

**An Archaeological Building
Assessment and Watching Brief during
development at Braunston Manor,
Braunston in Rutland,
Leicestershire**

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for Sandlewood Homes

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An Archaeological Building Assessment and Watching Brief During Development at Braunston Manor in Rutland, Leicestershire, SK 8340 0656.

by David Smith and Elaine L Jones, University of Leicester Archaeological Services.

1 Summary

Redevelopment at Braunston Manor and its grounds by Sandlewood Homes included in its planning permission provision for an assessment of the surviving building and a watching brief during construction work on its grounds.

A visual inspection of the building confirmed that most of the original fabric had been removed and therefore the proposed internal alterations would have no impact on significant structural remains. Although much of the roof was possibly original this was not affected by the repair work.

The watching brief has produced evidence of a Romano-British building dated by the pottery to the late 3rd and 4th centuries AD with some Saxon and medieval material also present.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 Braunston Manor is situated to the north of Church Street, Braunston, Rutland (Fig 1; SK 8337 0659) at the southern end of the village on a south facing slope which gives way to flat meadowland along the north bank of the River Gwash (Figure 1). Braunston village lies on the ferruginous limestone of the Marlstone Rock Bed which is overlain at the north of the village by the Upper Lias Clay. The Braunston Manor development site lies at the junction of the Marlstone and the underlying Middle Lias silt and silty clay. A deposit of Calcareous Tufa is to be found just east of Braunston and tufa was found on the site. (Institute of Geological Sciences Sheet 157. Stamford. 1: 50 000 Series)
- 2.2 The present building is to be refurbished and subdivided to form residential units, whilst the land to the rear is to be redeveloped with a series of new dwellings under Planning Application 95/0372 (Fig 2). In accordance with Planning Policy Guidelines 16 (PPG16, Archaeology and Planning, para.30), the Leicestershire County Council Planning Archaeologist required a visual inspection of the building in order to assess the potential presence of historically significant structural remains which might be affected by the proposed alterations.
- 2.3 The Leicestershire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) notes that a corn-grinding stone (quern) of Iron Age or Roman type was found at Braunston Manor in 1902 and may therefore be an indicator of a farmstead or settlement of that period. Following an Archaeological Impact Assessment (ULAS 9.7.1995) the development was granted planning permission conditional upon a watching brief being commissioned to observe construction work to the rear of the manor house in two specified areas (Fig 3).

3 The Building Assessment by David Smith

3.1 Aims and Methods

3.1.1 The aim of the building assessment was to determine:

- a) the main structural phases of the building with approximate dates
- b) the location of any historically important structural remains which might be affected by the alterations
- c) the need for further intrusive evaluative work in areas where doubt existed over the importance of certain structural features.

3.1.2 The method adopted was a general internal and external visual inspection, along with more detailed examination of those parts to be subject to alteration.

3.2 *Results*

3.2.1 By far the greater part of the original fabric of this house has already been removed during the course of its earlier history. From its position within the village it is almost certain that the present building covers the area of an earlier house of which there is no surviving evidence. Furthermore, with much of the below ground levels robbed out during the property's use as a grain store and more recently a light industrial unit, the chances of archaeological testimony surviving are substantially reduced.

3.2.2 The street elevation of the present house is built in at least three separate phases. The horizontal coursing of the predominantly ironstone walls and the introduction of darker ironstone used for details such as the window lintels; the limited use of limestone for quoining and originally for door surrounds suggests the house could be dated within the date parameters 1720-1750. Subsequent additional builds seem to have occurred in the mid-nineteenth century and in the closing decade of that same century. The sash windows of the street elevation are replacements for an earlier series of windows. The windows associated with the later phases of building are stone dressed. At the rear there are a series of stone mullioned windows, here again the size of the lights indicates they are of nineteenth century origin.

3.2.3 Inevitably the only surviving fabric relating to the earliest building phase of the present house survives in the roof space where there are two substantial collar and tie-beam principal rafter trusses having single pegged bridled joints at their apex. The trusses are of butt-purlin form; a series of carpenters' marks on them suggest they were trusses I and II in what may have been a more extended sequence. No evidence for other trusses could be identified. All the timber associated with these two trusses is oak. The common rafters in this part of the roof are either set on their narrow section or are square sectioned, all are sprocketed at their lower end. At their upper end a short yoke has been attached to form a housing for a reduced ridge piece which may have been nailed in position.

