

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING  
AT  
'THE CIDER MILL',  
ALDINGTON,  
WORCESTERSHIRE

Tom Vaughan MA AIFA

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

27<sup>th</sup> October 2003  
revised 5<sup>th</sup> December 2003

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Historic Environment and Archaeology Service,  
Worcestershire County Council,  
Woodbury,  
University College Worcester,  
Henwick Grove,  
Worcester WR2 6AJ



Project 2335  
Report 1156  
WSM 32297



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## Archaeological Recording at 'The Cider Mill', Aldington, Worcestershire

Tom Vaughan

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### Background information

<i>Client</i>	Elder Project Management Ltd
<i>Site address</i>	The Cider Mill, Main Street, Aldington, Worcestershire SP 0639 4410
<i>National Grid Reference</i>	WSM 32297
<i>Sites and Monuments Record reference</i>	Wychavon District Council W/02/0904
<i>Planning authority reference</i>	AS 2002
<i>Brief</i>	AS 2003
<i>Project design</i>	IFA 1999
<i>Project parameters</i>	
<i>Previous archaeological work on the site</i>	

There has been no previous archaeological work undertaken on site itself or on any adjacent plots within the village.

### Background

Aldington lies 2.5km to the east of Evesham, in the Vale of Evesham. The village is within the rural parish of the same name, within the Hundred of Blackhurst, in the south-east corner of Worcestershire. It is accessed off the B4035 to the south, and occupies the western bank of a tributary of the River Avon which flows to the west. The Cider Mill itself occupies the rear of a plot located on the north side of the village, overlooking fields and a wood to the north (Fig. 1).

The soils of the area belong to the Drayton series (411) of comprising slowly permeable calcareous clayey pelosols over clay (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1986).

The earliest reference to the settlement of *Aldingtona* is *c* AD 709 (WSM 17326). The name derives from the Old English meaning 'Ealda's farm' (Mawer and Stenton 1927, 260). At the time of the Domesday Survey of AD 1086 the village lay within the Hundred of Fishborough as an outlier of the manor of Offenham (WSM 24405). It comprised '...1 free hide for the church. In lordship 2 ploughs; 5 smallholders with 1 plough. 4 slaves. A mill at 5 shillings. The value was and is 40 shillings' (Thorn and Thorn 1982, 10/5 – 175c/d). Throughout the medieval period the manor generally descended in association with the manor of Badsey (VCH II, 353-356).

The earliest detailed map of the village, the Inclosure Plan of 1808, indicates a small building in the approximate location of the Cider Mill, although on a slightly different alignment (Fig. 2). It lies on the boundary of two plots: to the west, a rectangular area with additional buildings described as 'The Farm - 3<sup>rd</sup> Allotment', belonging to George Day, comprising 2a 0r 7p; and to the east a smaller sub-rectangular untitled plot of 0a 1r 25p. The 25<sup>th</sup> 1885/6 Ordnance Survey indicates the building as existing, as part of a Smithy, adjoined to buildings to the south. Orchards occupy the surrounding fields (Fig. 3: 6<sup>th</sup> OS).

Archaeological finds reported in the 19<sup>th</sup> century include Roman coins adjacent to the manor house; Roman pottery, including Samian Ware, a fibula, spindlewhorl and 4<sup>th</sup> century coins from Blackbands, near Blackminster Farm; and a pierced chlorite slate, interpreted to be an Iron Age 'bracer' or archer's wrist guard (VCH I, 218; Pevsner 1968, 42).

Cider houses originated in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as buildings where apples were crushed and pressed for the juice. They were predominantly separate single storey buildings or occupied the lower floor of a

larger structure. For example in Herefordshire and Worcestershire they were often situated below the hop rooms. The process involved two stages: firstly crushing in the mill, generally a circular stone trough with a stone roller driven by horse power; and secondly pressing in a press, which comprised a vertical screw above a tray from which the juice was collected in an adjacent tank. It was then stored in barrels to ferment in a cider cellar (Peters 1981, 54-5).

