

ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
WATCHING BRIEF  
AT  
GABLE HOUSE,  
PRIORS HARDWICK,  
WARWICKSHIRE



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## **Archaeological watching brief at Gable House, Priors Hardwick, Warwickshire**

Tim Cornah

With a contribution by Dennis Williams

### **Summary**

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Gable House, Priors Hardwick, Warwickshire (NGR 447095, 256186). It was undertaken on behalf of CgMs Consulting, whose client intends to construct a new summer house on the side of the existing building, for which a planning application has been submitted (ref. 12/00121/FUL).

The village of Priors Hardwick is thought to have its origins in at least the 11<sup>th</sup> century and various archaeological features throughout the village are thought to date from that period onwards. The medieval village is considered to have been mostly to the south and east of the 13<sup>th</sup> century church, with the area in which the development site is located having been occupied from the post-medieval period onwards. The results of this watching brief go some way to confirm this as one wide ditch, possibly for drainage, was identified which contained material of 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century date and was sealed by topsoil with 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century debris.

## Report

### 1 Background

#### 1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Gable House, Priors Hardwick, Warwickshire (NGR 447095, 256186). It was undertaken on behalf of CgMs Consulting, whose client intends to construct a new summer house on the side of the existing building for which a planning application has been submitted to and approved by Stratford on Avon District Council (Reference 12/00121/FUL).

The proposed development site is considered to include potential heritage assets, the significance of which may be affected by the application.

The project conforms to a written scheme of investigation prepared by CgMs Consulting (2013) which has been approved by the Planning Archaeologist for Warwickshire County Council.

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008).

### 2 Aims

The aims of the watching brief, as set out in the written scheme of investigation (CgMs Consulting 2013), were to:

- determine, as far as reasonably practicable, the location, the extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains;
- establish ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features encountered;
- document the extent of archaeological survival of buried deposits.

### 3 Methods

#### 3.1 Personnel

The project was undertaken by Tim Cornah (BA) who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2006 and has been practicing archaeology since 2003. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan (BA, MA, AIFA). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc, PGCert, MIfA).

#### 3.2 Documentary research

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of Warwickshire Historic Environment Record (HER).

#### 3.3 List of sources consulted

##### *Cartographic sources*

- 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey 1885 map, scale 25": 1 mile
- 1901-1906 Ordnance Survey map, scale 25": 1 mile
- 1955 Ordnance Survey map, scale 1:10,000
- 1983 Ordnance Survey map, scale 1:10,000

#### 3.4 Fieldwork strategy

Fieldwork was undertaken on the 23 July 2013. The WA project reference number is P4160.

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One trench amounting to just over 7.40m<sup>2</sup> in area was excavated. The location of the trench is indicated in Figure 2.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a 360° tracked excavator under archaeological supervision. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012a).

### **3.5 Structural analysis**

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

### **3.6 Artefact methodology, by Dennis Williams**

#### **3.6.1 Recovery policy**

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard WA practice (WA 2012a; appendix 2).

#### **3.6.2 Method of analysis**

All hand-retrieved finds were examined. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* date range was produced for each stratified context. These date ranges were used for determining the broad phases defined for the site. All information was recorded on *pro forma* sheets.

The pottery and ceramic building material was examined under x20 magnification and referenced as appropriate by fabric type and form according to the Warwickshire medieval and post-medieval fabric type series (Soden and Ratkai 1998)

#### **3.6.3 Discard policy**

The following categories/types of material will be discarded after a period of 6 months following the submission of this report, unless there is a specific request to retain them (and subject to the collection policy of the relevant depository):

- where unstratified
- post-medieval pottery, and;
- generally where material has been assessed as having no obvious grounds for retention.

### **3.7 Environmental archaeology methodology**

#### **3.7.1 Sampling policy**

Sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (2012a). In the event no deposits were identified which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

### **3.8 Statement of confidence in the methods and results**

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

## **4 The application site**

### **4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context**

The site is located within the village of Priors Hardwick and lies 1km to the east of the Oxford Canal and alongside a tributary to the River Itchen within the eastern limit of Warwickshire. The parish is made up of enclosed agricultural land with very few wooded areas. The solid geology of the area consists of Dyrham Formation siltstone and mudstone (British Geological Survey).

Though no deposits or features have been identified from this period, the information provided by the HER suggests the presence a Romano-British settlement (MWA731) to the south-west of the current village where pottery and human bone have been recovered.

