

# The Tiny Tim's Children's Centre, Whitefriars Lane, Coventry

## Archaeological Watching Brief



*understanding heritage matters*

Report No 1119  
August 2011



*Working for  
Warwickshire*

**Project:** The Tiny Tim's Children's Centre, Coventry

**Commissioned by:** Sarah harding, The Tiny Tim Children's Centre

**Project Report No.** 1119

**Site Code:** WL11

**NGR:** SP 3393 7873

**Planning Reference:** 4954/H

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## **Summary**

**Archaeological observation at The Tiny Tim Children's Centre, Whitefriars Lane, Coventry, which lay at the northern edge of the precinct of the medieval Carmelite Friary, revealed the remains of a late 19th/early 20th-century cellar containing an old fuel tank. A layer containing a number of fragments of human bone was recorded, suggesting further burials to the rear of the site in the medieval burial ground at the edge of the Friary precinct.**

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Coventry City Council for the erection of a new storeroom and toilet block to the rear of the Tiny Tim Children's Centre, Whitefriars Lane, Coventry (Planning Ref. 4954/H). Since the site lies within an area of archaeological potential, close to the boundary of medieval Whitefriars, it was considered that medieval archaeological deposits associated with the precinct of Whitefriars monastery might be disturbed during the work. It was therefore a condition of planning permission that the applicant should secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work to be carried out in conjunction with the development.

1.2 A programme of fieldwork, consisting of an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of the foundation trenches for the new extension, in accordance with a Brief prepared by the Planning Archaeologist on behalf of the Planning Authority, was commissioned from Archaeology Warwickshire and carried out in June 2011. This report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be deposited with the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum under the site code WL11.

## **2. Location**

2.1 The site is located at national grid reference SP 3393 7873 on the south side of Whitefriars Lane, within the city of Coventry (Fig. 1). The development area was previously within the carpark to the rear of The Tiny Tim Children's Centre.

2.2 The underlying geology of the area is Mercia Mudstone (British Geological Survey 1994).

## **3. Archaeological and Historical Background**

3.1 The site is situated in the south-eastern part of the medieval town of Coventry, which developed during the 9th to 12th centuries and this part of the town was also the site of the Carmelite Friary of Whitefriars. The friary (City of Coventry Historic Environment Record No. MCT 689) was founded in 1342 (VCH 1969). The surviving buildings of the friary include the Chapter House and east range of the Cloisters and other buildings lay to the south-east of the present site. The precinct of the friary probably extended from Much Park Street to Gulson Road and the site was almost certainly at the northern limit of the precinct of the friary (Fig. 1).

3.2 The standing remains of the cloister wing of the Carmelite friary, now Whitefriars Museum, lie less than 100m away to the south-east (HER MCT 850); however the building was separated from Whitefriars Lane by the construction of the ring road in the later 20th century. The medieval Whitefriars Gateway, dating to 1352, lies to the south-west of the site; it is now a toy museum.

3.3 Previous observation of an earlier extension to the front of Tiny Tim Children's Centre revealed evidence of the foundation of the medieval friary precinct wall (Coutts 2003). Further observation was carried out in 2009, when another extension was erected at the frontage of Tiny Tim's. This revealed evidence of a grave, thought to be part of the medieval burial ground at the edge of the Friary precinct, along with several post-medieval rubbish pits and further evidence of the medieval precinct wall. An archaeological evaluation of a stretch of the town and precinct wall at Gulson Road, to the south-east, revealed no evidence for the foundations of the town wall or Friary precinct wall was revealed (Thompson 2009a).

3.4 Excavations have also been carried out in the vicinity of the site, which have revealed medieval remains. At 114-115 Gosford Street, to the north, of 12th-/13th-century pits were uncovered, along with traces of medieval ridge and furrow (HER MCT 684). Excavations to the west, at the former Green Dragon Inn, revealed beam slots and postholes relating to a possible medieval building; a silver penny of Edwards I and a coin dating to 1320 were retrieved from the remains of a stone building (HER. MCT 733). Excavations in 1994/5 on the east side of Whitefriars Street (HER MCT 76) uncovered the back of plots and extensive medieval pitting with evidence for occupation dating back to the early 12th century (Coventry Museums Archaeology Unit 1995).