3.2.4 Both trusses have been closed between the collar and the tie-beam. Now with the lath and plaster work of the original partitioning removed an unusual series of infill timbers remain *in situ*. These include a series of sawn ogee curved forms normally associated with bracing, though it is doubtful they could perform such a function in this situation as the load bearing characteristics of the timbers have been entirely ignored in the process of cutting the forms.

3.2.5 The infill panel of the truss marked I has a crudely arranged housing for a spine beam running from underneath the collar to the gable wall supporting an under-drawn ceiling of reed and plaster and creating a dark chamber, although this could have been used as servants' sleeping accommodation the absence of either cresset marks or hooks suggest it was more likely to be used for storage purposes. The uses of dark chambers for both these purposes are recorded during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

3.2.6 At no point in the course of walking through the building were any early floor boards identified. Similarly the usual vertical migration of earlier features from ground floor to upper areas was to a large extent negated by the conversion of the upper two floors of the house into workshops and offices.

3.2.7 The only remaining features of particular note were:

1. an early 19th century staircase rising from first to second floor level. This has diamond set plain balusters but does boast a moulded handrail and acorn finials to the newels - these two features being worked in oak.

2. a chamber fireplace with crisply detailed column supports and a finely figured cast-iron draught plate. The room was in part of the late C19 addition situated immediately above where the kitchens were located at that time. However the form of the fireplace would seem to predate the room by probably 20 to 30 years. As such it may have been re-used but was more likely to have been an old stock item introduced by the builder, as a cost saving device, into what would have been senior servants' sleeping quarters.

4 **The Watching Brief by Elaine L Jones**

4.1 *Aims and Methods*

4.1.1 The aim of the watching brief was to:

- a) determine whether or not archaeological remains were present.
- b) to record any archaeological evidence located, during topsoil stripping and, if necessary, the cutting of foundation trenches.

4.1.2 As much of the site had been previously disturbed during earlier development two areas were agreed to be examined during the watching brief (Fig 3). The northern area included areas where the ground was about a metre higher than the rest of the site. Here, a bank was visible running east west across the development and continuing north-east into the adjacent meadow. The smaller southern area was partially covered by concrete. No archaeological deposits were revealed beneath this area.

4.1.3 The site was attended on 17 October 1995 from 8.45am to 5.15pm during top soil stripping. Because the size of the area and the JCB movements churning up the surface, it was decided, with the co-operation of the developers, to cut two exploratory trenches through the top soil where a relatively a clean surface could be seen (Fig.4). This was then hand cleaned and recorded.

4.1.4 As archaeological material was present in both trenches discussion on future action with the developers followed. As topsoil stripping had provided archaeological material in the exploratory trenches, it was agreed that the watching brief would be continued during the cutting of the house foundations for Houses 1 and 2 (Fig 2) in the northern area.

4.1.5 House 1 foundations were cut by JCB 3C on 6 December 1995 with archaeological attendance from 9.15am until dusk at 4.15pm. Weather conditions were bad with grey skies with poor visibility and falling snow.

4.1.6 House 2 foundations were examined in similar conditions on 19 December 1995 with site attendance from 8.25am to 10.35am.

4.2 *Results*

4.2.1 The exploratory test trench 1 (Fig 4) was c 10 m long by 3 metres wide and was cut by machine in 0.10 m spits to a depth of c 0.40 m. The upper topsoil layer consisted of a dark brown clay loam containing pottery sherds from the Roman, Saxo-Norman, medieval and post medieval periods (2). Beneath this a brown sandy clay layer produced predominantly Romano-British pottery sherds, animal bone and possible building material in the form of calcareous tufa, micaceous siltstones and cobbles (3). A dark grey-brown clayey silt and silty clay was revealed below the topsoil.

4.2.2 Exploratory test trench 2 was cut 10 metres from the northern site boundary. This revealed a similar sequence of layers to that revealed in trench 1 which again produced Roman, medieval and post-medieval material in the upper topsoil layer (4). Below this a sandy clay layer predominantly Roman and early medieval post sherds and animal bones (5). The natural clays and silts were not seen at this level and a grey brown silt was present.