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## Aims

The aim of the building recording was to record the techniques used in the construction of the building, its phasing and development, the functional and historic use and its association with surrounding buildings and the landscape. The use of dendrochronology (tree ring dating) was also considered in dating the structure.

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## Methods

General specification for building recording	CAS 1995, RCHME 1996 photographic/level 2 survey
Sources consulted	SMR Sources cited by the SMR 1808 Inclosure Plan CRO BA 1583 1885/6 Ordnance Survey 6" Sheet 39sp0644 & Sheet 39sp0643 1887 Ordnance Survey 6" Sheet XLII SE 1997 Ordnance Survey Landranger 150 1:50,000,
Date(s) of fieldwork	4 <sup>th</sup> March 2003
Area of deposits observed	c 18m <sup>2</sup> . Indicated on Fig. 2
Dimensions of excavated areas observed	Foundations      length 15m width 1.10-1.25m depth max 0.60m

### *Access to and visibility of structure*

Observation of the excavated areas was undertaken after mechanical excavation using a 360° tracked machine fitted with a toothed bucket. The exposed sections and surfaces were generally sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits, though any less clear may not have been identified.

### *Statement of confidence*

Access to, and visibility of, the structure allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Areas of the structure were obscured by vegetation, which was detrimental to the photographic record, but a full written record was undertaken as per the brief (AS 2002). Architect's drawings were requested from the client, but none were forthcoming.

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**Deposit description**

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface
100	Topsoil	Mid brown humic silty loam. Moderately loose but cohesive. Occasional tile, pottery, glass and animal bone.	0.00-0.35m
101	Subsoil	Mid brown silty clay. Moderately compact and cohesive.	0.35-0.45m
102	Natural	Dark yellow and grey clay. Compact.	0.45m+

Structural element	Description	Date
North wall - external	Rough coursed grey-yellow squared lias blocks bedded in a cohesive, yellowish white very chalky lime mortar with occasional grey lias flecks and angular chips. Brickwork dressing on corners: very hard dark orangey red with occasional small rounded pebbles and sandy inclusions; bricks 9.2x4.53x2.76"; bedded in same mortar. Occasional inserted yellow brick replacements (as in external floor below). Max 0.45m thick at base.	Original build.
North gable - external	Handmade red bricks 9.05x2.95x?", bedded in hard pinkish lime mortar. Over levelling layer of red roof tiles. c 2.77m above external brick floor.	Original or replacement of earlier wattle and daub infill?
South wall - external	Rough coursed grey-yellow squared lias blocks bedded in a cohesive, yellowish white very chalky lime mortar with occasional grey lias flecks and angular chips. Large yellow limestone quoins on corners. Red brick infill to rear of cupboards in internal elevation; brick as north wall. Frequent putlock holes. Max 0.40m thick at base. (somewhat obscured by adjoining building).	Repointed? original build
South gable - external	Handmade red bricks 9.05x2.95x?", bedded in hard pinkish lime mortar.	Original or replacement of earlier wattle and daub infill?
East wall - external	Box-frame wattle and daub panel walling over 0.65m high stone foundation of rough lias coursing bedded directly onto clay [102]. Max 0.40m thick at base. Two tiers of 12 panels set on squared cill beam. Beam section 14x7cm. Panels 91x61cm. Daub a very chalky lime mortar. Squared wood frames, 9x9cm section. Shallow nailed square jointing. One panel is a shuttered opening (unglazed). Two are boarded and one has wooden	Original build?

