

CASTLERING ARCHAEOLOGY

LLAND TO THE REAR OF CHURCH COTTAGE

16 HIGH STREET

OVERTON

WREXHAM CBC

SJ 37310 41854

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

FEBRUARY 2013

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ABBREVIATIONS:

approx.	approximate
<i>bpgl</i>	<i>below present ground level</i>
<i>c.</i>	<i>circa</i>
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists

Every effort has been made to provide accurate information within this report. However Castlering Archaeology cannot be held responsible for any errors and inaccuracies contained therein.

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1. BACKGROUND

This short report contains the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken on land to the rear of Church Cottage, 16 High Street, Overton, during ground disturbing works in association with the construction of a new garage, as indicated in Fig. 1 *following*.

Church Cottage is a Grade II Listed building of early 17th century date standing on the east side of the High Street with the linear plot of land, on which the garage is to be built, extending eastwards alongside Dark Lane. The plot lies within the historic centre of the village, where the garden plots that extend to either side of the High Street are thought to be medieval in origin. The churchyard of St. Mary's Church is located on the south side of Dark Lane. While the present church is of 14th / 15th century origin, an earlier church may have existed on the site.

In view of the archaeological potential of the development site, a watching brief was made a condition of planning approval by Mark Walters, Curatorial Section, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, acting as adviser to Wrexham CBC planning department (Planning application No. P/2012/0730).

In January 2013, Castlering Archaeology was contracted by Mr and Mrs James Glover to undertake the archaeological work. A WSI was submitted and approved by Mark Walters, and the watching brief was undertaken on Tuesday February 12th 2013.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the archaeological watching brief are to ensure the works are carried out to the satisfaction of the archaeological curator and to secure the preservation by record of any archaeological remains or artefacts that may be encountered during the excavation.

3. WATCHING BRIEF METHODOLOGY

The watching brief was undertaken by the archaeological contractor, who is a Member of the Institute for Archaeologists, using proven archaeological techniques which comply with Guidelines and Codes of Conduct set out by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA); in particular the *Standard & Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (revised October 2008).

4. RESULTS OF THE WATCHING BRIEF

The plot lies on the north side of Dark Lane and the brick boundary wall to the lane was removed to provide access. Four footing trenches were excavated by a 3 tonne mechanical excavator to an approximate width of 0.5m and a depth of up to 1m, to accommodate the footings for the 5.8m square new build. The watching brief monitored the removal of >400mm of rich soft dark brown sandy humic topsoil (Context 1), which had clearly been well-cultivated in the past. In subsequent years, as the garden plot was altered, the topsoil has been re-distributed over the area of the proposed new build. In general Context 1 sealed an average of >300mm of mid-to light brown firm sandy clayey subsoil with charcoal flecks and small stone (Context 2), recorded primarily in the north, east and west trenches. Context 2 sealed a firmer and stickier mid-to light brown subsoil (Context 3), recorded particularly in the eastern and northern trenches, where Context 3 sealed brownish red sandy clay with fine stone (Context 4).

The northern trench was cut by a linear feature that crossed the footing trench in a north-south direction (Feature 'F1'; Plate 3). The feature was cut into the topsoil but below the overburden of topsoil that had been banked up against the modern concrete panelled fence, as seen in Plate 3 *following*. The feature measured 0.95m at the top and 0.5m at its base. The irregular semi-circular section of the feature extended to a maximum depth of 0.5m, where it cut into Context 2 and 3. The feature is interpreted as a possible ornamental hedgerow or similar garden feature of fairly modern date, rather than representing a boundary.

To the west of Feature 1, the topsoil was cut by a modern posthole (Feature 'F 2'; Plate 4), which may have been associated with a modern wooden structure. The posthole measured approximately 0.3m wide and was also clearly cut with a spade below the overburden of topsoil, as seen in Plate 4 *following*.

While no dating evidence directly associated with the features was retrieved, it can be assumed that both features are of 20th century date.

At the south end of the western trench, 1.6m of red brick wall was revealed in the east facing section (Plate 5 *following*). The wall was constructed in standard machine-cut red bricks laid with a hard lime-based mortar. The wall extended for approximately 0.62mbgl and appeared truncated at the surface. Continued excavation eastwards from the wall revealed disturbed ground that extended for approximately 4.3m throughout the width of the south trench. The disturbed ground comprised a moist homogenous mixed dark grey soil with mixed ash, brick, tile and slate fragments (Context 5). Two section of 10" diameter ceramic service drain were also recovered and none of the fragments of building material pre-date the late 19th century period.

