, ENDC	
Project Design originator	Joe Prentice	
Director/Supervisor	Joe Prentice	
Project Manager	Steve Parry	
Sponsor or funding body	Mr D Stone	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	June 2008	
End date	August 2008	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical		
Paper		
Digital		
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)		
Title		
Serial title & volume	08/187	
Author(s)		
Page numbers		
Date		

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING RECORDING AND DESK-BASED
ASSESSMENT AT 18-20 BENEFIELD ROAD,
OUNDLE, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

Abstract

Desk-based and building assessment revealed that the two cottages had been originally built as one-up one-down structures, with the upper room contained within the eaves. At some stage during the nineteenth century the upper walls were raised to provide more head-room on the first floor. Probably at the same time the dividing wall between the two properties was replaced in brick. On the ground floor this has subsequently been replaced by modern brickwork and breeze blocks.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Mr D Stone is the current owner of 18-20 Benefield Road, Oundle, Northamptonshire (NGR TL 0357 8820, Fig 1). East Northamptonshire District Council (ENDC) has requested that archaeological building recording and limited desk-based assessment should be undertaken on the two cottages since there were proposals to alter them by creating internal connecting doorways. As the proposed alterations were relatively limited, and the cottages are Listed Grade II, a Level I response was considered appropriate.
- 1.2 The cottages are two of a row of stone-built structures on the western side of the town of Oundle (Plate 1). Each cottage comprises a single room to each floor with a simple staircase within the original building footprint; with a single storey extension to the rear which contains modern kitchen and bathroom facilities. The proposal is to remove one staircase and introduce connecting doorways on both ground and first floors to join the cottages internally. The focus of this report is therefore the material, method and date of construction of the interior wall between the two cottages.
- 1.3 Two site visits were made; one before any alterations were undertaken, the other after the modern wall coverings had been removed to reveal the constructional details of the wall, but before any openings had been made.

2 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 The general objectives of the recording were:
 - To set the buildings into a local historical context using basic map regression to trace the development of the site
 - To provide a general written, drawn and photographic appraisal of the historic resource which constitutes the building in those areas which were to be affected by alteration
 - To provide information about the historic development of the building, in order to constitute an archive record before alteration.
- 2.2 More specifically, the work:

Aimed to record those structural elements which were to be removed to allow new openings made between the two separate buildings. The report includes the location and dimensions of the new openings and an analysis of the constructional details revealed by the removal of wall plaster.

Desk-based assessment has been undertaken using the Extensive Urban Survey for Northamptonshire (Oundle) and the English Heritage listing as well as maps held by Northamptonshire Archaeology.

- 2.3 The scope of the building recording was limited to the cottages although this was placed in the wider context of the town. This appraisal of the setting primarily took the form of a photographic record to set out the relationship to other buildings and by the use of historic maps. The buildings were recorded in accordance with the standards, conventions and specifications defined in the English Heritage procedural guidance (2006) to level I, and in particular the records made as part of the work conformed to the following:

Written Account on a room-by-room basis in those areas to be affected. This took the form of pre-printed record forms, filled in with free-text and cross-referenced to other record types.

Drawn Record comprising the production of a scaled plan at ground and first floor level including the locations and dimensions of the affected areas.

Photographic Record employing both general and specific photographs to show exteriors, relevant interiors and specific items and fixtures/fittings, if significant.

3 **DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT**

- 3.1 Oundle has a long and well recorded history with archaeological and documentary evidence providing indications that the area has been settled since prehistoric times. A small Roman town is located on the east bank of the River Nene in the parish of Ashton, at the eastern end of the bridge into the town.

Of the more recent history, Oundle is recorded as having a market in 1086 and the town grew during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as the economy of the period expanded (Ballinger and Foard 2002). It appears to have maintained its local importance throughout the medieval period and by 1712 it was described by Morton as “a fair, well built, pleasant and healthy town advantageously and sweetly situated”.

It continued to flourish as a market town throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but never became closely involved with the leather, boot and shoe industry which became so important elsewhere in Northamptonshire. This has meant that Oundle was not substantially re-developed during the nineteenth century with a large number of industrial buildings and has retained a greater quantity of earlier domestic buildings. It is perhaps the school that has had the greatest impact on the town since the middle years of the nineteenth century when the original school building was demolished.

