

# Gatley Hill evaluation April 2017



Drawing of Gatley Hill Farm by Frank Mitchell from an original painting by Peter Burrows

(Mitchell & Mitchell 1980, 15)

South Manchester Archaeological Research Team working with Norman Redhead and Cheadle & Gatley U3A Archaeological Group were asked to carry out test pitting on the site of the 16<sup>th</sup> century farm buildings highlighted in the painting above. Whilst this image does show an element of artistic licence, does indicate the possible locations and structure of the original buildings. This was to establish the level of archaeological remains of these buildings, with a view to submitting an application for funding to carry out a community excavation adjacent to Scholes Park. The evaluation took place over two days in April 2017 and further work is scheduled for March 2018 where it will be necessary to encroach the boundary of Scholes Park where with reference to OS maps there is evidence of the three additional farm buildings associated to the initial dig which was set to reveal the barn/warehouse as seen in (Fig 1). This building was established as the best initial excavation option due to its accessibility and proximity to the adjacent car park. This would cause little disruption to the Scholes Park public visitors and was the most open space of the buildings within the potential remit of this evaluation. The three other buildings viable for evaluation are located within the park boundary and sit to the south/east of the warehouse structure.

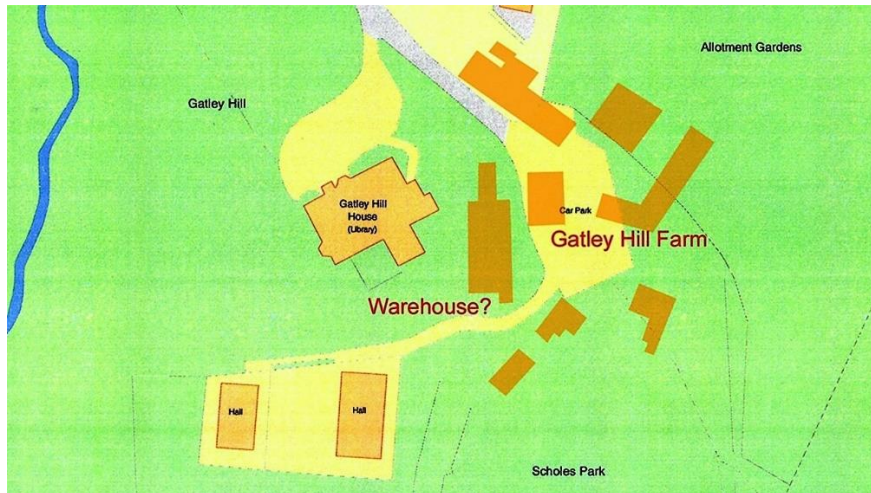


Fig 1:- showing the warehouse/barn located to the centre of the based on OS mapping of 1907.  
Scale 1:1250

## Historical notes on the chapel

Gatley Hill was a farm which dated back to at least the 16th century. It was also known as Holt Farm and under that name is documented in the Northenden parish register which lists Elizabeth Ryle in 1585 and Reynold Ryle in 1588, both of 'Holt, Gatley'. In the mid-18th century the property was acquired by Thomas Alcock. On a site adjacent to the farm, he built Gatley Hill House. This Georgian mansion, which was later extended on the east, still stands and is used as a library (Ills. 7.4.5 & 6). The house remained the residence of the Alcocks until the 1870s. Among its occupants, in the early to mid-19th century, was John Alcock, cotton manufacturer. From the late 18th century onwards the farm was occupied by the Worthington family, who in the 1780s and 1790s are also described as tanners. In 1935 the estate was acquired by Cheadle and Gatley UDC and the farm buildings were demolished.

In 1821 Gatley Hill House was described as including warehouses, as well as outbuildings and gardens.<sup>2</sup> The tithe award of 1839 also mentions a warehouse,<sup>3</sup> and this was probably a substantial building which stood to the east of the house (Ill. 7.4.1). Gatley Hill Farm in 1821 by contrast was listed as comprising a house and outbuilding. To the east of the possible warehouse, the tithe award shows six buildings which at this period appear to have included outbuildings to Gatley Hill House as well as the buildings of Gatley Hill Farm (Ill. 7.4.2). To the south of the warehouse the tithe award also shows a small square building. The field to the south of this was known as Dove House Croft and it is possible that this building was a dovecote which gave rise to this name. The last structure had been removed by 1872,<sup>4</sup> but with this exception the early buildings are still shown on OS mapping of the 20th century.

A painting of Gatley Hill Farm shows several buildings which include a two-storey farmhouse and a barn, but it is difficult to relate these various structures to the historical mapping.

