

Mill of the Black Monks, Monk Bretton
Historic Graffiti Recording

ArcHeritage 2019

The Mill of the Black Monks, Barnsley, South Yorkshire
Recording of Historic Graffiti

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

This report presents the results of a graffiti recording exercise and training session at the Mill of the Black Monks public house, Monk Bretton, South Yorkshire. The recording of historic graffiti carved into the stonework of the building was undertaken as part of the Dearne Valley Landscape Partnership Archaeology and Geology Project. Recording was undertaken using pro-forma sheets and digital photography.

The Mill of the Black Monks is a former watermill, originally associated with Monk Bretton Priory. The building appears to date to the 17th century, when it was probably rebuilt with stone reused from Monk Bretton House, itself constructed from material reclaimed from the former monastery. The mill, now a public house, is grade II listed (NHLE 1151153).

A total of 22 inscriptions were recorded within the building and 18 on the exterior. Further graffiti was noted on the first floor of the south block, and may be located within other parts of the building, but this could not be investigated due to time constraints. The graffiti largely comprises carved names and initials, the earliest dated being that of one of the millers, Ralph Taylor, in 1709. The latest dates to 1897. A faint 'butterfly' apotropaic mark on a reused window jamb may have been carved prior to the installation of the window in the mill.

1 INTRODUCTION

On 23rd May 2019, ArcHeritage conducted a graffiti recording exercise and training session at the Mill of the Black Monks public house with members of the Friends of Monk Bretton Priory and the Consibrough Research and Archaeology Group. The local volunteers participated in the recording and received training and guidance on the practices and methods of recording historic graffiti. The Mill of the Black Monks is a former watermill, originally associated with Monk Bretton Priory. Although medieval in origin, the building appears to date mostly to the 17th century when it was likely rebuilt with reused stone from the 16th-century mansion built within the grounds of the priory, itself constructed with material reclaimed from the medieval monastery.

The project is part of the Dearne Valley Landscape Partnership (DVLP), a HLF-funded, five-year programme of projects focusing on the historic buildings and landscapes of the Dearne Valley. By working with local communities, the Partnership aims to protect, preserve and enhance the area. Established as part of the DVLP, the Archaeology and Geology Project has enabled more of the Dearne Valley's historic environment to be surveyed through the archaeological investigation of ten sites, of which the Mill of the Black Monks is one. The aims of the Archaeology and Geology Project are to enhance the understanding of the heritage of the area and develop skills, knowledge and capacity within local communities.

2 LOCATION

The Mill of the Black Monks is located on Grange Lane, Monk Bretton, South Yorkshire, approximately 2.5 km east of Barnsley town centre and 200m south-west of the remains of Monk Bretton Priory Church (NGR SE 37189 06358, Figure 1). The rectangular building is aligned north-south and is situated on the west side of Grange Lane. It sits within a larger plot with housing estates to the north and open land astride the River Dearne to the south. The Mill is a grade II listed building (NHLE 1151153).

3 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the recording was to identify and record historical graffiti carved into the stonework both within and outside the building. Volunteers used pro-forma sheets to record individual inscriptions and plot them on the walls within the building. The inscriptions were then photographed using a DSLR and raking light. An appropriately sized scale was used in each of the photographs.

4 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The priory of St Mary Magdalene of Lund at Monk Bretton was founded between 1153 and 1154 as a daughter house of the Cluniac Priory of St John at Pontefract. Following long disputes between the two houses, the priory seceded from the Cluniac order and became an independent Benedictine house around 1280. It was formally dissolved in 1538 (Willmott and Bryson 2013, 138-140). There was probably a watermill on the site of the Mill of the Black

Monks from early in the history of the priory, although there has been little research to support this.

On its dissolution, the priory fell into the hands of the Blithman family, who held it until 1580 when the land fell into the hands of Harry Talbot who is thought to have begun construction of a mansion on the grounds of the priory, prior to his death ten years later. Willmott and Bryson (2013, 147) argue that it is likely that much of the visible fabric of the mill consists of stonework taken from the Talbot mansion. This would explain the preponderance of high status decorative stonework found within a utilitarian building.

The mill functioned as such into the 19th century and appears with its current footprint on the 1855 six-inch OS map. This labels the building as a corn mill and clearly shows the head and tail goits either side of the building, taking water from and returning it to the Dearne. The 1892 25-inch OS map shows the head-goit as dry and makes no reference to the building being a mill. The same arrangement is shown on the 1906 OS map whilst the head-goit is shown as built over on the 1931 OS map.

5 DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING

The Mill of the Black Monks consists of a range of buildings arranged north-south with its principal elevation facing east towards Grange Lane (Plate 1). The building is constructed of hammer-dressed sandstone and roofed with stone slates. The main part of the building, in which the graffiti recording took place, are the two blocks in the southern part of the range. The blocks have been converted into a public house but cartographic evidence and scars in the fabric of the building, as well as the structure of the timber ceiling, indicate that the blocks contained two wheel-pit and at least two grindstones.

Internally the two southern blocks form a large room on the ground and first floor. The ground floor room has entrances to the east and west and a tudor-arched fireplace in the west wall. The room has plain stone walls, a flagstone floor and a timber ceiling consisting of deep section joists supported by three east-west bridging beams (Plate 2). The ceiling also has the remains of the framework for grinding machinery. The upper floor consists of a large room with a queen post roof.

