

Archaeological Field Unit

**An Archaeological Investigation at
The Old Rectory, Ufford,
Peterborough.**

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Commissioned by Mr & Mrs Peel

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The Old Rectory, Ufford,
Peterborough.**

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SUMMARY

Between the 5th March and the 14th of June 2001 the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council conducted an archaeological investigation at The Old Rectory, Ufford. The investigation entailed examination of floors within the foot-print of the hall prior to floor re-surfacing taking place and observation of service trench excavations. The investigation uncovered an oval-shaped drain under the stone floor of the utility room which on full excavation was found to have been truncated by the construction of the Hall's west wing. Investigation of the drain produced no artefactual evidence, thus, achieving an accurate date for the construction of the drain proved to be impossible. However, it is possible that the drain was constructed during the fourteenth century which would make it contemporary with the initial construction of the Hall.

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(TF 0938 0403)

1 INTRODUCTION

Between the 5th March and the 14th June several visits were made by staff of the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council to The Old Rectory, Ufford, Peterborough. The object of the visits was to undertake an archaeological investigation of the floor layers in both the utility room and to the west of the central passage together with monitoring the excavation of both gas and drain trenches (Fig. 1). The work was carried out to satisfy a planning condition in advance of refurbishment.

2 SITE BACKGROUND

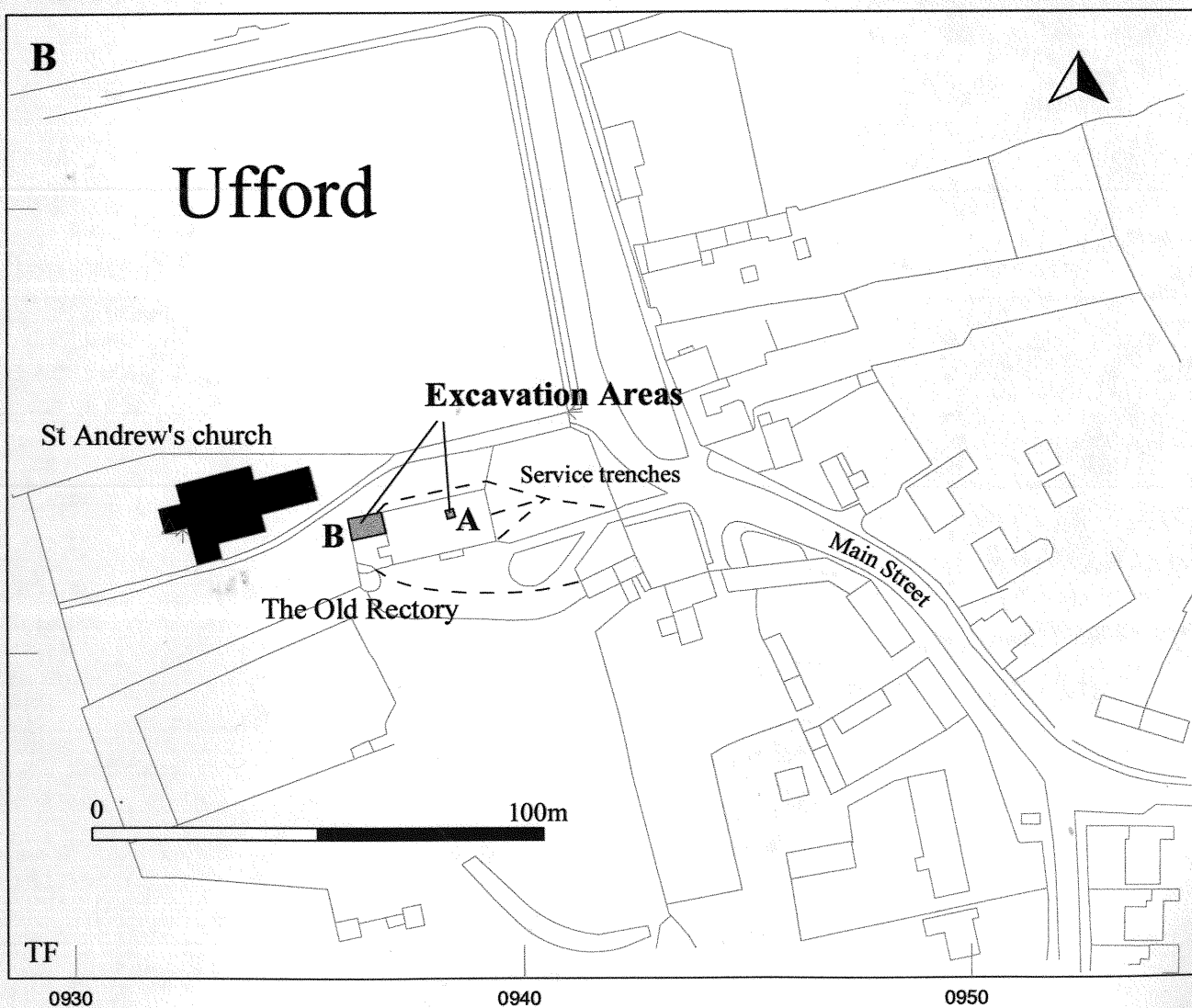
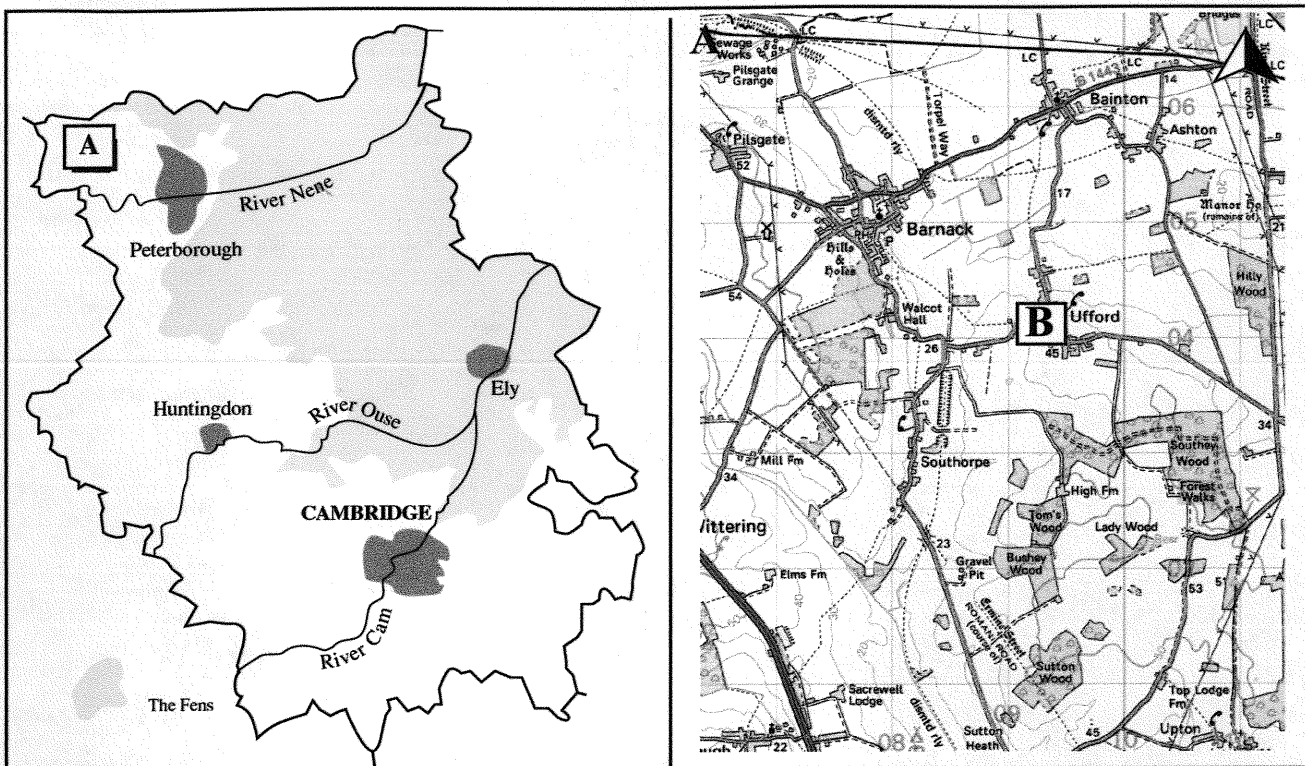
Planning Background

The proposed development entails the complete refurbishment of The Old Rectory (TF 0938 0403) and associated groundworks for a new gas main and drainage trenches. Given that the site is located near the historic St. Andrews Church (below), the possibility of there being archaeological remains determined the need for an archaeological investigation.

The brief was produced by Ben Robinson of Peterborough City Council Archaeological Services (PCCAS), Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery (Brief for Archaeological Investigation, 30/01/00).

Topography and Geology

The Old Rectory is located on high ground (41.33m OD), overlooking Main Street, Ufford. The local geology consists of Blisworth Limestone (Sheet 157, British Geological Survey 1984).



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Figure 1 Location map

3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Evidence for prehistoric activity within the immediate vicinity of the village is inconclusive. However, there are two sets of cropmarks (PCCSMR 09888, linear marks and PCCSMR 09892, rectilinear enclosure) which, despite a lack of artefactual evidence, have potential for being prehistoric in date especially when considering their shape in plan.