- 4.2.3 Some of the upper layers were removed during site levelling prior to the cutting of the foundation trenches for House 2. These were cut into the natural Liassic silts and clays. Archaeological strata could be seen in the vertical section freshly exposed along the northern edge of the site at (12).
- 4.2.4 House 1 foundation trenches cut through Romano-British deposits which probably included evidence for the close proximity of structural remains. This consisted of a possible cobbled surface (7) which was 3 to 4 metres wide east-west and could be seen in the freshly cut vertical section at (10) (Fig 5) and continuing c 15 m to the south (11) (Fig 4).
- 4.2.5 The finds recovered were from the sides of the fresh cut foundation trenches. Material from House 1 comes from the trenches marked (6) (7) (8) (9) and (11) on Figure 3 and consisted of predominantly Romano-British pot sherds, brick and tile fragments and animal bones within deposits of dark grey brown silts and clays. Beneath this lay a horizontal construction layer of cobbles, boulders and stones (Fig 5).
- 4.2.6 Four Anglo-Saxon pot sherds probably of the late 5th-6th century were recovered from (6). A small pit about half a metre east of (6) produced one medieval Stanion Lyvedon rim sherd (9).

5 *Conclusion*

- 5.1 As the roof, 19th century staircase and fireplace (above 3.2.3-4; 3.2.7) were not affected by the development no further recording work of the structure was undertaken.
- 5.2 The small area examined and the conditions during watching brief make interpretation of the archaeological remains difficult. However, archaeological features were revealed possibly relating to a building of Roman date. The closely datable Roman pottery comes from the late 3rd and 4th centuries AD with an emphasis on the second half of the 4th century. The substantial stone and cobbled layer (7), plus the fragments of roof tile (*imbrices* and *tegulae*) and other building stones, may suggest that the deposits relate to a Romano-British villa or farmstead. No tessera, wall plaster or flue tiles from hypercausts and baths were found to indicate a high status building, however. The extent of the settlement is not known and may well spread into adjacent areas.
- 5.3 Continued use after the Roman period might be suggested by the 5th - 6th century AD Anglo-Saxon pottery. Saxo-Norman Stamford ware pot sherds of the 9th to 12th century and medieval Stanion Lyvedon and Cistercian wares, plus the post medieval material are all indicative of long and possibly continuous settlement in Braunston.
- 5.4 Any further development adjacent to the area examined may reveal more evidence of Roman and later occupation and perhaps afford greater opportunity to record these in more detail.

6 *Archive*

- 6.1 The archive consists of 12 context record sheets, photographs and annotated plans; two boxes of archaeological material LMARS Acc No.A1.1996 (see Appendix 1).

7 *Acknowledgements*

- 7.1 We would like to thank Mr A Bradbury and Mr Doyle of Sandlewood Homes for their help and co-operation with this work. The pottery recovered has been identified by Nick Cooper, School of Archaeology, University of Leicester, (See Appendix A). Richard Buckley edited the building assessment. The project was managed by Patrick Clay.

Cresset	Pottery oil lamp of medieval or post-medieval date
Cistercian ware	Late medieval glazed dark purple pottery
Hypercaust	Roman underfloor heating system
Imbrices	Curved Roman roof tile
Iron Age	Archaeological period dated between c.600 BC and the Roman invasion in AD 43
Marlstone Rock Bed	Limestone outcrop in the Braunston area
Medieval	Archaeological period dated between 1066 and the dissolution of the monasteries in 1538.
O.D	Ordnance datum - Height above sea level
Roman	Period during which Britain was occupied by the Roman empire between AD43 and c.450
Post-medieval	Archaeological period dated between 1538 and the present day
SMR	Sites and Monuments Record held, for Leicestershire, by Leicestershire Museums Arts and Records Service at the Jewry Wall Museum, St Nicholas Circle, Leicester
Saxon	Archaeological period dated between c.AD 450 and the Norman invasion in 1066
Stamford ware	Early medieval pottery manufactured at Stamford c 850-1250
Stanion-Lyvedon ware	Medieval pottery manufactured in the Stanion and Lyvedon areas of Northamptonshire
Substratum	Undisturbed natural geological bedrock or sub-soil
Tegula	Roman tile of fired clay used on roofs
Tessera	Small cubes of stone, tile or pottery used in mosaic floors in higher status Roman buildings.
Tufa	Light porous rock sometimes used in buildings
Upper Liassic Clay	Geological bedrock in the Braunston area of earlier deposition than the Marlstone Rock Bed.
Watching brief	Presence of archaeologist(s) to record any remains revealed by development work

Appendix A

The Pottery

by Nick Cooper, Department of Archaeology, University of Leicester.

Context (1) 1 sherd NVGW 2nd - 4th century
25 sherds of Late Medieval/Post Medieval/Modern
(includes Pancheon ware, ?Midland Purple, Willow
pattern)

1 clay pipe.