6 RESULTS

The ground floor and the east elevation of the south block were searched for graffiti by volunteers. 22 inscriptions were recorded within the building and 18 (see Photos 1-41) were recorded externally. Graffiti was also found on in the first floor of the south block, however this was not recorded due to time constraints. Similarly, it is possible that the rest of the building contains more graffiti, however resources only allowed the investigation of the southern block.

All of the inscriptions are carved into the sandstone blocks making up the walls, the majority of which is probably material reused from Harry Talbot's mansion. The internal graffiti can be found throughout ground floor room; however, it is concentrated mostly in the recess in the eastern half of the room and around the fireplace in the western half of the room.

The majority of the internal stonework has a finely dressed finish and the inscriptions stand out accordingly, however, some of the stonework features peck-marks for plaster, presumably from

an earlier building, and the recorded marks may have been made unintentionally. Whilst some of the marks consist of anonymous and undatable geometric shapes such as triangles (Photo 3), the majority consist of either names or initials, sometimes with dates. The inscriptions are generally made with care, featuring a classical roman style hand with serifs, or a more cursive hand. The earliest dated inscription is that of Ralph Taylor, Miller, dating to 1709. The latest inscription appears to read C. Coward Anno 1897, however this may be an outlier as there are no other dated inscriptions from beyond the early 19th century. The style of the undated inscriptions is consistent with the dated examples, indicating that they probably date from the same period. Ralph Taylor's inscription is also the most complex, and the fact it is also signed miller indicates that Taylor worked at the mill and may well have been the first person to leave their mark.

While none of the dated inscriptions predates 1709, the southern window in the east wall has a faint 'butterfly' mark in its south jamb. The window itself is a simple square two-light mullion window with signs of reuse. Although difficult to date, the mark is apotropaic in nature and is more likely to date from before the window was reset in the mill.

6 DISCUSSION

The nature and dates of the inscriptions indicate that the majority of them were made *in situ*, after the mill was remodelled using reused stonework, probably from Harry Talbot's mansion. The earliest dated inscription is from 1709, indicating that the mill had been remodelled by this point, which would correspond with the last descendant of Harry Talbot dying in 1675 and presumably leaving the house empty. If the remodelling took place in the late 17th or early 18th century then this would be an unusual, but not unprecedented, use of late gothic/Tudor style at a time when classical architecture was more fashionable and before the revival of interest in gothic architecture.

As is often the case, the reason for the large amount of 18th- and 19th-century graffiti in the mill is unclear; however it may be that due to the unusual antiquated style of the building, and its proximity to the site of Monk Bretton Priory, the mill was something of a curiosity and a tourist attraction, upon which people were encouraged to leave their mark.

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ArcHeritage would like to thank the Dearne Valley Landscape Partnership for commissioning this report and the friends of Monk Bretton Priory for the Conisbrough Research and Archaeology Group for volunteering on the project.

8 REFERENCES

Willmott, H. And Bryson, A. 2013. Changing to suit the times: a post-Dissolution history of Monk Bretton Priory, South Yorkshire. *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 47/1, 136-163.