Evidence of Roman activity consisted of Roman occupation debris including pottery sherds, a bowl and a silver spoon (PCCSMR 00104, PCCSMR 00098).

As with the lack of evidence for prehistoric activity the same can be said for the post-Roman period until the thirteenth century when construction work on St. Andrew's Church commenced (PCCSMR 00101). However, within the building fabric of St. Andrew's church are fragments of early twelfth century stonework which may suggest an earlier church existed on the site. Alternatively, the stonework may have been imported thus negating the potential for an earlier building on the site.

The fourteenth century sees the construction of the original Old Rectory, located 30m to the south-east of St. Andrew's Church. Remains of the original building take the form of a single hall, aligned east/west; and split into three equally sized bays. The layout of the fourteenth century hall is not clear due to extensive rebuilding and refurbishment during the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Barson and Bond 2001).

The middle of the eighteenth century saw the completion of Ufford Hall (PCCSMR 00103a), traditionally thought to be the location of Uphall, known as the Manor of Ufford during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Located approximately 500m to the north-west of the village are the largely robbed-out remains of Downhall, a post-medieval manor dating to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

4 METHODOLOGY

Initially two areas were targeted for investigation within the boundaries of the house (Fig. 1). The first area (A) consisted of a small test pit, 1m sq., which

was hand excavated. The second area (B) was the utility room where the whole of the floor area was hand excavated after the stone slabs had been lifted.

The two areas were photographed and base planned. Once identified, features were excavated, planned (at 1:50) and recorded using the AFU's standard recording system. Sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20 and excavated features photographed.

A number of service trenches located around the outside of the house were excavated using a 0.30m toothed bucket. Each of the trenches was photographed and appropriate measurements were taken.

5 RESULTS

The first area (A) to be investigated was located within the room east of the Old Rectory's central passage. Initial investigation indicated traces of an earlier floor. However, on excavation the possible floor turned out to be redeposited limestone and concrete which was acting as infill, supporting the *in-situ* flagstone floor presently in use. Removal of the limestone and concrete revealed a sandy silt layer which was excavated to a depth of 0.30m (full depth of the sandy silt was not ascertained). At which point it was considered well below any disturbance that may be caused through the lifting of the old floor and laying of a new floor. No artefacts were recovered from the test pit.

The second area (B) was located in the utility room and covered an area 6.27m x 3.25m. Initial investigation of the floor was undertaken by Ben Robinson (PCCAS). A stone-lined drain was partially exposed. As a consequence of the initial investigation further work was carried out which involved the removal of all remaining flagstones and the underlying sandy silt. On removal of the sandy silt the full extent of the drain system was exposed. In plan the drain was sub-oval in shape with its north-eastern end truncated by a c. seventeenth century wall (Fig. 2).

Removal of a number of the drain capping stones revealed (Fig. 2) a square-sectioned drain lined on both sides with hand-cut limestone blocks with the base being of natural limestone bedrock. Excavation and removal of the limestone blocks showed that a channel was cut into the natural limestone