The village itself is thought to have originated in at least the 11<sup>th</sup> century and was one of the 24 vills which formed Earl Leofric's original endowment of the monastery which he founded at Coventry; his gift was confirmed by Edward the Confessor in 1043 AD. The church has some surviving fabric that dates to the 13<sup>th</sup> century (VCH V, 137-9) and the information provided by the HER suggests that the site of the medieval village was broadly within the contemporary village as indicated by a series of earthworks (MWA6208, MWA728, MWA6211, MWA6210). Most of these are located to the south-east of the church though MWA6210 is 400m to its west. Further to this, 100m to the south of the church are earthworks that could be interpreted as either a moat or fishponds (MWA6206, MWA6207), either of which are likely to be medieval in origin. If interpreted as a moat, it may suggest the presence of a former manor house.

The majority of the buildings within the village date to the post-medieval period, the earliest of which is the Butchers Arms pub which is thought to date from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century (VCH V, 137-9). There are two further buildings in the village which date from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, one of which is Gable House. There are other buildings in the village which survive from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The village's current character is not significantly changed from that seen in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century maps.

### **4.2 Current land-use**

The site is currently used as a garden for the property, with the area to be developed being made up of a patio and planting beds.

## **5 Structural analysis**

The trench and features recorded are shown in Fig 2 and Plates 1-3. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

The geology observed within the excavated area comprised a compact yellow clay (103). Cut into this, one archaeological feature was recorded. This feature ran roughly north-west to south-east. The north-east edge of it only was seen, as it extended beyond a modern extension of Gable House to the south-west. It is at least 2.20metres in width, about 0.47m in depth and greater than 4.40m in length. Its cut [102] is shallow sided that breaks gradually to a flat base and is filled by a soft yellowish grey clay (101). This fill is consistent with prolonged waterlogging as may be expected in a drainage ditch.

Overlying and sealing (101) was a layer of mid grey brown clayey silt (100), interpreted as a mixed topsoil.

### **5.1 Artefactual analysis, by Dennis Williams**

The artefactual assemblage, from two stratified contexts, consisted of pottery, tile, glass, clay pipe and bone, as shown in Table 1. The pottery was in generally good condition, with low levels of abrasion and a mean sherd weight that was above average.



period	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	weight (g)
post-medieval	ceramic	-	clay pipe	1	1
post-medieval	ceramic	-	pot	9	466
post-medieval	ceramic	-	roof tile	4	790
post-medieval	glass	-	vessel	1	70
post-medieval/modern	ceramic	-	pot	6	60
undated	bone	animal bone	-	6	262
totals:				27	1649

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

The pottery comprised post-medieval and modern sherds as summarised in Table 2.

period	fabric code	Fabric common name	count	weight (g)
post-medieval	MY	Midlands Yellow ware	1	10
post-medieval	MB	Midlands Blackware	8	344
post-medieval/modern	MGW	Modern glazed ware	6	60
post-medieval	MISC	Miscellaneous red ware	2	112
totals:			15	526

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery

### Summary of artefactual evidence

The context finds summary, with *terminus post quem* date ranges, is shown in Table 3.

#### Pottery

##### Post-medieval

Sherds of Midlands Blackware (fabric MB), 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century in date, and Midlands Yellow ware (fabric MY), 18<sup>th</sup> century in date, were recovered from topsoil (100). Two sherds (including a jar base) of an unidentified, unglazed red ware (fabric MISC) were found in fill (101) of ditch [102]. These were also likely to be post-medieval in date.

##### Post-medieval/modern

19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century glazed ware sherds (fabric MGW) were recovered from topsoil (100).

#### Other finds

##### Bone

Fragments of cattle bone were recovered from fill (101).

*Clay pipe*

A fragment of a clay pipe stem found in topsoil (100) was small and undiagnostic.

*Glass*

A sherd of green glass, found in topsoil 100, exhibited glassblowing marks and a radius of curvature typical of a 19<sup>h</sup> century bottle.

*Tile*

Fragments of 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century nibbed roof tile were recovered from fill (101).

context	material class	object specific type	fabric code	count	weight(g)	start date	end date	tpq date range
100	ceramic	pot	MB	1	120	1600	1800	1800-1950
	ceramic	pot	MB	1	48	1600	1800	
	ceramic	pot	MB	2	132	1600	1800	
	ceramic	pot	MB	1	16	1600	1800	
	ceramic	pot	MB	1	28	1600	1800	
	ceramic	pot	MY	1	10	1700	1800	
	ceramic	pot	MGW	3	38	1800	1950	
	ceramic	pot	MGW	3	22	1800	1950	
	ceramic	clay pipe	-	1	1	1600	1900	
	glass	vessel	-	1	70	1800	1900	
101	ceramic	pot	MISC	1	96	1600	1800	1600-1850
	ceramic	roof tile	-	1	452	1600	1850	
	ceramic	roof tile	-	3	338	1600	1850	
	ceramic	pot	MISC	1	16	1600	1800	
	bone		-	6	262	-	-	

Table 3: Summary of context dating based on artefacts

**5.2 Significance**

The assemblage from this watching brief was a small one, and of limited archaeological significance, but was indicative of occupation and use during the post-medieval period.