	weather boarding.	
West wall - external	Box-frame wattle and daub panel walling over 0.77m high stone foundation of rough lias coursing bedded directly onto clay [102]. Max 0.40m thick at base. Two tiers of 12 panels set on squared cill beam. Pegged beam, section 14x7cm. Panels 91x61cm. Daub a very chalky lime mortar. Squared wood frames, 9x9cm section. Shallow nailed square jointing. Occasional panels are shuttered openings (unglazed). Two panels have wooden weather boarding. Doorway to south end encompassing 3 panels width, c 1.80m high. Wooden doors hung on tapering wrought iron hinges.	Original build?
External floor surface	Yellow brick floor to north of building. Bricks handmade, very hard, 8.9x4.3x3.15", unmortared, aligned north-south. Bedded directly onto [102]. Underlies topsoil [100].	Abuts and post-dates building
North wall - internal	As external wall.	Original build?
North gable - internal	9 courses two bricks wide, below 21 courses, 1 brick wide, to apex. 2 vertical buttresses, two bricks wide, 8 courses high below horizontal beam to hold upper purlins. Red handmade brick in sandy fabric. Whitewashed.	Replacement of earlier wattle and daub infill?
South wall - internal	Two cupboards to east and west sides. c 1.15m above floor. Dimensions 0.35m deep, 0.61m wide, 0.44m high. East lintel of wood. West lintel of decorated molded plaster over stone. Red brick jambs as on north and south external elevations. Otherwise as external wall.	Original features?
South gable - internal	9 courses two bricks wide, below 21 courses, 1 brick wide, to apex. 2 vertical buttresses, two bricks wide, 8 courses high below horizontal beam to hold upper purlins. Red handmade brick in sandy fabric. Whitewashed.	Replacement of earlier wattle and daub infill?
East wall - internal	As external wall.	Original build
West wall - internal	As external wall.	Original build
Cider press	Upper beam, squared, 0.44x0.39x2.89m, on iron reinforced timber frame. Two vertical screws with vertical compressor bars. One extant square wood compressor tray; maximum 1.08m <sup>2</sup> , to fit 0.88m <sup>2</sup> brackets with blocks. Set on a 0.33m high, 2.82m long, 1.10m wide brick base. Bricks mixed red and yellow, hand and machine made, in ?Portland cement. Enamelled ceramic trough to north, set into floor, frost cracked hard red fabric with occasional sand and chalk inclusions, stamped on lip, '1334'.	Original fixture?

Internal floor surface	Large roughly squared grey lias flagstone slabs. Largely obscured by soil and debris. Floor space maximum 9.30x6.10m.	Original surface?
Roof and frame	King post trusses off heavy tie beam, carrying ridge purlin. Inclined struts between king post and principal rafters of ash. Joists squared; section c 15x20cm; not reused: that to north has bark adhering. Purlins very roughly hewn; not reused. Ash wood frame affixed with mixture of pegs, bolts and nails. Covered by 19 <sup>th</sup> century machine-made red-yellow tiles. c 45° pitch. Collapsed on south-west side.	Original timbers, tile replaced.

### Description and discussion

The trench excavated around the south, west and north sides of the building revealed a loose topsoil [100], containing occasional post-medieval debris, overlying a shallow subsoil, [101], above the natural matrix of yellow-grey clay, [102]. No archaeological features, horizons or finds were identified. A single yellow brick floor was recorded, abutting the north wall (as above) and directly overlying the clay.

The building (WSM 30729; Fig. 4 and Plates 1-16) comprises three bays, with a ground plan of 10.10x6.90m. It is orientated north-south, with a pitched tile roof and walls of varied construction (see above). It is accessed via a yard to the west and is abutted by a brick lean-to to the north and a type 1 Worcestershire cow house to the south (Peters 1981, 69).

The press itself (Fig. 6 and Plates 10-11) lay to the south end of the building. It comprised a massive upper beam on an iron re-enforced timber frame with two vertical screws set on a brick base. Both horizontal compressor bars and the east wood press tray are extant. The enamelled trough lies adjacent to the north, bedded into the floor. A number of brackets and blocks were noted to one side (Plate 12). They are square, with chamfered internal corners to fit onto the compressor tray. The base comprises both handmade and machine made bricks, bedded in Portland cement. It is clearly therefore either of or has been rebuilt in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The roof joists are determined not to have been previously used in another building (Plate 16). The frame was secured with a mix of wooden pegs, iron bolts and nails, indicating that it has undergone alteration and repair during its lifetime. A sample was taken from one of the main tie beams for dendrochronological analysis. However the wood was determined to be of ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*; pers comm Liz Pearson), and was unsuitable as there is at present no post-medieval tree-ring chronology of ash (English Heritage 1998, 12).