3.5 A stone house of 14th-century date, comprising a first floor chamber and a stone-vaulted cellar, was revealed to the west of the site after bombing in 1941 (HER MCT 3931). 114-115 Gosford Street, to the north, is a timber-framed medieval building which has been re-cased in brick and faced in stucco (HER MCT 684). The Oak Inn, at 120 Gosford Street is another surviving timber-framed building in the vicinity (HER MCT 684). An archaeological evaluation on the west side of Whitefriars Street in 2002 (HER MCT 16521) recorded evidence for medieval backyard or agricultural activity and a post-Dissolution boundary wall (ULAS 2002).

3.6 Speed's 1610 town plan of Coventry shows Whitefriars (Fig. 2, '*White fryers*' 59) and the friary precinct. The frontages of Jordan Well and Much Park Street were built up but there were no structures in the vicinity of the development area (Speed 1610). Bradford's map of Coventry of 1748-9 shows that the development area lies in the northern part of Whitefriars Close (Fig. 3). The Board of Health map of 1851 shows that the eastern side of Whitefriars Street had been developed and the northern part of what was Whitefriars Close had been divided into five linear areas running roughly NW-SE. These appear to have been under cultivation in the mid 19th century. Between 1888 and 1937 the frontage of the site remained unoccupied, with an internally buttressed wall running around the perimeter (Ordnance Survey 1888, 1905, 1906; 1914; 1925; 1937; Figs. 5 and 6). The central part of the site was taken up by the north-western part of a large building, constructed between 1888 and 1905, demolished in the mid 20th century. The 1955 Ordnance Survey map shows a small building marked the "Polish Ex-Servicemen's Club" on the street frontage within the same compound.

## **4. Watching Brief**

4.14 At the rear of Tiny Tim's, on land currently used for car parking, an L-shaped foundation trench was machine-dug by a 360 degree excavator with a 0.60m wide bucket (Fig. 7). The trench was cut to a depth of 1.50-2.00m. Natural red clay (7) was observed in the trench at a depth of 0.80m to 1.50m. This was overlain by a 0.70m thick layer of brown clay loam (3) which contained a number of fragments of human bones and some animal bone. The clay loam was overlain by 0.20m of concrete which was in turn sealed by a brick floor (1). A 0.20m thick layer of carpark tarmac (8) lay over the brick floor.

4.2 Brick cellar walling (5, 10 and 11) was uncovered at the south end of the area trenched. This narrow area of cellaring housed a large, cylindrical, metal fuel tank which was presumably used for a heating system in the previous building. The tank was removed by machine. The floor of the cellar was made up of brick pavers (9). The cellar itself was not visible above ground and excavation revealed that it was mainly backfilled (6) with bricks when the building above was demolished. Finds of pottery, clay pipe and glass were recovered from the fill.

## 5. Conclusions

5.1 Archaeological recording at the Tiny Tim Children's Centre in June 2011 recorded a quantity of human bone, presumably from the medieval cemetery of Whitefriars. Brick walling from an infilled late 19th/20th-century cellar was also recorded. The building above the cellar was a large one, probably industrial in nature, constructed in the early 20th-century but demolished by the middle of the century.

## Acknowledgements

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank Sarah Harding of the Tiny Tim Children's Centre for commissioning the work. Work on site was carried out by Rob Jones and Kevin Wright. This report was written by Pete Thompson and Rob Jones with illustrations by Candy Stevens. It was edited by Catherine Coutts.

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## Appendix A: List of Finds

<i>Context</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Date/Comments</i>
3	Bone	14	Human
3	Bone	2	Animal
6	Bone	1	Animal
6	Glass	1	Vessel
6	Pottery	1	Manganese Mottled Ware, 1680-1740
6	Clay Pipe	2	Stem
6	Spoon	1	Oval bowl, made by Firth/Dixon
6	Pottery	5	Stainless Staybrite, 20th century Modern Glazed Ware

## Appendix B: List of Contexts

1	Brick floor
2	Concrete
3	Brown clay loam layer
4	Cut for cellar walling
5	Cellar wall
6	Backfill of cellar
7	Natural red clay
8	Modern carpark surfacing
9	Brick floor of cellar
10	Cellar wall
11	Cellar wall