The section of brick wall and the disturbed Context 5 appear to be roughly contemporaneous. Both the wall and Context 5 extended to a depth of 0.62 to 0.7mbgl, where they lay above a mid-to light brown clayey sandy matrix with gravelly stone that formed the base of the south trench (Context 6). The brickwork suggests the section of wall may have been associated with an outhouse of late 19th / 20th century date. The outhouse or its predecessor (Fig. 3 *following*) may have been the site of a 'bottom of the garden privy lavatory' and, although no outlet was seen in the section of exposed brick wall, such an outlet would explain the composition of Context 5. Waste was generally directed from the rear of the privy to a compost pit where additional rubbish was often placed. The presence of a compost heap at this location would also explain the fine grade of the topsoil on site. In more recent times, the lavatory presumably fell out of use and the unfirm ground to the rear was made-up with fragments of building waste.

No other features were revealed other than those referred to in the text.

5. FINDS

The main artefact type collected from the site was pottery, which ranged in date from the 19th to the 20th century together with 19th / 20th century building materials. The ceramic material was recovered entirely from the topsoil and the small assemblage was typical of mass produced domestic wares, comprising decorated and undecorated white earthenware, typical of everyday tableware. Surprisingly, no earlier ceramic material was recovered.

6. DISCUSSION

The excavations, while interesting, were disappointing in archaeological terms. The archaeological evidence is clearly dated to the recent past.

Within the limits of the excavation, it was not possible to confirm the length or function of linear Feature 2. The composition of the topsoil indicates that it is likely to be a modern garden feature. The boundary division between High Street and Church Lane properties, as indicated on the 1838 Tithe and 1871 OS maps (Figs 3 & 4 *following*), is clearly further to the south and these alignments can still be seen in modern property boundaries.

The watching brief recorded the ground disturbance possibly associated with a red brick outhouse / privy. While the section of wall appears to be in the position of the south wall of the small structure recorded by the Tithe in 1838, the brickwork on site confirms a later date. The brickwork may be the surviving evidence of the south wall of the small structure recorded by the OS in 1871, as seen on Fig. 4 following, and the 1838 record suggests a likely predecessor.

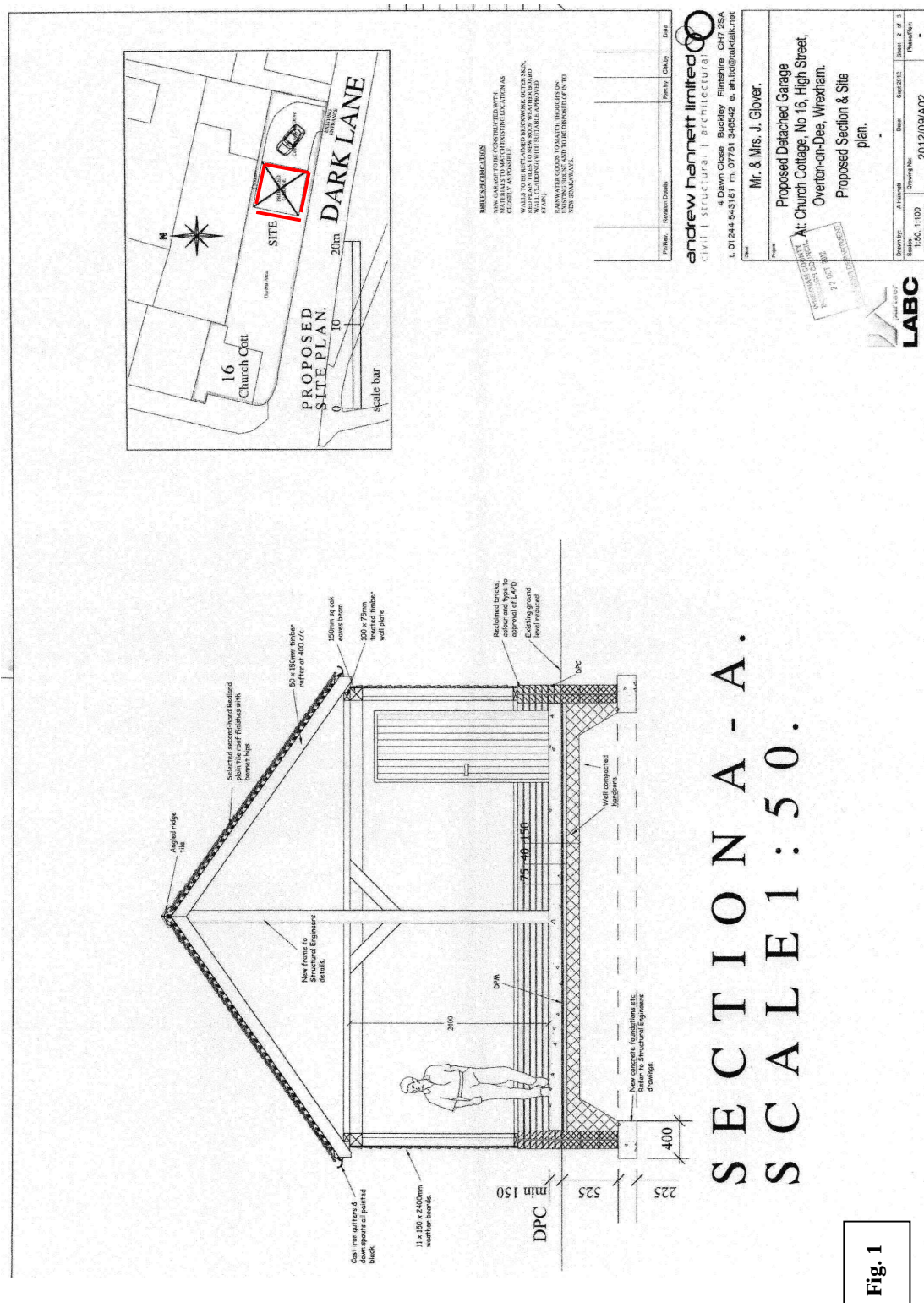
No pre-19th century evidence has been recovered during the current works.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Castlering Archaeology would like to thank Mr and Mrs Glover, the present owners, for contracting the archaeological work and the ground-workers on site for their full co-operation.