Area B

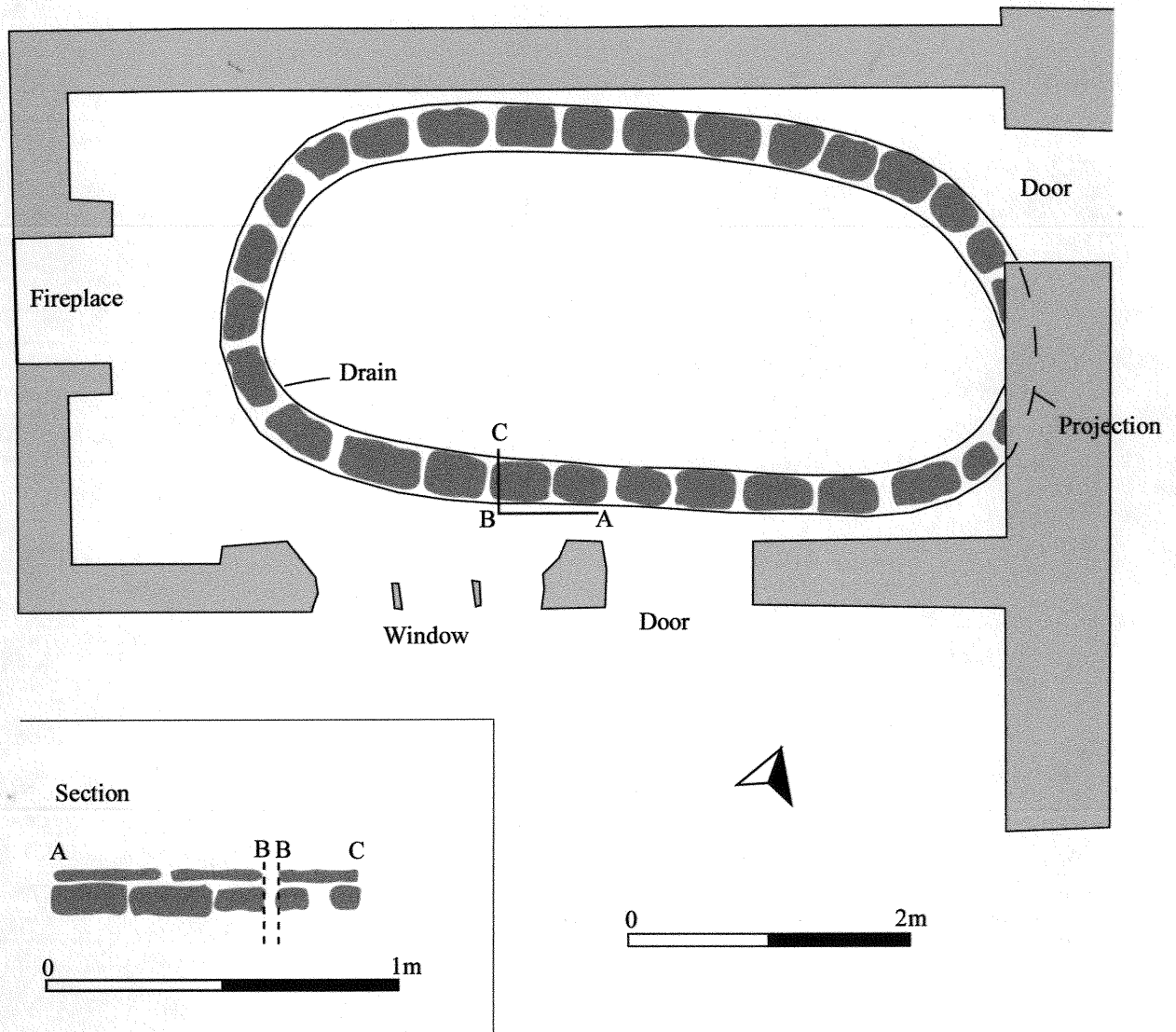


Figure 2 Stone drain, plan and section

within which the man-made drain was laid. As well as the excavated portion of the drain a number of capping stones were lifted in order to recover any artefacts that may have been deposited during use of the drain. However, this proved to be unsuccessful, and as a consequence a usage date for the drain could not be obtained.

Each of the service trenches excavated proved to be devoid of any archaeological features or artefacts. The reason for the absence of any archaeological evidence would appear to be the result of ground disturbance as part of a landscaping programme. The depth of topsoil exposed in the drainage trenches ranged between 0.25m at the eastern end of the site and 0.30m at the north-western corner of the house. Removal of the topsoil revealed disturbed ground consisting of limestone blocks, sand and subsoil the depth of which ranged between 0.95m at the eastern end of the site and 0.64m at the north-western corner of the house, when removed the natural geology consisting of Blisworth Limestone was revealed.

Excavation of the curvilinear gas main trench located on the southern side of the house also revealed no archaeological evidence, again due to landscaping. The trench-section revealed a surface layer consisting of sandy gravel 0.10m in depth, on removal a layer of re-deposited limestone blocks and sand was revealed, which on removal exposed the natural geology consisting of Blisworth Limestone.

6 DISCUSSION / CONCLUSION

The aims of this study were to highlight the potential for preservation of archaeological remains on the subject site and to identify the nature of any remains that may be affected by the proposed development.

The development involves considerable refurbishment of the existing building together with the excavation of service trenches.

A key research issue was to determine the extent and nature of medieval activity (see above). Hand-excavation of a small portion of the floor, within the boundaries of what is considered to be the original fourteenth century hall revealed no archaeological evidence associated with earlier floor layers or pre-

fourteenth century building remains. Removal of the large flagstones and compacted silts from the floor of the utility room revealed a sub-oval drain which had been truncated during the construction of the seventeenth century west wall (see above). Function and date for the construction of the possible drain is somewhat unclear; due to the lack of datable evidence and also truncation which has removed essential evidence.

Observation of the service trenches revealed no archaeological remains, only large amounts of soil re-deposited during a landscaping scheme.

The apparent lack of structural and artefactual remains recovered from the investigation both internally and externally could possibly suggest the location of The Old Rectory was not occupied prior to the fourteenth century. Although there is also the possibility that any earlier occupational evidence was removed with the construction of the Rectory.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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