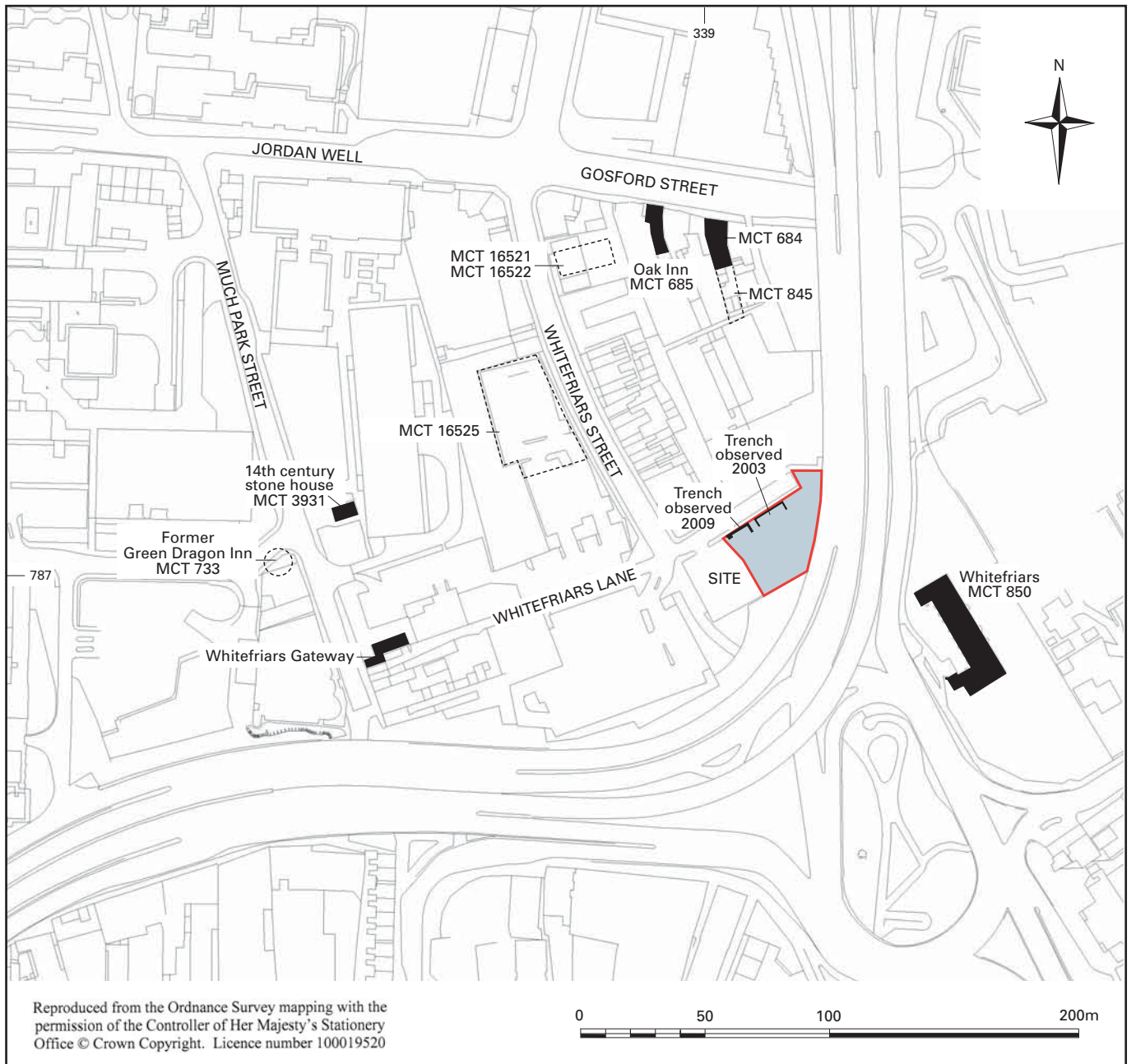


Fig. 1: Site location



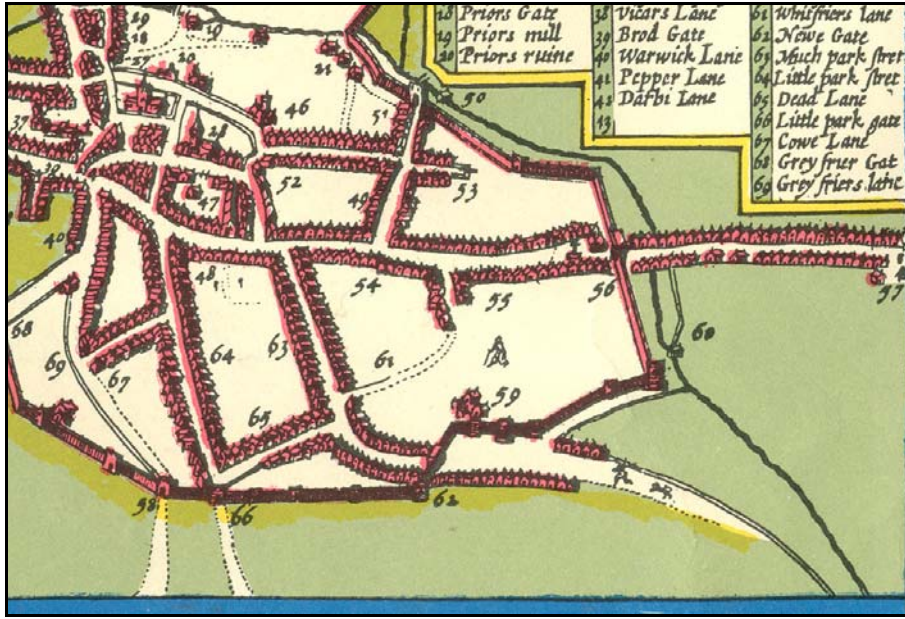


Fig. 2: Detail from Speed's map of Coventry, 1610

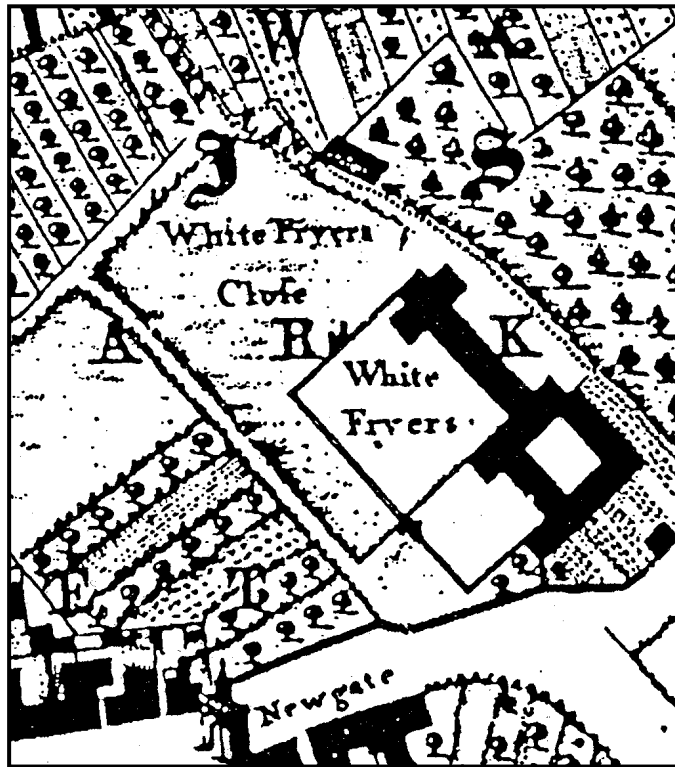