- 3.2 Oundle contains 172 listed buildings, of which 128 have no function ascribed to them, but are assumed to be domestic buildings. The cottages at 18-20 Benefield Road are listed as follows;

Benefield Road (South side). No 16 (incorporating No 14) Nos 18 & 20. TL 0388 2/115. II GV. 17th century. Low cottages of 2 storeys in stone. No 18 cement rendered, with stone slate roof and 2 brick on stone chimney stacks. No 16 has 2 dormers which break eaves and 2 windows and door with rendered lintels. No 18 has 2 modern windows on 1st floor and 1 on ground and plain door. No 20 has 2 windows on 1st floor and 1 window on ground, wood lintels, as to door.

- 3.3 The Extensive Urban Survey does not describe individual domestic buildings and apart from the brief listing description, nothing is known of the two cottages which are the subject of this report. They appear to be present on the 1810 Ordnance Survey preparatory map (Fig 2). They lie at the very western edge of the town at that time, but the detail of the map is such that little else can be said of them. On the 1880 Ordnance Survey map they are depicted essentially as they remain today, but without the rear extensions, at the edge of the town and with their respective garden plots shown (Fig 3). They are subsequently present on all later maps which again show them in outline only.
- 3.4 No previous building recording or archaeological investigation is known to have been undertaken at, or near to, the cottages.

4 BUILDING RECORDING

- 4.1 **External description.** The two cottages face onto Benefield Road which is aligned roughly north-west to south-east. For the sake of ease, the street frontage will be described as being the north side, number 18 lies to the east, number 20 at the far western end of the terrace row (Fig 1, Plate 1). Number 18 has a doorway and window on the ground floor with two windows to the first floor. The majority of the façade is cement rendered, apparently the result of much of the front wall collapsing and having been re-built in brick during the twentieth century (D Stone pers comm). The eastern end of this façade retains some dressed, coursed limestone, re-pointed with cement. The roof is covered with Collyweston stone slates and the property shares a stone chimney stack with its neighbour to the east, topped with more recent brickwork and supporting two chimney pots of yellow clay (the western one serves number 18).

Number 20 is constructed of the same dressed, coursed limestone and shares a similar configuration of single door and window on the ground, and two windows on the first floor. The roof and chimney are also similar, though the chimney (on the west gable end) is a single stack and pot, this time the brick section tapers towards the top. All of the windows are modern replacement casements; the doors too are modern, all appear to be of pine and are painted white. In number 20 they are placed beneath oak lintels, in number 18 the cement render covers all lintels where they are probably modern replacements.

The west gable end shows clearly that the cottages were originally a single storey with a room in the eaves, which have subsequently been raised (Plate 2). The original pitch of the roof line suggests that at this stage they were probably thatched, and there was a small window to the north of the chimney stack, now blocked with stone. The south façade of the cottages is obscured on the ground floor by a modern single storey extension, but where the original cottage wall can be seen it is of coursed limestone rubble (Plate 3). There was a door and window on the ground floor of each cottage, opposite those in the north façade, and just one window to each building on the first floor. The east end of each cottage is the partition wall between it and the next building; only that between numbers 18 and 20 was observed during this project.

- 4.2 **Internal description; ground floor.** Internally both cottages have been modernised to varying degrees, and all interior wall surfaces (which were the subject of this survey) were covered with either plaster or plasterboard. These were recorded prior to any alterations by photography. Floor coverings were modern. The current owner then removed the modern wall covering in those areas on the ground and first floors where the new openings were to be made (Figs 4 and 5). On the ground floor of both cottages this was found to be plasterboard with a void behind, and the wall between the two cottages was found to be of twentieth-century red brick (210mm x 100mm x 60mm), two bricks thick bonded in cement (Plates 4 and 5). At the northern end of this wall there was also some use of breeze

blocks to make the understair cupboard adjacent to the front door. The brick wall sits beneath an oak beam lying north-south between the north and south stone exterior walls of the building (Fig 4). It was not possible to examine the underside of the beam to see if it retained sockets for upright timbers, which may have been present if there had previously been a studwork partition, perhaps with a doorway if the cottages had previously been connected. One side of the beam was roughly chamfered, the other retained a waney edge. The beam retains whitewash indicating that it was exposed within the ground floor room at some stage, and also retains empty sockets along the top edge for joists.