Context (2) Roman:

1 sherd greyware 2nd - 4th century
1 sherd NVCC 4th century
7 sherds of shell tempered ?RB
3 sherds oxidised ware RB not closely
datable

Medieval:

2 sherds Lyvedon-Stanion green glazed
7 sherds Stamford ware

Late Medieval:

1 Cistercian ware handle

1 sherd Pancheon ware

• 1 sherd glazed handle

Post medieval:

3 clay pipe fragments

1 Tile fragment RB?

Context (3) Roman:

2 sherds NVCC 4th century

1 sherd other colour coat (Oxford fabric,
dark cc) 4th cen.

Other rims-

1 Large storage jar in gritty grey ware

1 Bead rim necked jar

1 Lid seated even fired rim in grey ware

1 Lid seated var.fired in fine oxidised fabric

1 Lid seated var.fired, burnt

16 other bodysherds from these vessels, grey
ware

8 shell tempered sherds RB

Medieval:

2 (1 rim) Lyvedon Stanion

1 hooked rim jar, sandy oxidised ware

2 Stamford ware

Post medieval:

1 Pancheon ware

5 other ?medieval sherds

Tile/stone (Collyweston slate)

Animal bones

Flint not humanly struck

Context (4) Roman:

1 NVCC 4th century

1 oxidised ware fragment

1 shell tempered

1 white ware

Medieval:

3 joining base sherds in green glazed sandy fabric

Late/Post Medieval:

1 Pancheon sherd

1 brown glaze

1 pipe frag

1 whetstone fragment

Animal bones

Context (5) Roman:

1 NVCC 4th century

5 white ware sherds

5 shell tempered

5 oxidised/grey sherds

Early Medieval:

2 Stamford ware sherds with green glaze inc. handle frag.

stone

Animal bones

Context (6) Roman:

7 NVCC sherds, inc. rim of "Castor Box" of 4th century (Howe et al Form 89).

21 shell tempered sherds

11 grey ware/oxidised fabrics 2nd - 4th century

Anglo-Saxon:

4 sherds of handmade, quartz-mica tempered fabric of late

5th - 6th century?

1 tap slag fragment

Animal bones and shells

13 RB tile fragments inc. roof tile (tegulae)

Context (8) Roman:

1 NVCC jar base in an oxidised fabric 4th century

1 Late Roman shell tempered ware (hooked rim, Harrold type jar c.350 +

1 grey ware fabric of a bead and flange bowl of 3rd - 4th c.

3 white ware sherds

6 shell tempered sherds

6 grey ware/oxidised fabric

(8) cont. Medieval:

2 green glazed sherds inc. 1 jug rim handle junction

1 rim of lid in oolitic tempered fabric

1 necked jar with cord impressed band round neck - med?

Post med & modern pot & glass

Roman roof tile fragments (Imbrex & tegulae)