Fig. 3: Detail from Bradford's map of Coventry 1748-9

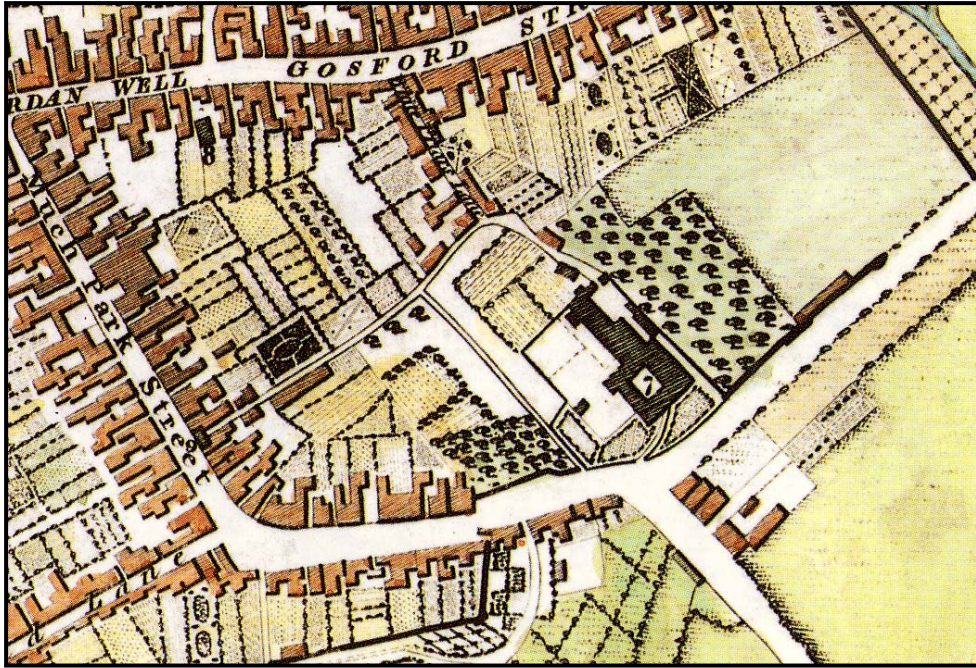


Fig. 4: Detail from Sharpe's map of Coventry, 1807



Fig. 5: Detail from the Ordnance Survey 1:500 map of 1888