8. SOURCES

1838 Tithe map
1873 OS 25" map, Flintshire Sheet 22.13



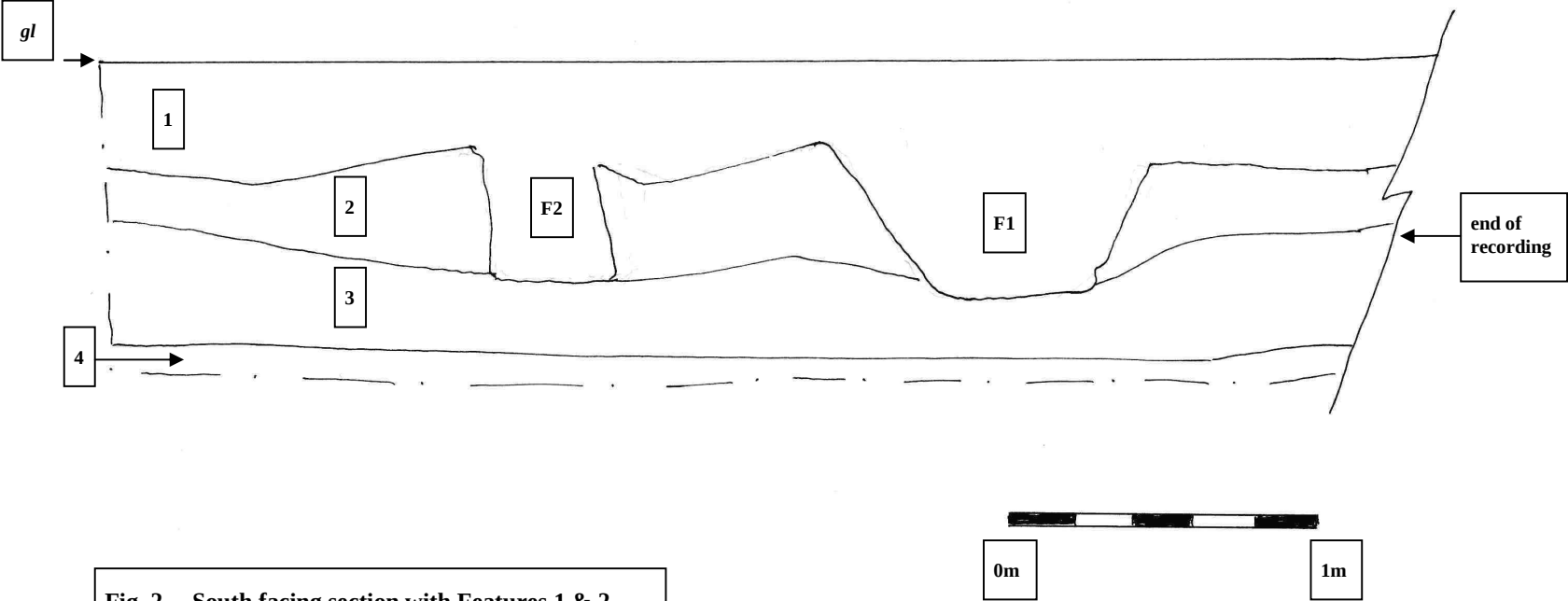


Fig. 2 South facing section with Features 1 & 2
Scale 1:20



Plate 1: Rear of No. 16 High Street, excavation of footings viewed from the east



Plate 2: Final extent of excavation, viewed from the east