PLATES



Plate 1: East elevation of the Mill of the Black Monks



Plate 2: Main ground floor room, facing south

PHOTOS OF THE GRAFFITI

South Wall

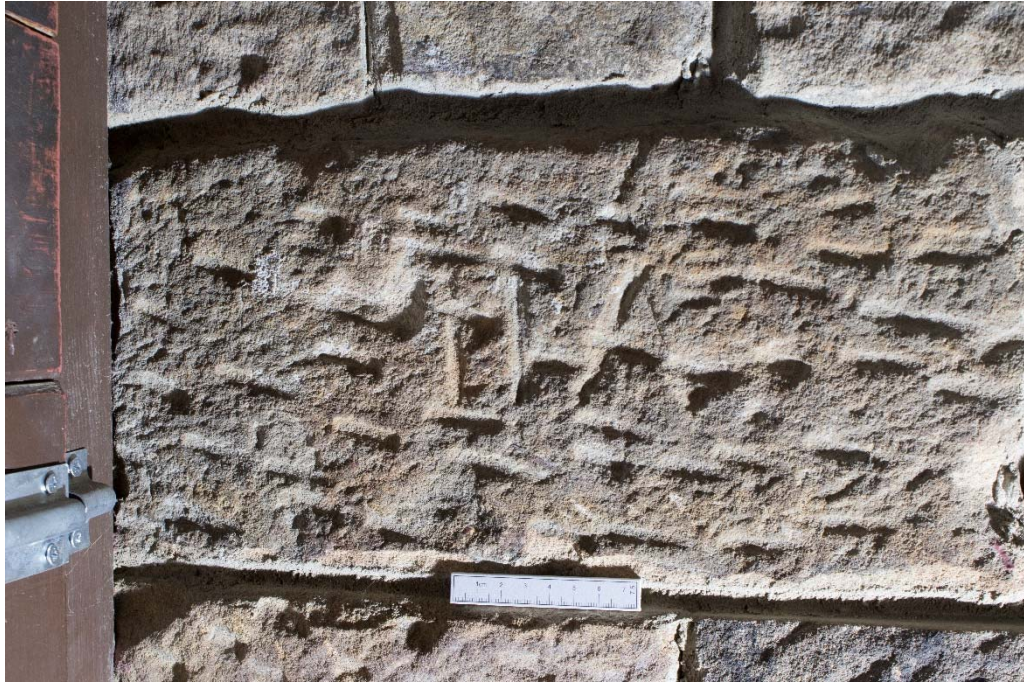


Photo 1 No. 1: Possibly reads PLA

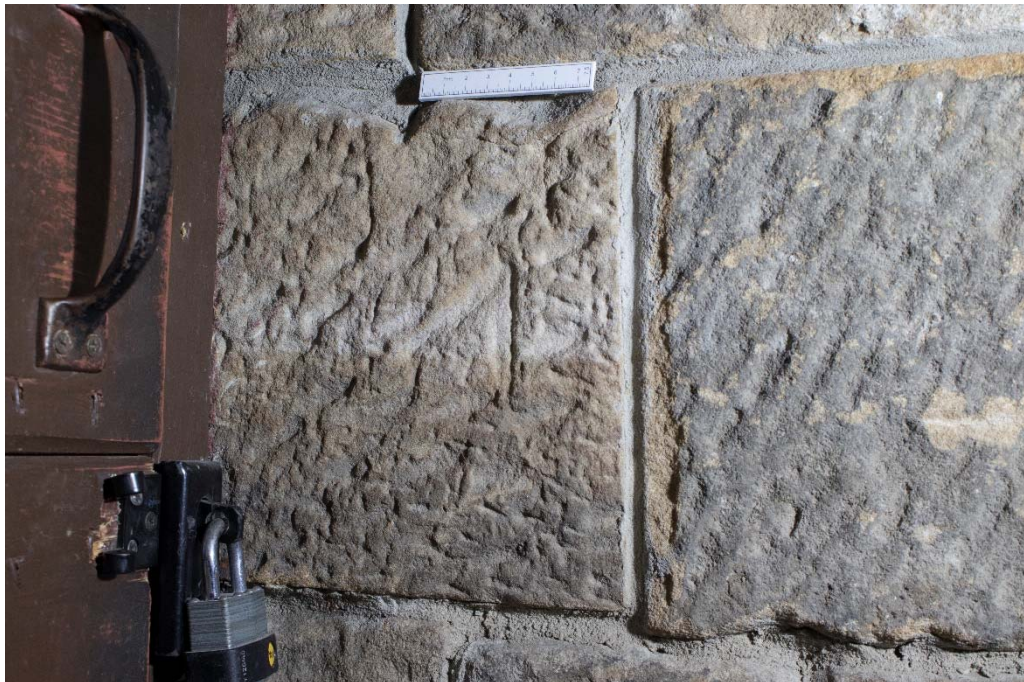


Photo 2 No. 2: Chevron

West Wall

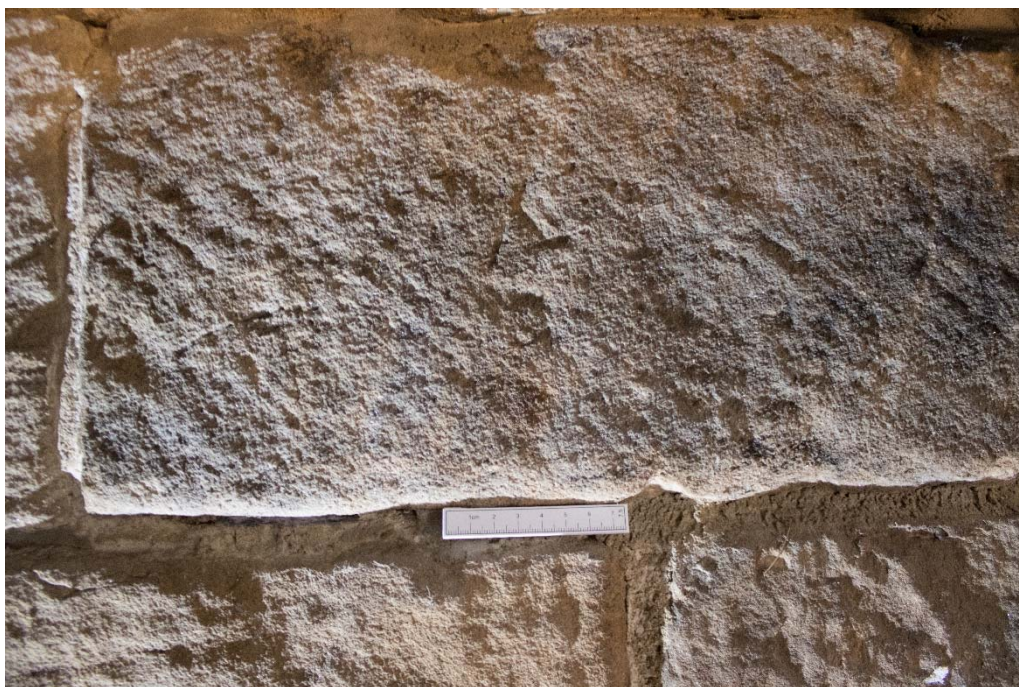


Photo 3 No. 5: Chevron



Photo 4 No. 1: JF 17??