- 4.3 ***Internal description; first floor.*** The new opening was to be made at the top of the staircases, and in doing so would make one of them obsolete (Figs 4 and 5). That within number 20 was removed and was revealed to be modern, probably dating to the 1970s, and was constructed of pine. Both internal wall surfaces between the two cottages were covered at first floor level with plaster on the removal of which the partition wall was shown to be of nineteenth-century red brick (230mm x 110mm x 70mm) bonded in lime mortar (Plates 6 and 7). At the top of the staircase in number 18 a brick pier had been constructed in the angle of the dividing and front walls of the cottage and was constructed of twentieth-century brick bonded in cement (Fig 5, Plate 6). It appears that this pier was inserted when the front wall of the cottage was rebuilt and it tidies the change from existing stonework to the new, narrower rendered brick front wall which remains today.
- 4.4 Due to the proposed new works associated with the creation of the new doorways and staircase removal, the owner had also removed the plaster from the whole covering of the west wall of cottage number 20 which revealed that the rafters of the original roof survived *in situ* (Plate 8). The angle of the rafters supports the theory that the roof was originally thatched and shows that the first floor room had little head room; a collar survives which is very low, but the room was apparently used for accommodation as indicated by the presence of plaster on the underside of the rafters. Rather oddly, the rafters do not lie directly above the oak beam, but slightly to the west of it, this means that the brick infill wall at first floor level does not rest on top of the first floor principal beam but on the floor boards to one side. This also indicates that the brick partition wall is secondary. Unfortunately the upper surface of the principal beam is covered by a later length of pine which obscures the surface, thus hiding any potential evidence of sockets which might indicate a timber frame, perhaps covered with lath and plaster. It appears that when the north and south (front and back) stone walls were heightened, the brick partition wall was introduced as the same type of brick is used both above and below the original rafters. This lifting of the walls and heightening of the roof gave extra headroom and allowed the small windows to be inserted in the north and south facades. At some stage metal straps have been added between the north and south walls and the original rafters, presumably to act as ties.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Each of the two cottages, numbers 18 and 20 Benefield Road, though originally of two storeys almost certainly had first floor rooms which were almost entirely contained within the eaves. They may have had small dormers but no evidence survives to confirm this, though there was at this stage a small window in the west gable wall, now blocked. The original roof structure was of a much steeper pitch suggesting that it was probably covered in thatch, not Collyweston stone slates. There is no clear indication that the two cottages were separated at this stage, though it is unlikely that they were not. The most likely scenario is that they were divided internally with lath and plaster over a timber frame, but as neither the upper or lower surfaces of the oak beam lying along the dividing line could be seen, this cannot be confirmed. Similarly the underside of the surviving rafters is not

visible due to the insertion of the brick wall at first floor level although traces of plaster can be seen indicating that the original first floor room was plastered.

- 5.2 At some stage, probably in the first half of the nineteenth century, the north and south walls were raised making the first floor rooms higher. It appears to have been at this date that the brick wall was inserted on both floors, though at ground floor level it was replaced during the twentieth century. Both staircases are of modern construction and it is not certain if they are replacements in the same position as original stairs, though this seems most likely given the limited floor space available in both cottages.
- 5.3 On the ground floor the area of wall through which the new doorway is to be created is of twentieth-century construction; the original oak principal beam beneath which this wall has been inserted will form the lintel of the new opening and will not be removed. On the first floor the fabric of the wall to be removed is of nineteenth-century construction.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to the owner, Mr D Stone, for his help during the site observations and for the use of his drawings which remain the copyright of Robert Powell, surveyor.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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English Heritage 2006. *Understanding Historic Buildings A guide to good recording practise*