Plate 3: North trench, Feature 1



Plate 4: North trench, Feature 2



Plate 5: Section of brick wall, viewed from the south

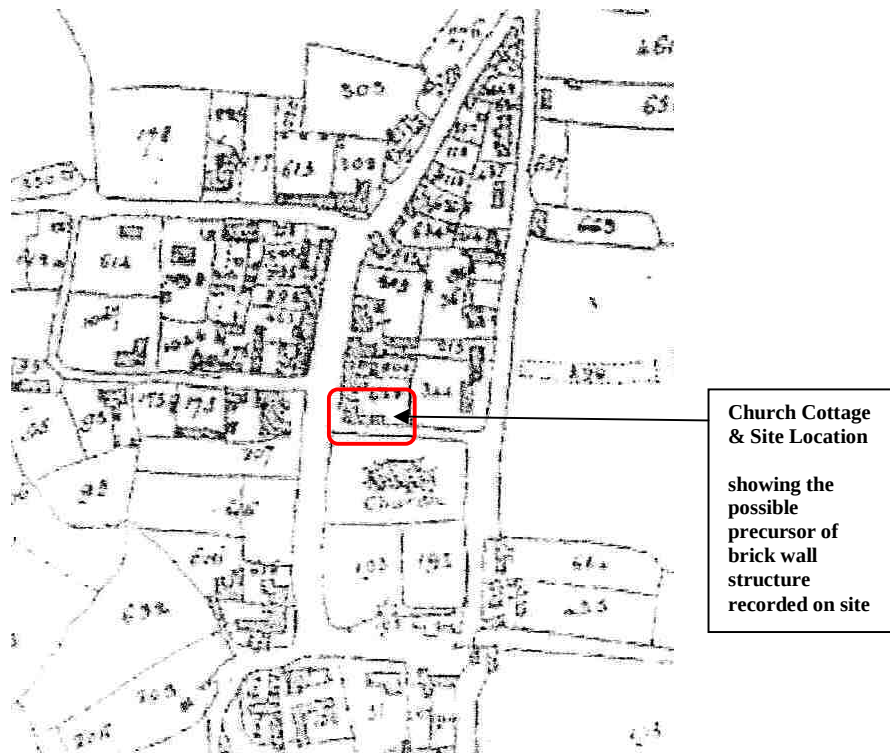


Fig. 3 Extract from 1838 Tithe map

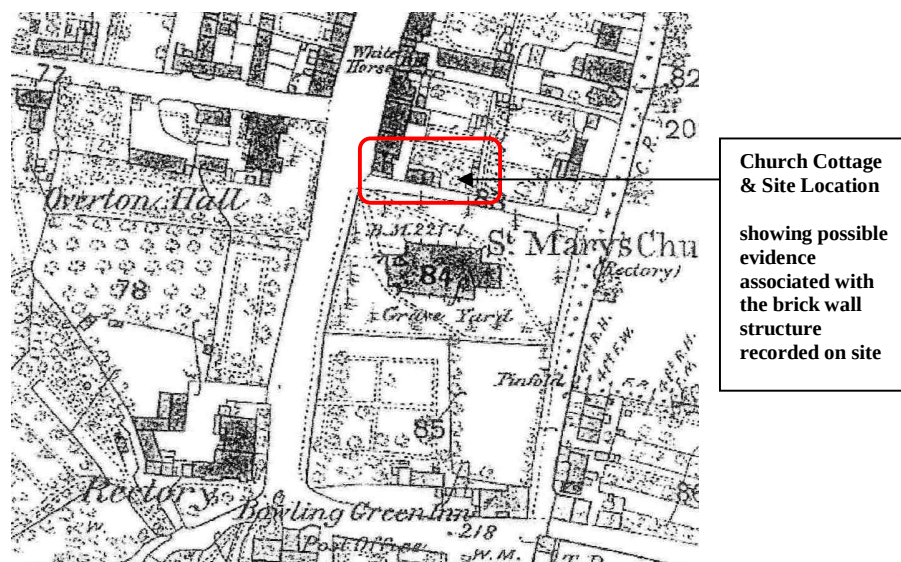


Fig. 4 Extract from 1871 OS map