Photo 5 No. 2: R

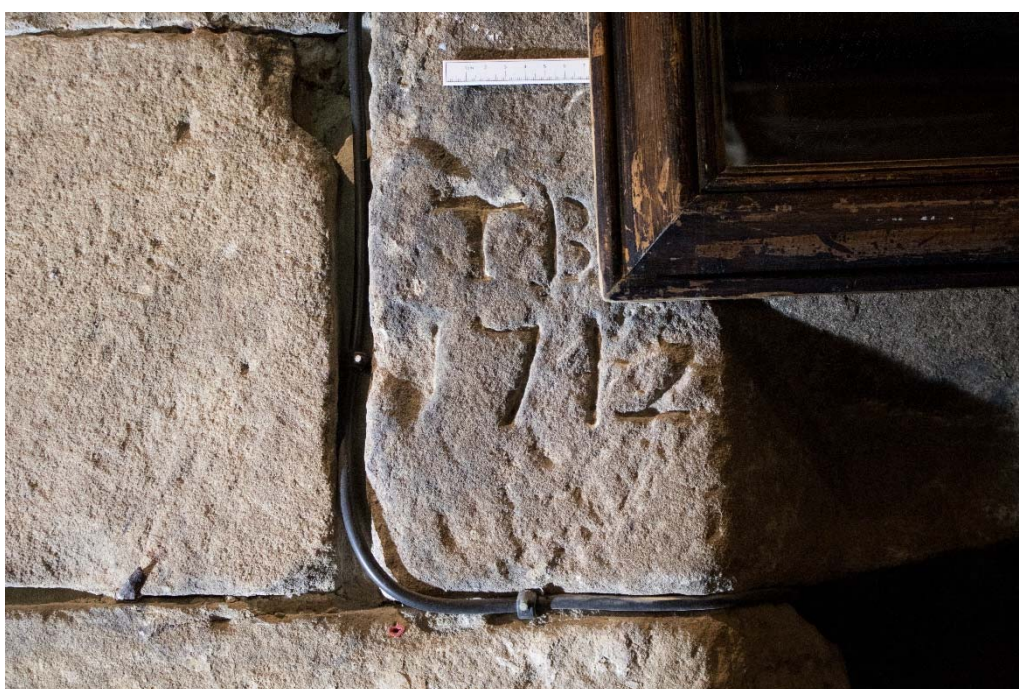


Photo 6: No. 3: TB 1712

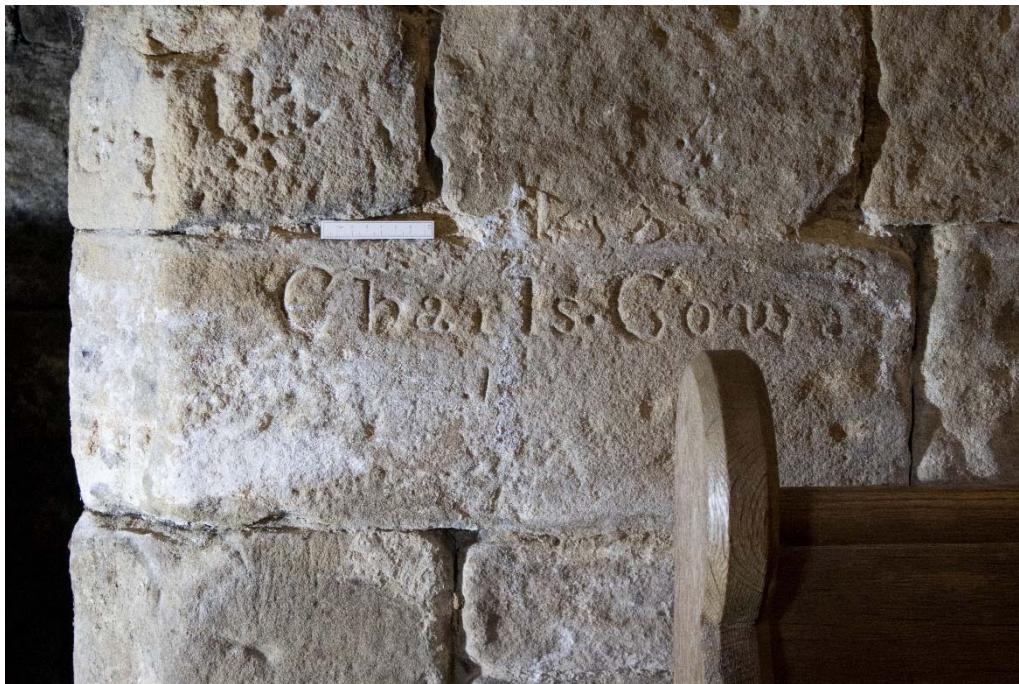


Photo 7 No. 4: Charles Cowa (Coward?)