GLOSSARY

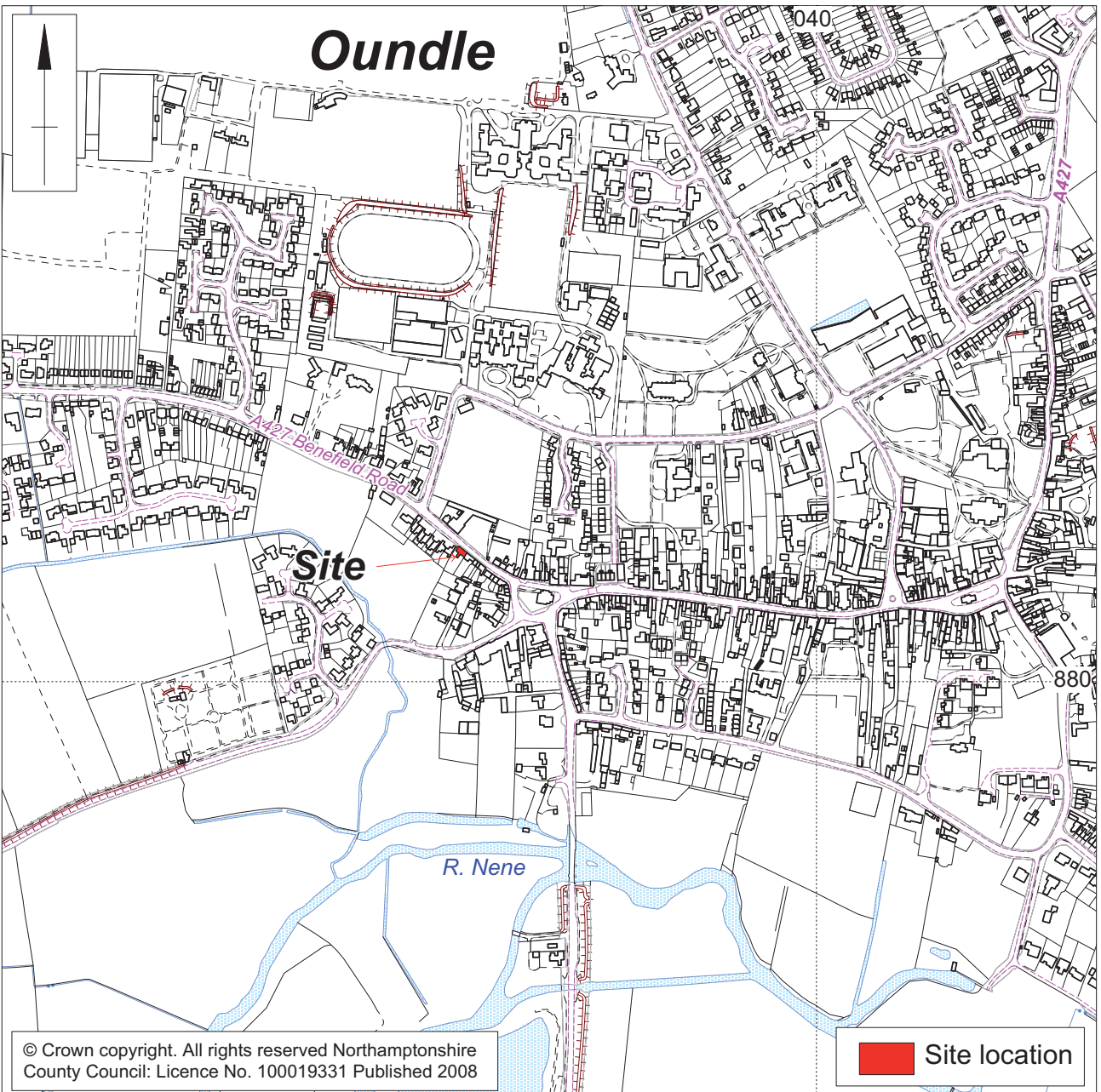
Casement: Window frame hinged on one side

Cement: Bonding material used in both brick and stonework. Portland cement was patented in 1824

Collar: Transverse timber connecting a rafter at a point above the base but below the ridge

Lime: Bonding material used in both brick and stonework, also in wall plaster. Used from the Roman period until the early part of the twentieth century when it was largely superseded by Portland cement.

Waney edge The natural outer edge of a piece of timber, one that has not been shaped.