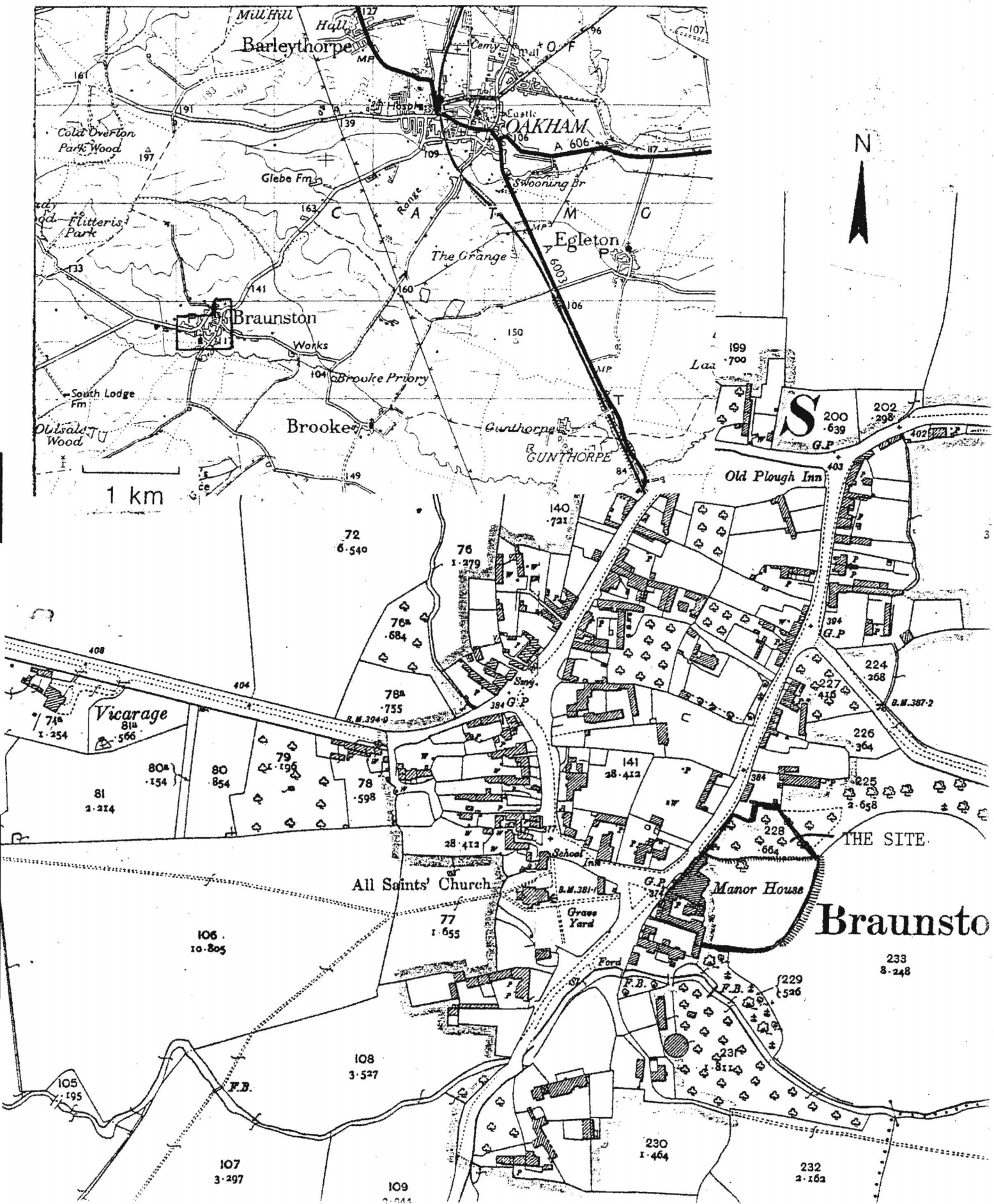
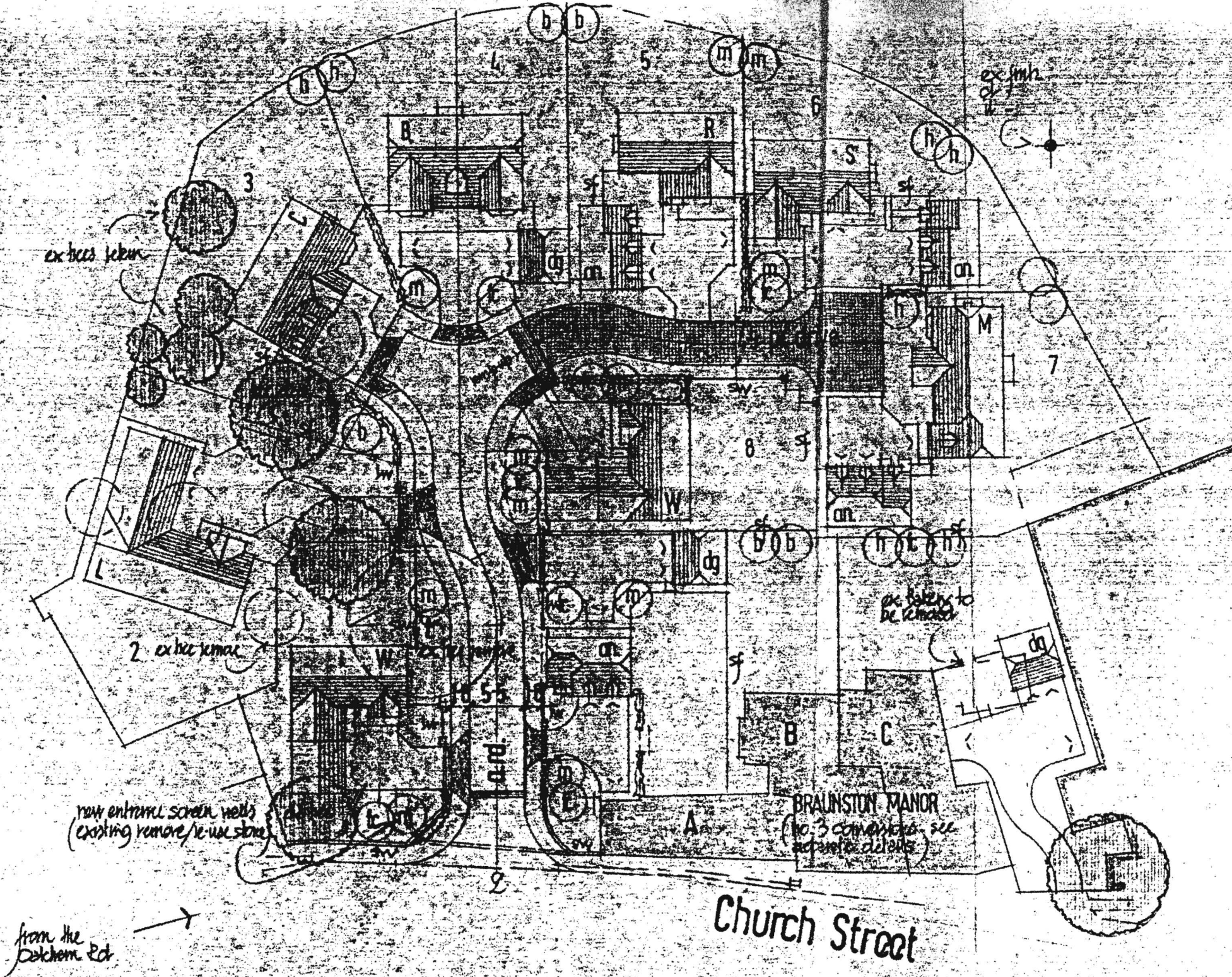