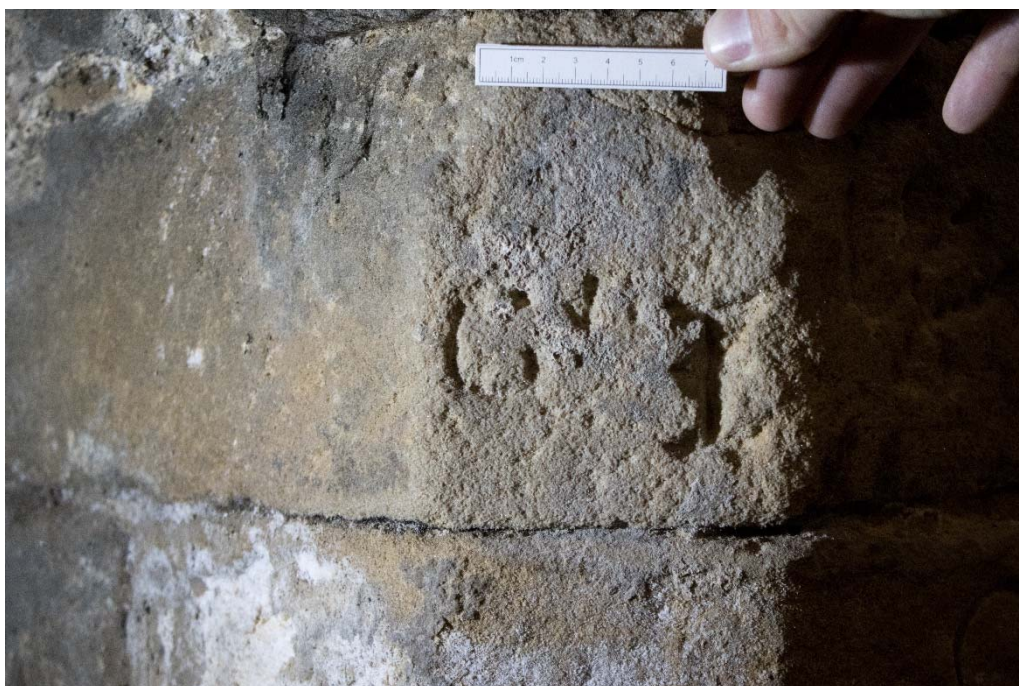


Photo 8 No 8: G^{II}

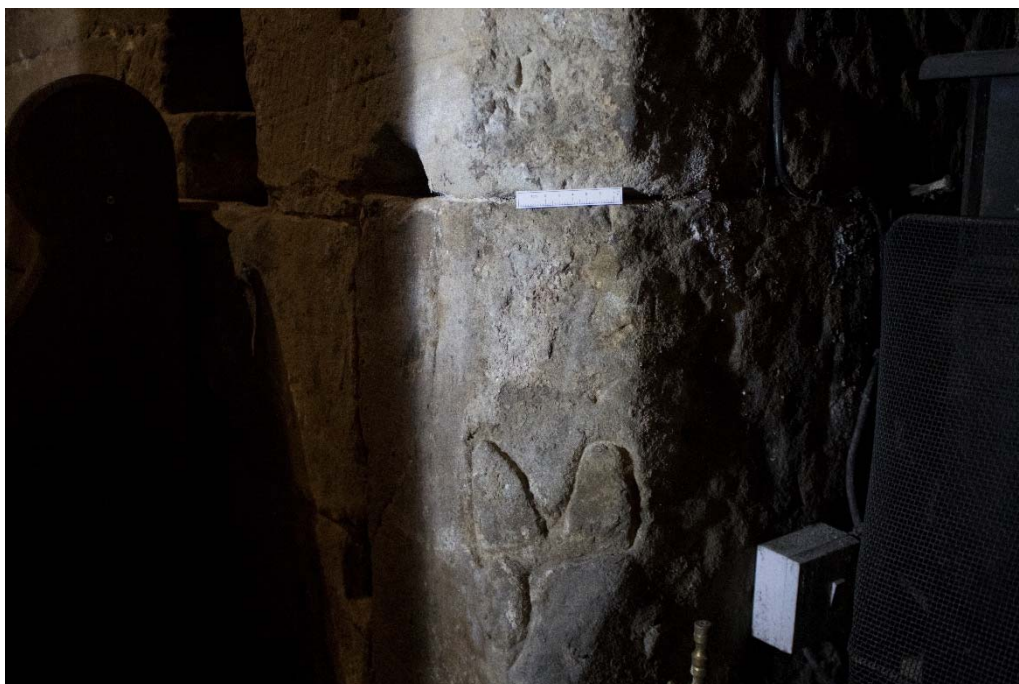


Photo 9 No. 7: Heart

East Wall

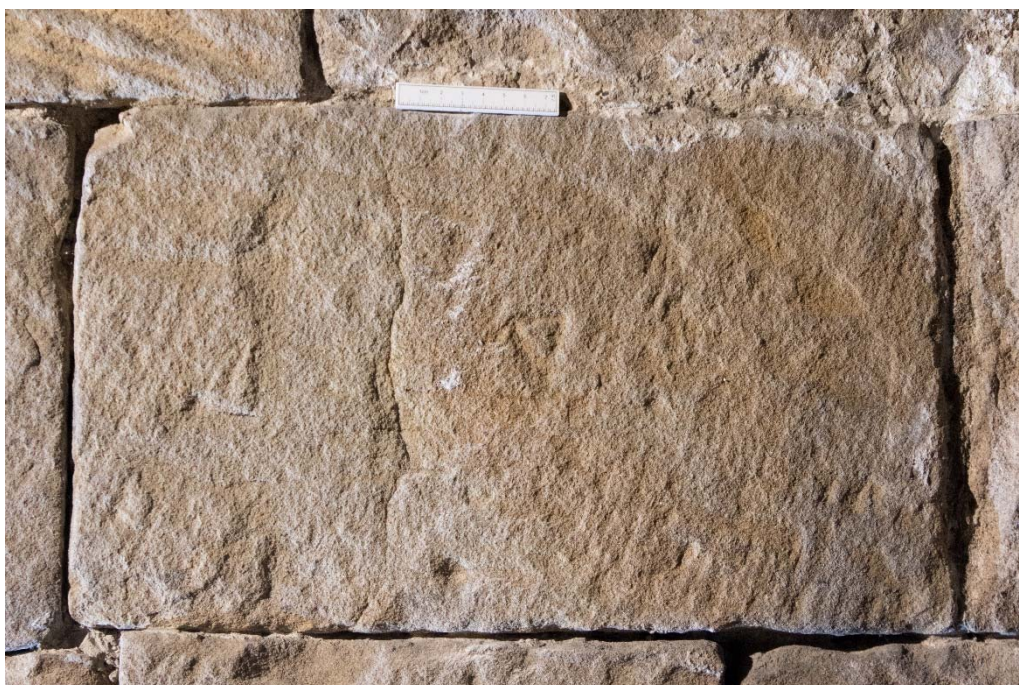