## **Archaeological Potential and Suitability**

The site of the possible warehouse now lies within a grass-covered area between Gatley Hill House on the west, a public carpark on the east and a footpath on the south. A lamp post stands close to the north-west corner of the site.

To the south of the carpark and path, a grass-covered area at the northern end of Scholes Park includes the site of the three southernmost buildings on the site and, to the west of these, may also include the site of the possible dovecote. The site of the most easterly of these buildings is crossed by a path. This southern area also has some peripheral tree cover.

Considered together, these several sites have the potential for a medium-sized excavation, although trenching would need to take into account any services and may also be restricted by tree roots.

Historical notes and potential sustainability sourced from University of Manchester Archaeological Unit June 2009 & 1 Mitchell & Mitchell 1980, 15. 2 Survey and Valuation of the Township of Stockport Etchells, 1821 (Stockport Local Heritage Library). 3 CRO EDT 371. 4 OS Cheshire 1:2500 sheet XIX.5, 1872.

## **Methodology**

This would consist of hand trenching 1m x 1m<sup>3</sup>, and to be extended when deemed necessary. Hand trowelling after the initial de-turfing. Recording by photography and ranging poles and written context sheets. All trenches to be back filled and re-turfed on completion.

## **Trench excavation reports**

### **Trench 1**

This trench was located central to the site with a view to establishing wall features of the warehouse structure and possible internal wall features. The conclusions were internal wall structures possibly stalls. North west south east orientated wall three course brick feature

evident in the top left of the excavation, little evidence of bonding substantiating the probability this is an internal wall/floor feature as seen in (Fig 2)



Fig 2:- Showing north west, south east wall/floor surface with return. Trench 1

## Trench 2

This trench revealed an external cobbled floor surface to the east of the main structure, cobbles were large and ovoid in shape measuring from 5cm x 3cm – 6cm x 8cm, evenly spaced and level for a solid floor surface see (Fig 3)



Fig 3:- Cobbled floor surface situated to the east of the main structure. Trench 2



### **Trench 3**

Located as were all trenches on the grassy area adjacent to the car park and located over the potential remains of the warehouse/barn structure of the old farm. This trench revealed evidence of a cobbled courtyard and stone sett kerbing for what we established was the courtyard to the south of the warehouse structure. The cobbles were ovoid in shape water washed and on average 10cm in length and 6cm in width. The sett size 6cm x 6cm, with handmade brick floor laid edge on 7cm x 21c. This trench was extended to 2m x 2m to allow further investigation of the relationship between the various surfaces found in the initial excavation Fig 4:-



Fig 4:- West facing image of trench 3 showing the cobbles and setts, with a brick floor surface to the south west edge. Trench 3

### **Trench 4**

This trench was located to the north of the site and revealed the most significant archaeology in relation to the warehouse/barn. It was established that we had several levels of archaeology. The north east corner of the warehouse/barn was established. Also revealed were two external floor surfaces. These consisted of irregular cobbles ranging in size from 5cm x 5cm to 7cm x 6cm, laid adjacent to a stone sett floor 6cm x 6cm. (Fig 5)



Fig 5:- Cobbled external floor surface adjacent to stone sett's with the north east return of the main warehouse/barn feature trench 4

### Trench 5

This trench revealed an internal brick herring bone laid floor surface located centrally and to the east of the main structure. There wasn't any bonding evidence found, and they were laid south west, north east in relation to the main building. They were consistent and well laid providing a quality surface. Bricks measured 20cm x 7cm no depth measurement was available. (Fig 6)



Fig 6:- herring bone laid internal floor surface laid north east- south west

## **Trench 6**

This trench revealed a single course external brick wall, which was established was likely to be an outhouse/lean-to structure with little evidence of any bonding and was a later extension to the main building, located to the east side of the main structure. (Fig 7)



Fig 7:- single course external brick wall, probable lean-to structure constructed to the east of the main building

## **Conclusions**

In summary this initial investigation gave a good account of the level of archaeology that remains in relation to the warehouse/barn structure. This would suggest the viability of further investigative work going ahead within the boundary of Scholes Park, to establish the level of remains for three associated farm buildings still accessible for evaluation. Unfortunately, many of the other remaining buildings associated to the farm have been covered by subsequent buildings and/or car park hard standing surfaces, and are therefore inaccessible

I would like to thank the team from (SMART) South Manchester Archaeological Research Team for carrying out the work over the two days. In addition, I would like to thank Cheadle and Gatley U3A and Norman Redhead for their input and research work for this evaluation

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