FIG. 1. The site at Braunston in Rutland. (Extract from the OS 1904 2nd ed. 25 Inches to 1 Mile)



materials

matching Bullfinch (red) stone to house type & Braunston Manor & courtyard & front entrance screen
 approved granite paving Buff paving for all remainder
 Sandstone Pennine (uncombined) Slates to all roofs
 windows white paint or tree stain - all garage doors

screening

- sw 100% screen wall in Bullfinch stone with matching ties and coping in red brick, with blockwork (to refer to)
- lw 100% screen wall as above (to detail)
- sf 150% (4 150 gravel board) vertical on oak posts (side view)
- gock approved spike top paling fence selective hedge planting at good

surfacing (access road)

5.5m access road with 1.8m footpath & 1.8m service road finish in black bit mac with approved chippings private drive (4.5m) in approved paving or cobble margins both sides (all private footpaths paving)

landscaping

new & replacement tree planting in accordance & species denote as follows - all well staked & re-

- b ~ fagus sylvatica (purple beech)
- h ~ taxus baccata (holm oak)
- m ~ acer platanoides (norway maple)
- t ~ prunus avium (sloanea cherry)

existing trees on site selectively removed/treated with open faced garden frontages & selective (be)

street lighting

500th.

Fig.2 Location of the development area.