**6 Synthesis**

One linear ditch feature was recorded within the excavated area and may have had a drainage function. The artefact analysis from this feature suggests a post-medieval date. Therefore this feature is likely to be broadly contemporary with Gable House. The deposit overlying this ditch was a topsoil from which post-medieval and modern artefacts were recovered.

No other archaeological features, layers, structures or horizons were observed.

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## 6.1 Research frameworks

The medieval village of Priors Hardwick has been identified as mainly being to the south and east of the church with some remains being suggested to its south-west. Though only a small area was excavated and observed, this watching brief goes some way to confirm this hypothesis as only post-medieval activity was observed.

## 7 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on behalf of CgMs Consulting at Gable House, Priors Hardwick, Warwickshire, (NGR 447095, 256186).*

*The village of Priors Hardwick is thought to have its origins in at least the 11<sup>th</sup> century and various archaeological features throughout the village are thought to date from that period onwards. The medieval village is thought to have been mostly to the south and east of the 13<sup>th</sup> century church with the area in which the development site is located having been occupied from the post-medieval period onwards. The results of this watching brief go some way to confirm this as one wide ditch, possibly for drainage, was identified which contained material of 17<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> century date and was sealed by topsoil with 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> century debris.*

## 8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Cathy Patrick (CgMs Consulting) and Caroline Rann (Warwickshire County Council).

