

NEWBURY'S OLDEST KNOWN BUILDING DATED TO ABOUT 1436

Newbury Town Council is pleased to announce that tree-ring dating has established the date of the oldest identified building in Newbury to be on or about 1436. The building is Bartholomew Manor and the adjoining Manor Cottage, which were constructed at the same time. Both buildings have been much altered, but enough smoke-blackened timbers were found to carry out a reliable dating. 1436 was during the reign of King Henry VI, before the Wars of the Roses.

This advances the date of the earliest identified building in Newbury by 40 years. The previous earliest known date was 1476, assigned by tree-ring dating in 2013 to 17-18 West Mills. This brings the total of Newbury buildings known to be medieval to three, the third being the Litten in Newtown Road.

Tree-ring dating (or dendrochronological analysis) is an established technique for dating the exact year that the timbers in a building were felled and incorporated in a building. The growth of a tree varies year by year, providing a unique pattern. Three core samples were taken and compared, and the process has sufficient rigour to assure of its reliability. It (and the earlier dating of 17-18 West Mills) were carried out by Dr Andy Moir of Tree-Ring Services, Micheldean www.tree-ring.co.uk who is an established specialist in the field.

During the medieval period Bartholomew Manor was the property of Sandleford Priory, which closed in the 15th century. Along with much other property in Newbury and Enborne, it became owned by St. George's Chapel at Windsor. In 1547 the Chapel agreed a lease to John Winchcombe II. On John Winchcombe's death in 1557, he left the lease to his grandson John with a life interest to his son, clothier Henry Winchcombe.

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Tudor documents suggest that Henry made it his home, but he died in 1562. In the 1920's and 1930's Bartholomew Manor was occupied by the philanthropist Dr Essex Wynter, who renovated or restored many of the buildings in the Argyle Road area.

Anthony Pick, Deputy Leader of Newbury Town Council, said: "This is a very exciting development. We are very grateful to the residents of Bartholomew Manor and Manor Cottage for their co-operation and to the members of the Council's Heritage Working Group for taking the tree-ring programme forward to give us such an outstanding result."

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