

Archaeological Field Unit

Archaeology at The Hall, Burrough Green

T Way

1998

Cambridgeshire County Council

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Archaeology at The Hall, Burrough Green

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INTRODUCTION

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at The Hall, Burrough Green (TL 635556) by the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council on the 14th September 1998. The work was undertaken for Cambridge Courts and involved a single site visit.

The proposed development comprised the construction of a tennis court 34.77m x 16.47m (with associated easement of c.2m), adjacent to The Hall. The construction necessitated turf stripping and plant excavation to a depth of 0.15m.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND GEOLOGY

The site of the proposed tennis courts lies on the western edge of the historic village of Burrough Green adjacent to the post medieval manorial site of The Hall (SMR 07376) and within 300 hundred metres of moated site (SMR 01161). The site lies within an area of pasture which has been recorded since the 17th century as associated with the park and garden landscape of The Hall. The site lies on boulder clay.

A large house (also known as The Hall) was constructed on the site in c.1575 incorporating elements of an earlier house which lay either on or near the site. This 16th century house probably extended the full width of the surviving walled forecourt; by 1665 it was recorded as containing 26 hearths in the Hearth Tax returns. Extensive gardens lay both within the area of the forecourt and immediately to the east and south-east. The main 'front' of the present house, still with central doorway, may mark an axial design which extended into the garden forecourt and towards the moated site (VCH vol. vi. 141-146). However, records from the 17th century appear to demonstrate access via avenues to the south in a similar position to the present track.

By 1670 the House was said to be large, but ruinous and inconveniently positioned (VCH vol. vi. 141-146).

The present building largely dates in appearance and construction to the 19th century, when it was substantially reduced by the removal of the side wings (still visible on the 1837 Tithe Map (CUL Maps bb. 53(1) 01.13) and converted to a farmhouse. The main building still incorporates many elements of the earlier houses on the site.

The specific area of the proposed tennis court appears to have been under pasture/grass land since at least the 17th century. An Estate Map of 1674 (CRO 101/P1) shows both details of the Hall and its immediate surroundings. The specific area of tennis courts is shown as falling within the area of 'Home Close' an irregular-shaped pasture close of some 23 acres. The area within the present walled garden is marked on this map as 'Lawn', whilst a rather irregular shape to the immediate north west (currently occupied by a pond) appears to be labelled '3rd demesne Orchard'. The area of the moated site was also marked as 'demesne Orchard' in the late 17th century¹.

By the date of the Tithe Apportionment in 1837 (CUL Maps bb.53(1) 01.13) the layout of the immediate area was little changed, although some of the sub-divisions in the area of the pond are not shown and the moat is not marked as such. The area of 'Home Close' was now described as 'The Park' and included just over 17 acres. To the immediate east of the church a small rectangular area was recorded as 'The Great

¹ It is interesting to note that the the moated site (SMR 01161) still contains very mature apple trees.

Garden'; the 'Great' probably being to distinguish it from the smaller walled garden in front of the house.

Immediately prior to development work the site was under pasture and formed part of a series of three paddocks for horses and cattle. Some very low relict earthworks could be seen within the area which possibly relate to previous access ways, whilst in the adjacent paddocks there are slight remains of relict ridge and furrow.

METHODOLOGY

Initial turf stripping took place to a depth of c.0.08m using tracked plant. Following this initial stripping examination of the area revealed no evidence for any archaeological material or artefacts. Further stripping down to the topsoil/subsoil junction then took place to a depth of about 0.15m.

RESULTS

No features were noted after the initial turf stripping. The area was then stripped again to subsoil level. The light brown clay-rich subsoil was low in organic component and there was a clear horizon between top and subsoil indicative of the use of the area as pasture/grazing over a considerable length of time.

After stripping to subsoil level an irregular area of gravel/broken brick approximately 2m wide was noted running diagonally across the area from the north-west corner towards the corner of the walled garden on the south-east. Examination of the brick and other building material fragments within this feature indicated that it was of a late (19th or 20th century) date and may relate to a trackway shown on the 1886 OS map of the site.

A photographic record was made during the course of the watching brief including overall shots of the possible trackway feature.

No artefacts were recovered despite thorough investigation of both stripped topsoil and the exposed subsoil.