## 9 Bibliography

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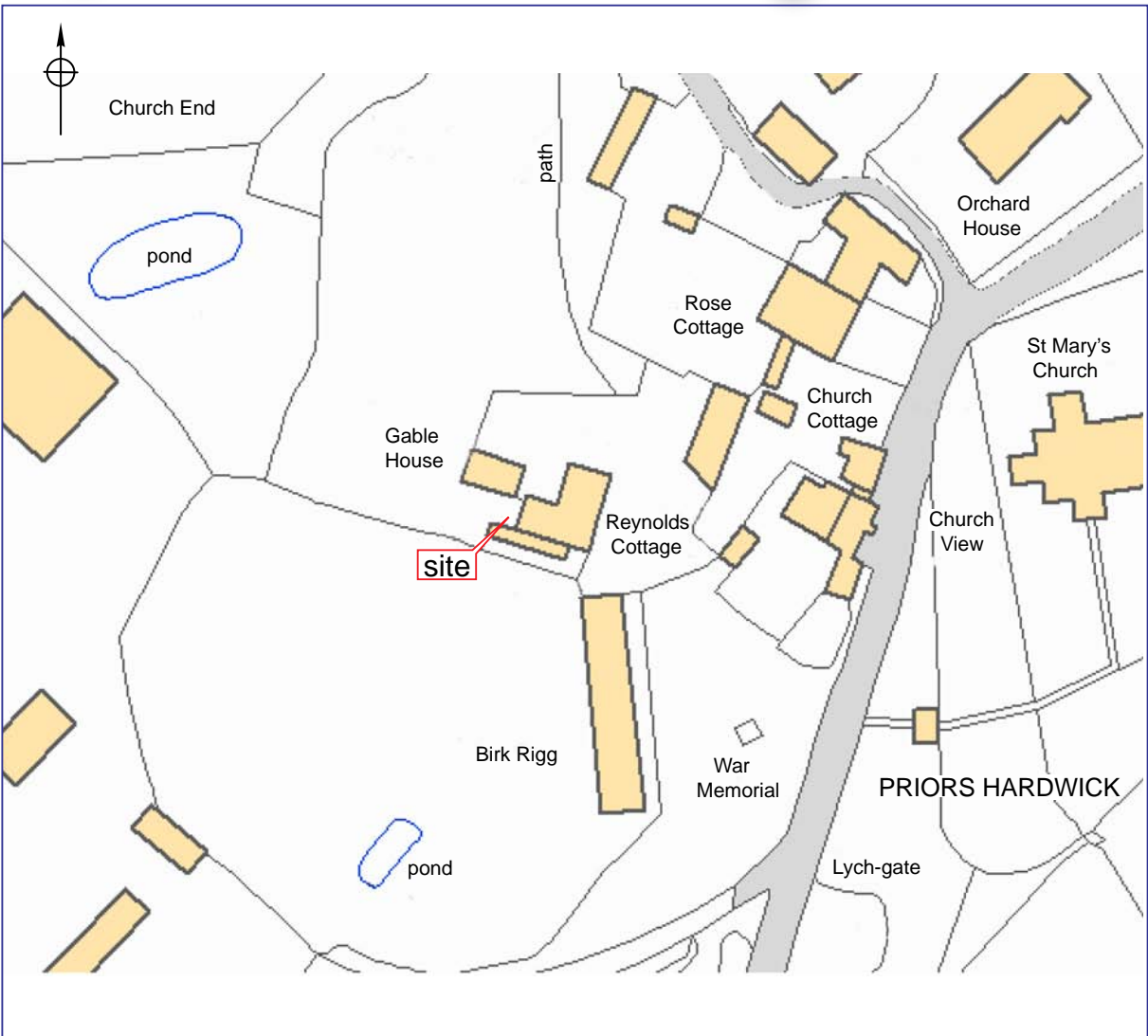
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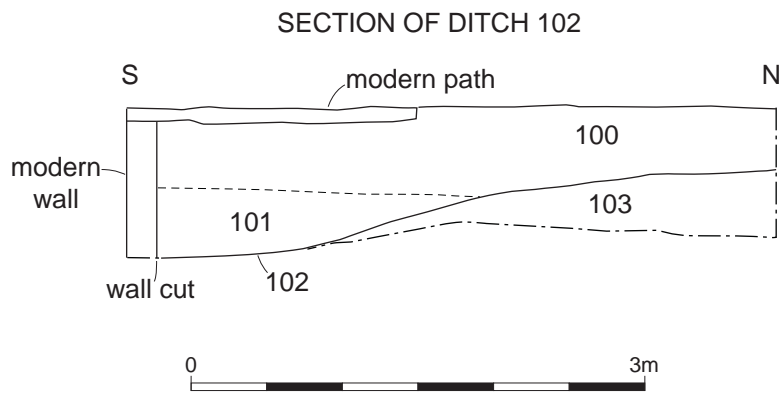
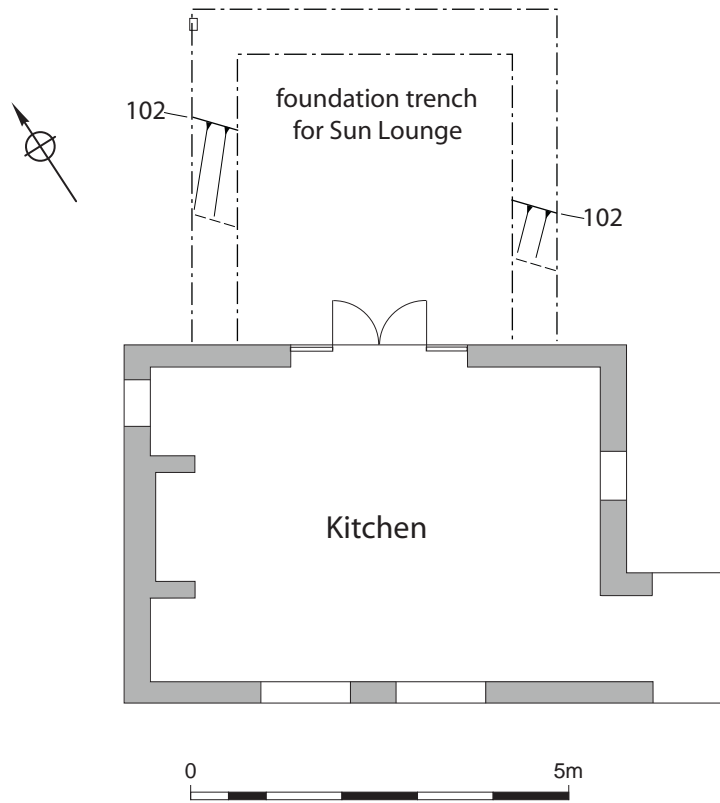
**Figures**



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Location of the site

Figure 1



Trench location plan

Figure 2

## Plates



*Plate 1 The site looking south-east*



*Plate 2 The excavated area looking south*



*Plate 3 Ditch [102] looking north-west*

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## Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

### Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: c12.50m Width: 0.60m Depth: 1.06m

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Topsoil	Mid grey brown clayey silt with occasional small rounded stones, some charcoal flecks and frequent rooting and modern CBM.	0.00-0.60m
101	Fill of 102	Soft mid yellowish grey clay with some small to medium sub-angular limestone pieces at its base.	0.60-1.06m
102	Ditch Cut	This is a fairly shallow sided feature, possibly a ditch running roughly north-west to south-east.	0.60-1.06m
103	Natural	Compact light yellow clay	0.60m+

## Appendix 2 Technical information

### The archive

The archive consists of:

- 1 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 9 Digital photographs
- 1 Scale drawings
- 1 Trench record sheets AS41
- 1 Box of finds
- 1 CD-Rom/DVDs
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Warwickshire Museum,  
The Butts,  
Warwick Warwickshire,  
CV34 4SS