Photo 10 No. 1: Triangle

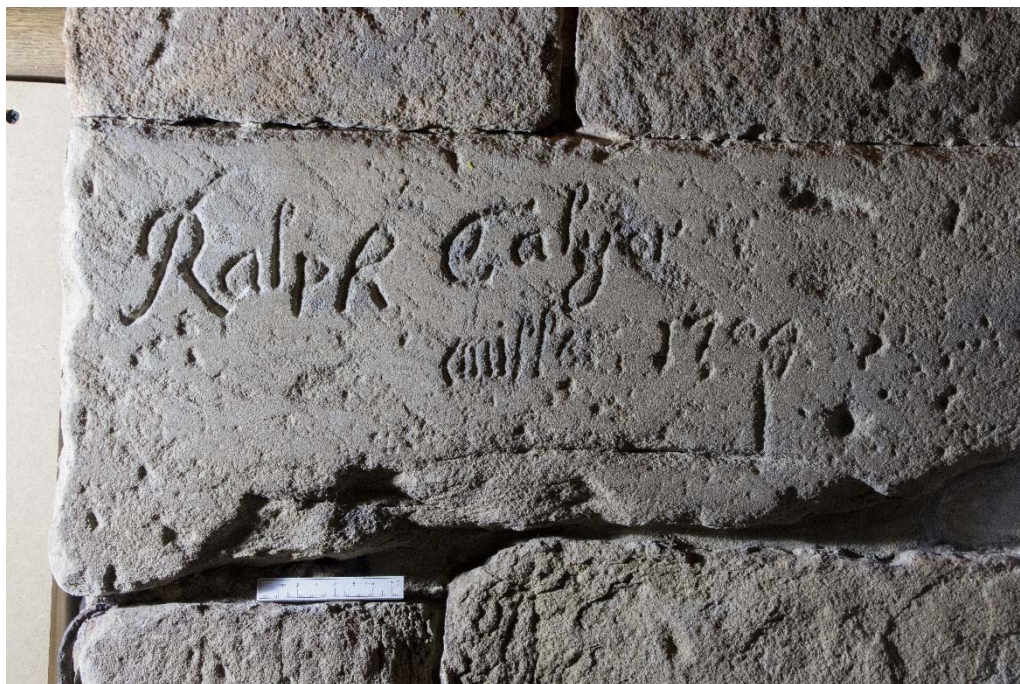


Photo 11 No.2: Ralph Taylor miller 1709

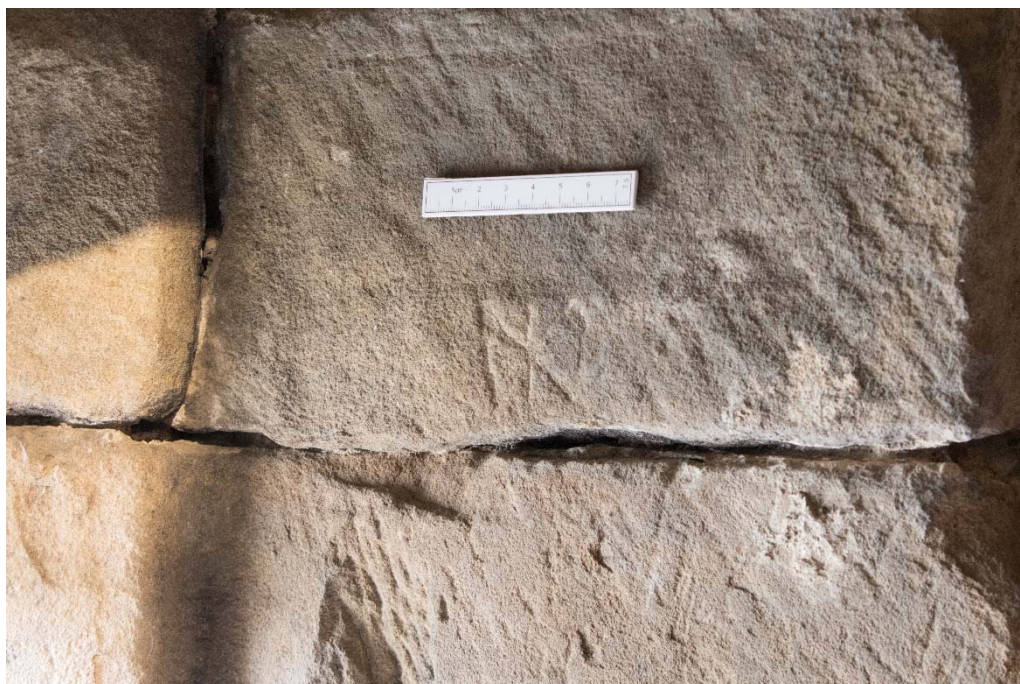


Photo 12 No. 3: Unknown pattern