CONCLUSIONS

The absence of any pre-19th century features appears consistent with the use of the site as pasture/lawn during the post medieval period. No features associated with 'garden archaeology' were recovered. Relict ridge and furrow in the surrounding area may suggest that at some time prior to the 16th century the area in the immediate vicinity of the site formed part of a cultivated area, however no indications of relict ridge and furrow were found at subsoil level within the immediate area of excavation.

Although no pre 19th century features were recovered within the limited depth of excavation undertaken in connection with the present development it should be noted that this does not preclude the possibility that archaeological remains predating the medieval period might exist on the site at a greater depth.

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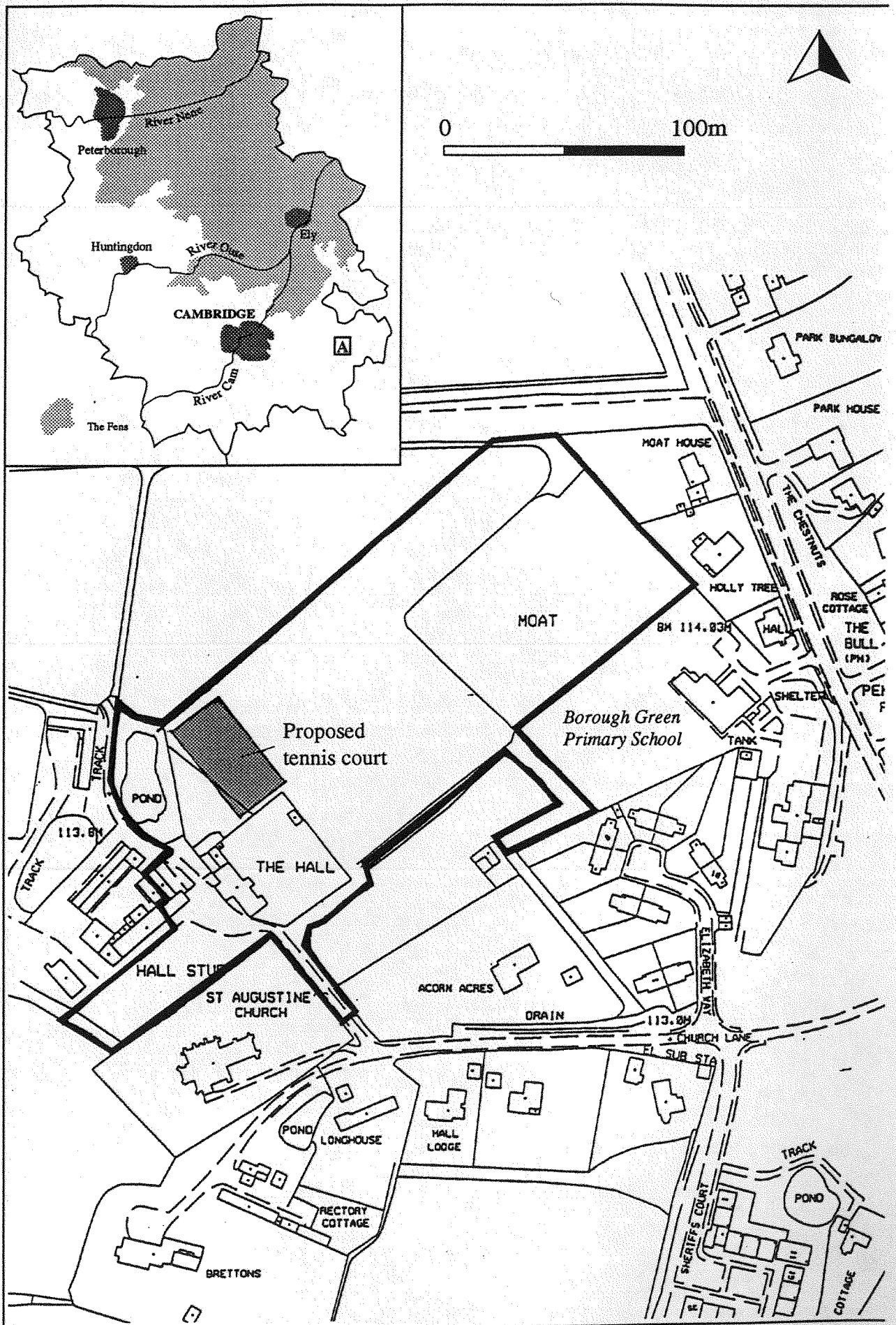


Figure Location plan



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