revisions

1 minor highway adjust (service strip in left margin) ~ 15/5/95

drawing ref. 3495 · 1a

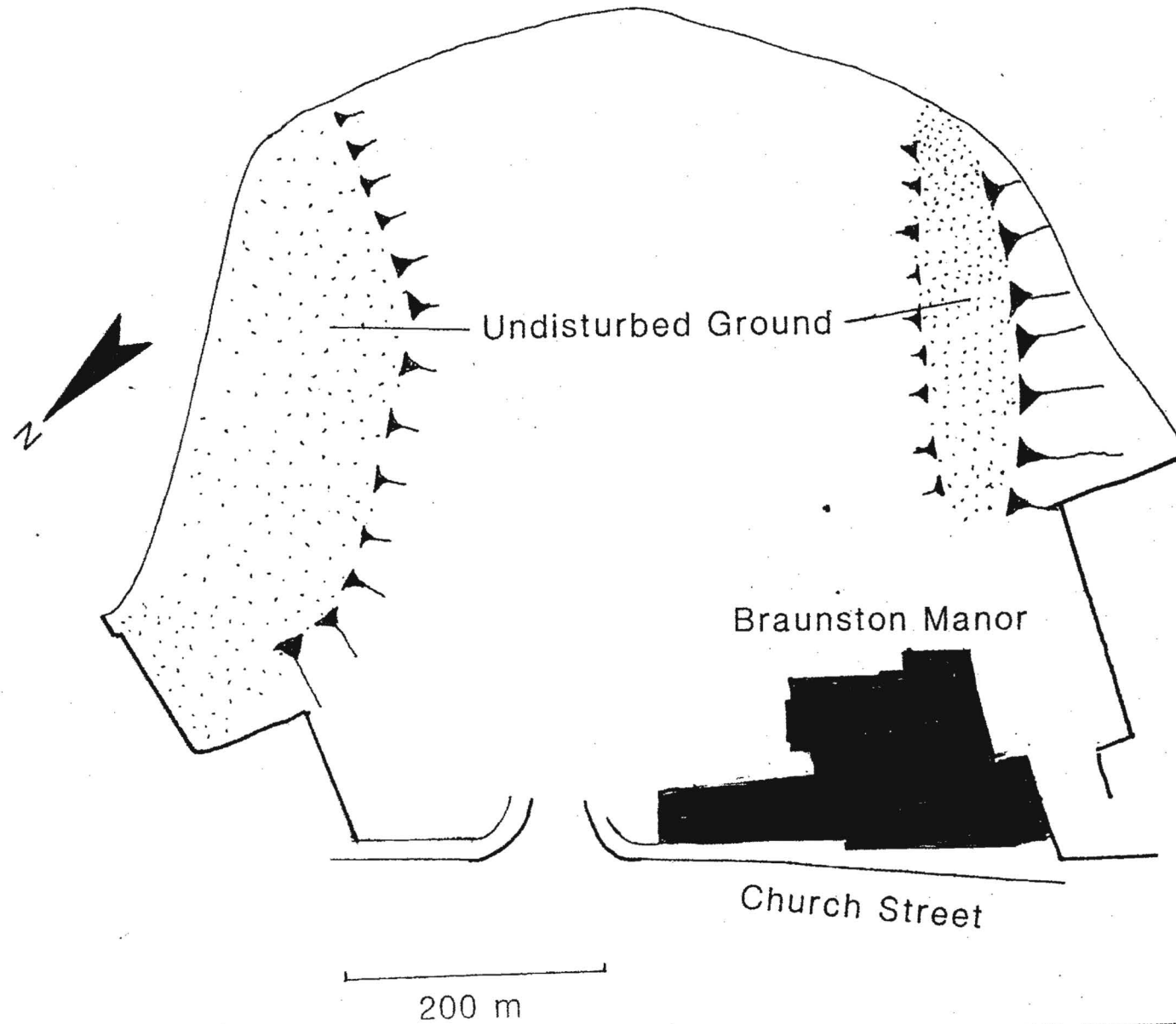
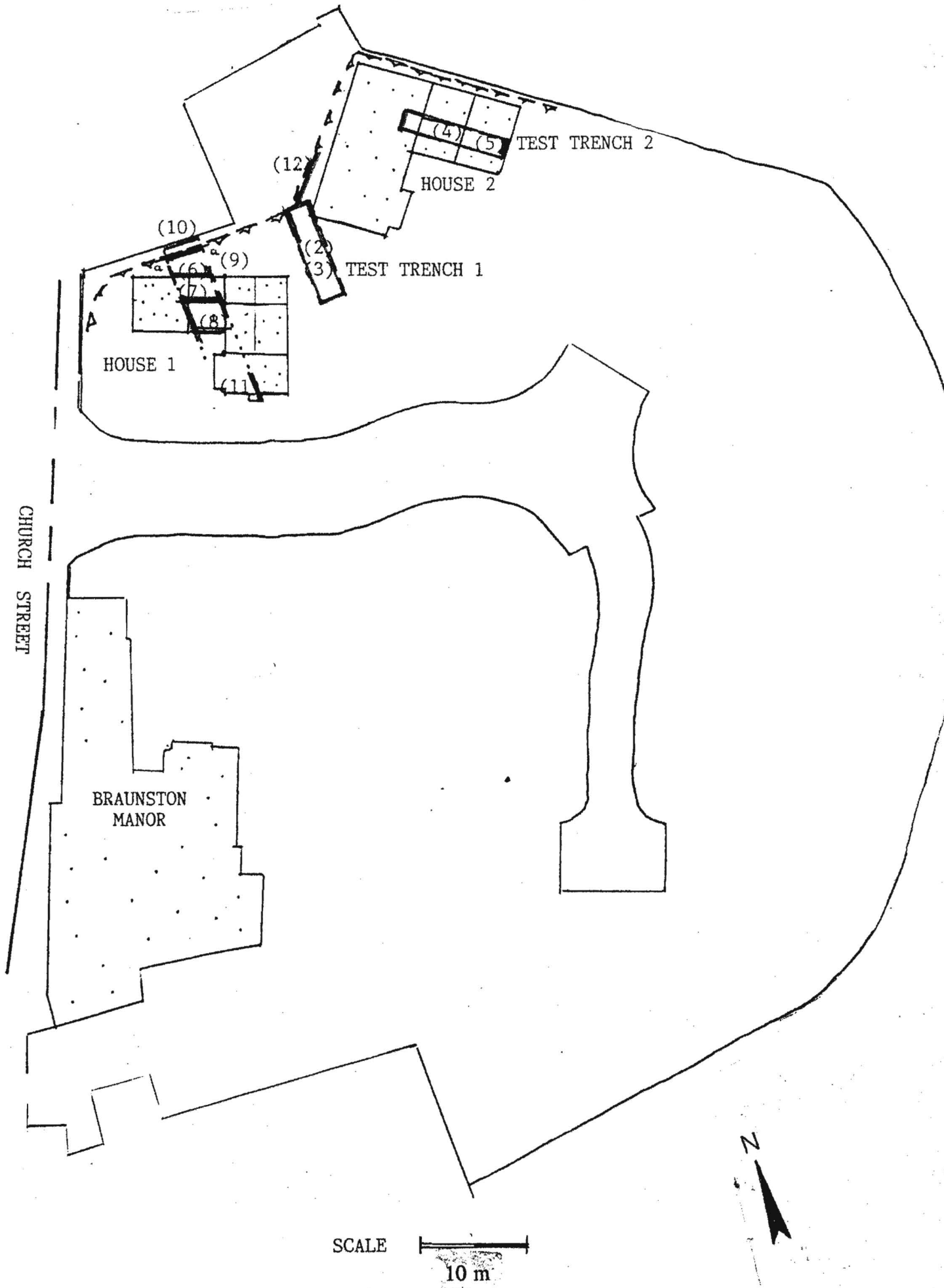