The horizontal timbers between the tiers of the panels in the east and west walls are jointed with nails, whereas the uprights are affixed to the cill beam with wooden pegs. Thus the horizontals are may be later replacements. The panelling was noted to have originally been whitewashed, then painted orange, and finally painted a third time pale yellow-fawn.

There is no indication that the brick in the north external corners and associated with the cupboards in the south internal wall are later inserts, although the whole building may have been repointed thus masking any alteration. Although the bricks in the gable-ends are handmade and support the purlins it has been conjectured that they are a replacement of earlier wattle and daub infill.

There were no fixtures or fittings indicative of earlier or alternative use of the building (Plates 13-14). Nor was there any evidence for a cider mill (as distinct from the press) within or adjacent to the building. There was no indication of earlier structures, horizons or deposits within the groundworks

external to the building. Infact the natural clay was identified directly beneath a shallow subsoil and topsoil containing modern debris.

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## Conclusions

The exact date of the building is unclear – vernacular building styles frequently continued for very long periods after later innovations had been introduced elsewhere. The mixed building styles within the structure is evidence of this. It can however be considered to be of late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century origin, on the basis of the 1808 Inclosure Plan, which does indicate a building on the site. This is indicated on a slightly different alignment, but this may be simply due to inaccuracy on the part of the cartographer. Unfortunately the possibility of dendrochronological analysis has been discounted.

The present building is of a single phase (excluding the roof tiles). The brick dressing and brick gable ends are considered to be part of the original build as they are integral and structural features and particularly as there is no indication of alteration. A caveat to this is the possibility of wholesale repointing which would disguise and mask any changes.

The building was probably constructed as part of late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century farmstead, and its original function is unclear, though it does not appear to have been a barn or cartshed. It was in use as part of a smithy, which occupied the site in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The cider press itself is considered to be of 20<sup>th</sup> century date. Archaeological observation of deposits in the immediate vicinity of the building revealed no additional useful evidence about its use. Further research into the documentary record may reveal more.

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## Publication summary

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service 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 recording project was undertaken on behalf of Elder Project Management Ltd at 'The Cider Mill', Aldington, Worcestershire (NGR: 0639 4410; HER ref. WSM32297). The exact date of the building is unclear, although on the basis of cartographic evidence it can be considered as of late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century origin. Unfortunately the possibility of dendrochronological analysis has been discounted. The building was part of a probable late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century farmstead, although its exact original function is unclear. It was used later as part of a smithy, which occupied the site in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The surviving cider press inside the building is considered to be of 20<sup>th</sup> century date.*

*The present structure is of three bays and is a single phase of mixed building styles, comprising rough coursed lias dwarf walls to either side with wood framed panel infill, and brick gable ends. The roof frame comprises a king post truss off a heavy ash tie beam.*

*No earlier structures, archaeological horizons or deposits were identified within the groundworks and there was no indication of an associated cider mill.*

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## Archive

Fieldwork progress records AS2	2
Photographic records AS3	1
Colour transparency photographs	12
Black and white photographs	21
Context number catalogue AS5	1
Scale Drawings	2
Computer disks	1

The project archive is intended to be placed at:                      Worcestershire County Museum  
    Hartlebury Castle, Hartlebury  
    Near Kidderminster  
    Worcestershire DY11 7XZ  
    01299 250416

telephone

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## Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Mark Begley and Colin Davies (Elder Project Management Ltd) and Mike Glyde (Worcestershire County Council Planning Archaeologist). The project was managed by Derek Hurst.

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