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RYECOTE CHAPEL, GREAT HASELEY, OXON - WATCHING BRIEF

SP 60 SE

Introduction

A watching brief was undertaken by the Oxford Archaeological Unit, on behalf of English Heritage, at Ryecote Chapel, Great Haseley (Grid Ref. SP667047 approx.) during the excavation of a trench for a fire hydrant main. The pipe-trench was dug across the field south of the Chapel, breaching the churchyard boundary, and terminating in a small pit for the fire hydrant just inside the boundary hedge. The site was visited on March 12th (due to the reported presence of burials in the southern field), and again on March 13th, after the trench had been excavated to completion. The watching brief was undertaken with the full co-operation of the contractor, D F Long.

Results

The pipe-trench was 9" (23 cm) wide and about 1 m deep, while the fire hydrant pit was 0.7 x 0.8 m square and also 1 m deep. The trench was excavated by machine, except on the occasion bones were encountered, and in the section inside the churchyard, where excavation was undertaken by hand. The soil was a uniform brown silty clay, about 0.5 m deep, over a lighter yellowish brown silt.

Nothing of archaeological significance was found. Three groups of bones discovered 10 - 15 m from the boundary hedge turned out to be those of an animal or animals (probably cow). About 20 m from the hedge the pipe-trench had disturbed building rubble of brick and tile (probably 18th century). There was no trace of an 'in situ' structure.

Comment on results

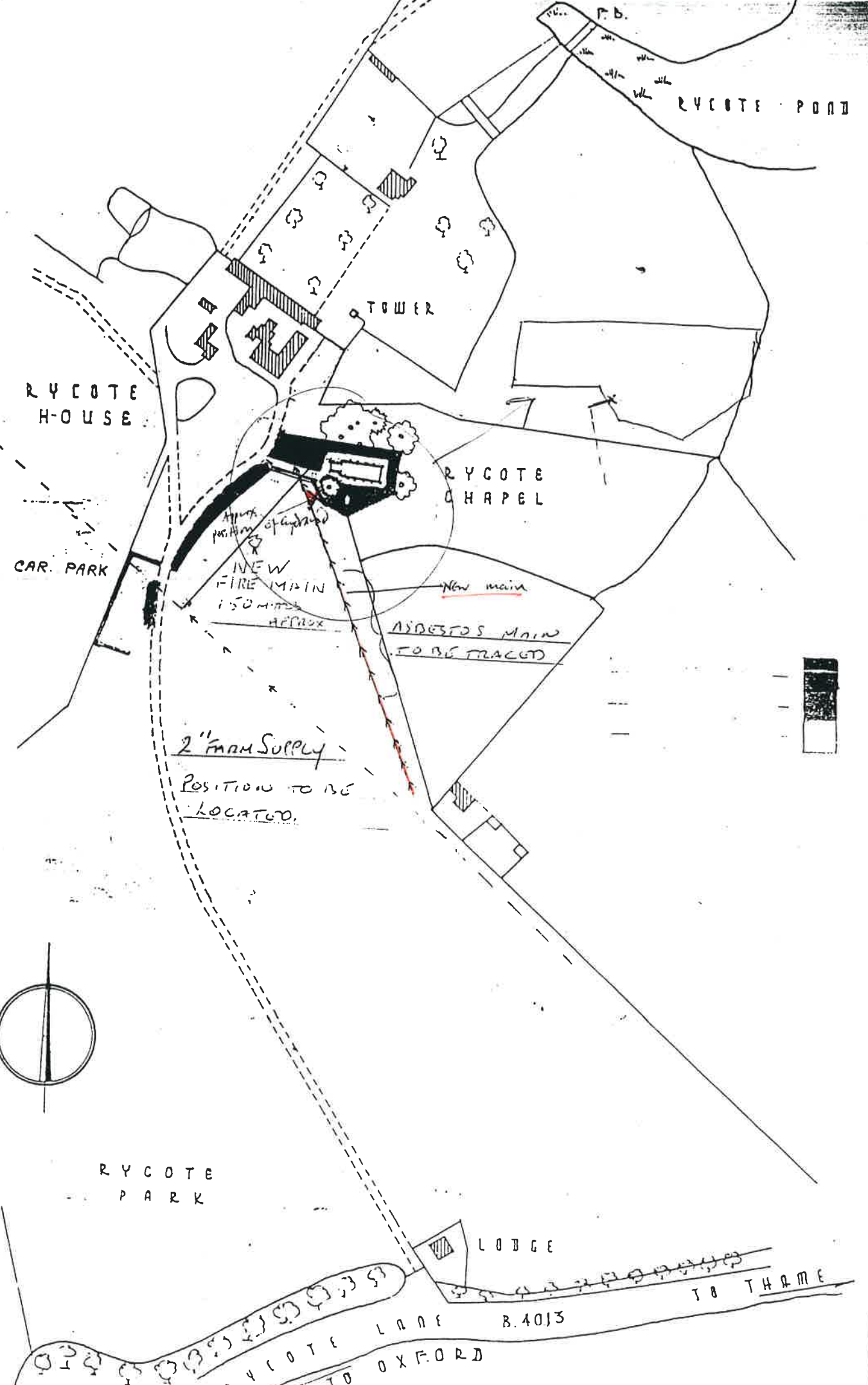
While no archaeological material or features relating to Ryecote Chapel or its antecedents were found, the limited nature of the ground works and the conditions under which observation and recording took place, mean that these results should be treated accordingly. In this regard, the following points can be noted:

- The schedule of work involved pipe-laying and backfilling close behind the excavation of the trench, such that, at any one time only a small section of trench could be inspected. Thus, only the areas immediately inside and outside the boundary hedge, and a further 10 m of trench to the south, were available for inspection at the times of visit.

- The extreme narrowness of the pipe-trench made detailed inspection of the side walls impossible.

- The fire hydrant pit (into which the fire hydrant had already been fitted at the time of inspection) had apparently been dug at the junction of an asbestos main, which ran along the inside of the hedge (rather than outside it as indicated on the plan.) It seems likely therefore that the ground in this particular area had been recently disturbed.

Andy Mudd Oxford Archaeological Unit March 1991



RYCOTE HOUSE

TOWER

RYCOTE POND

RYCOTE CHAPEL

CAR PARK

NEW FIRE MAIN
150 METERS
APPROX

New main

ASBESTOS MAIN
TO BE TRACED

2" FIRE SUPPLY
POSITION TO BE
LOCATED

RYCOTE PARK

LODGE

RYCOTE LANE B.4013
TO OXFORD TO THAME

ENLARGED FROM CIVIL ENGINEERING PLAN

BJS/1651