Fig. 3. The development area showing the areas of undisturbed ground subject to the watching brief in relation to the manor.

Fig.4 The development area showing the location of the test trenches and house foundations.



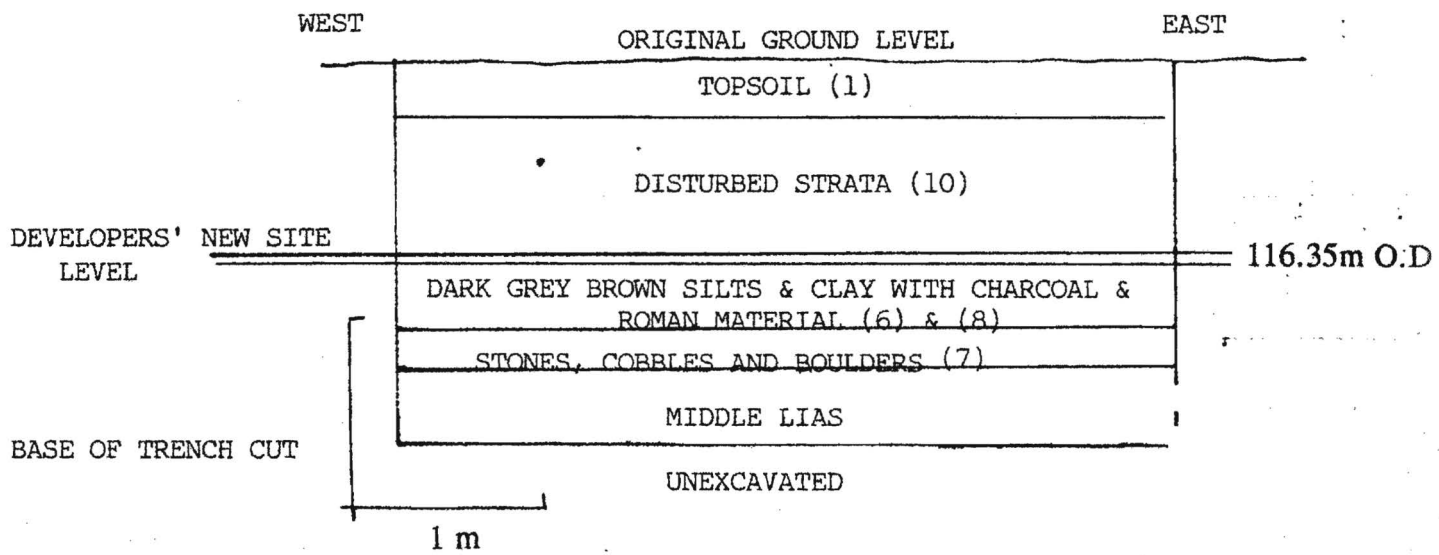


Fig:5 Section a-a (Fig.3) through northern foundation trench of house 1.