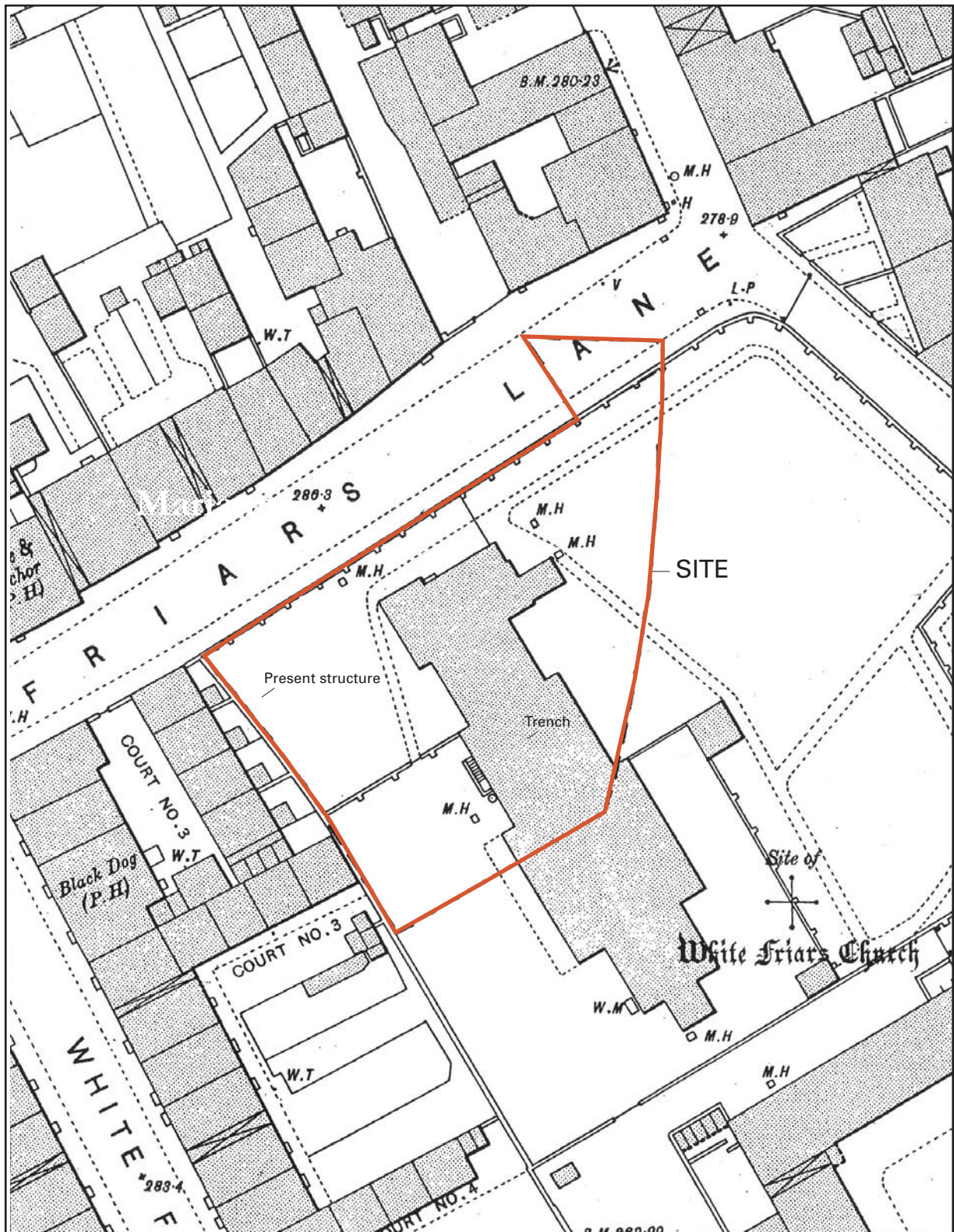


Fig. 6: Detail from the Ordnance Survey 1:500 map of 1905 with present structure and trenching overlaid



Fig. 7: Trenches observed



Fig. 8: Cellar wall 11



Fig. 9: Fuel tank