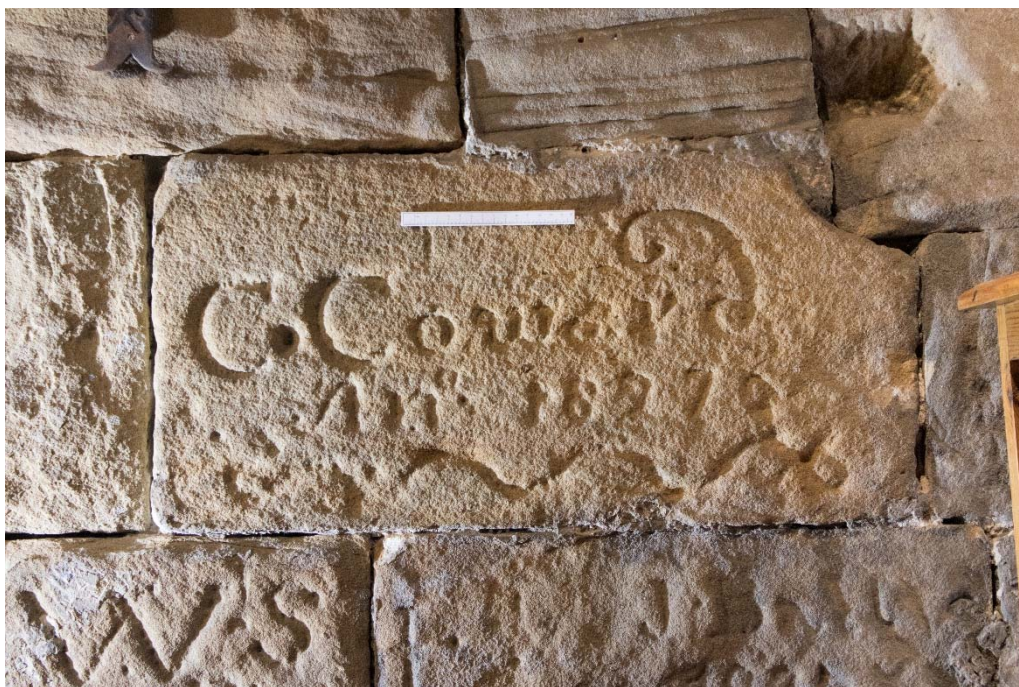
East Wall Recess

Photo 13 No. 1: C. Coward an° 1897



Photo 14 No.2: Cursive initials

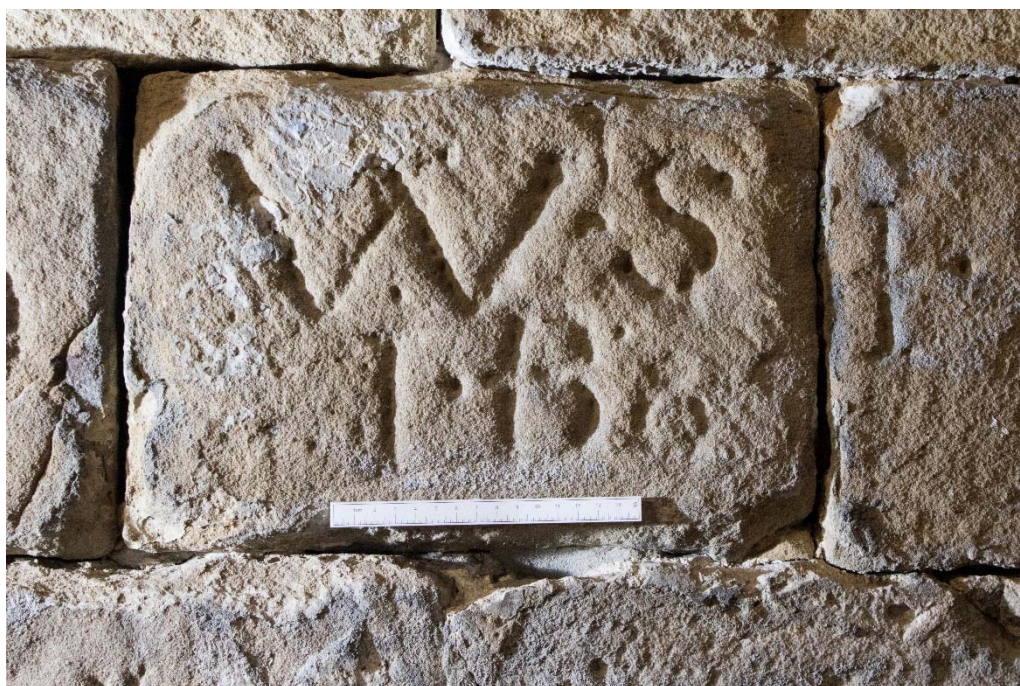


Photo 15 No. 3: W.S I.B