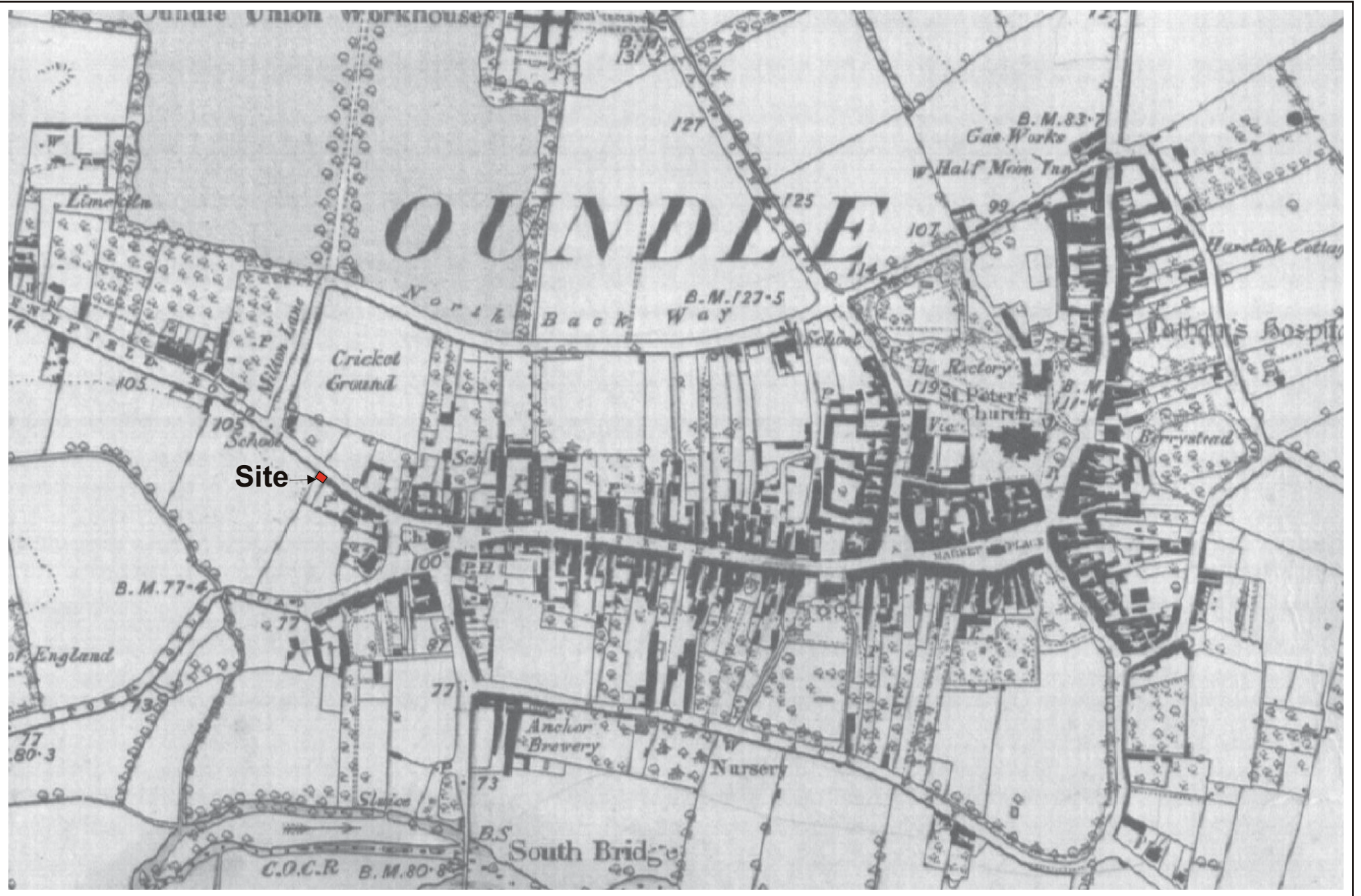


Scale 1:7500

Site location Fig 1



1810 Ordnance Survey preparatory map Fig 2



Site

1880 Ordnance Survey Map Fig 3

Ground floor plan, 18 and 20 Benefield Road, Oundle Fig 4



First floor plan, 18 and 20 Benefield Road, Oundle Fig 5





Plate 1 Street frontage (north side) on Benefield Road



Plate 2 West gable end showing former roof line



Plate 3 Garden frontage (south side) with later single storey additions



Plate 4 Dividing wall between cottages; ground floor, east side (No 18) looking west



Plate 5 Dividing wall between cottages; ground floor, west side (No 20) looking east



Plate 6 Dividing wall between cottages; first floor, east side (No 18) looking west



Plate 7 Dividing wall between cottages; first floor, west side (No 20) looking east



Plate 8 Dividing wall between cottages at first floor level showing original rafters and brick infill looking east from No 20