Photo 16 No. 4: J. Ball 1831

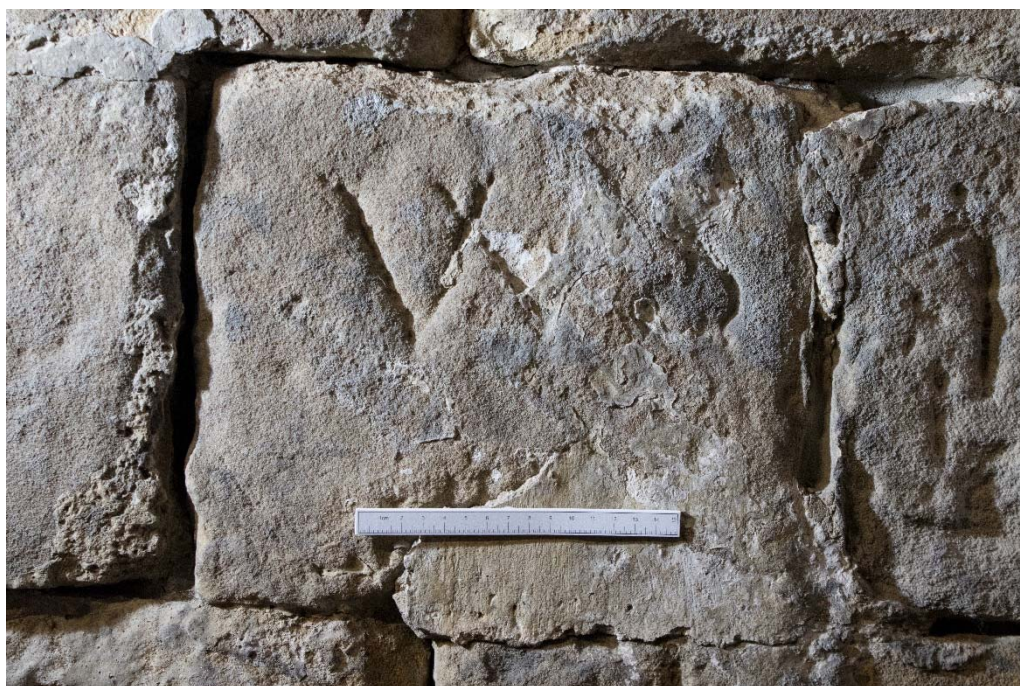


Photo 17 No. 5: W



Photo 18 No. 7: G. Batty 180?

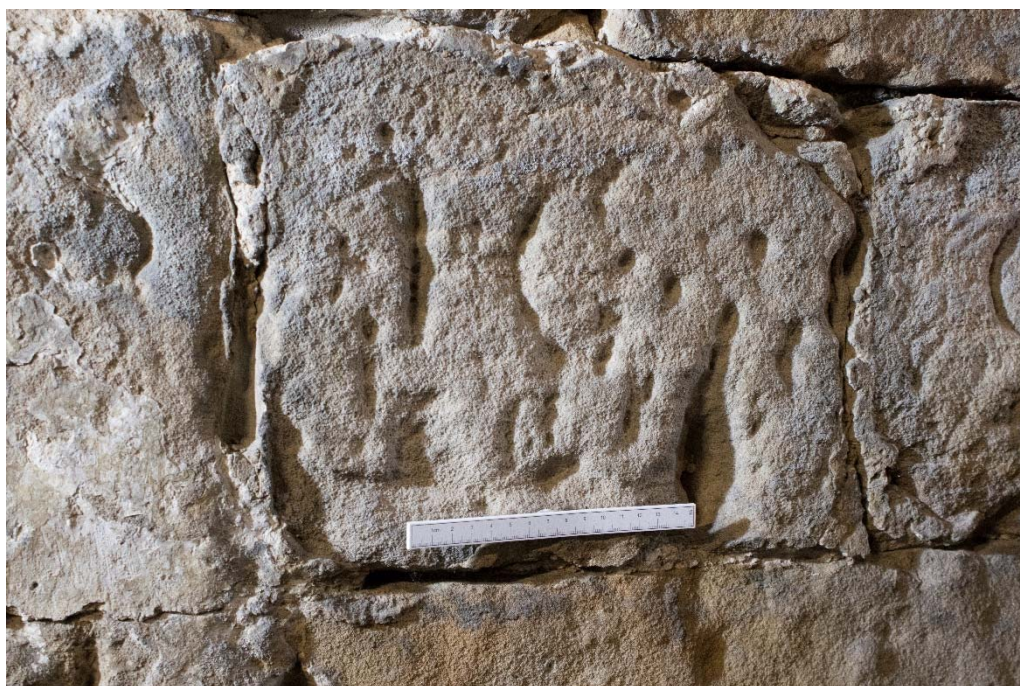


Photo 19 No. 6: I.C

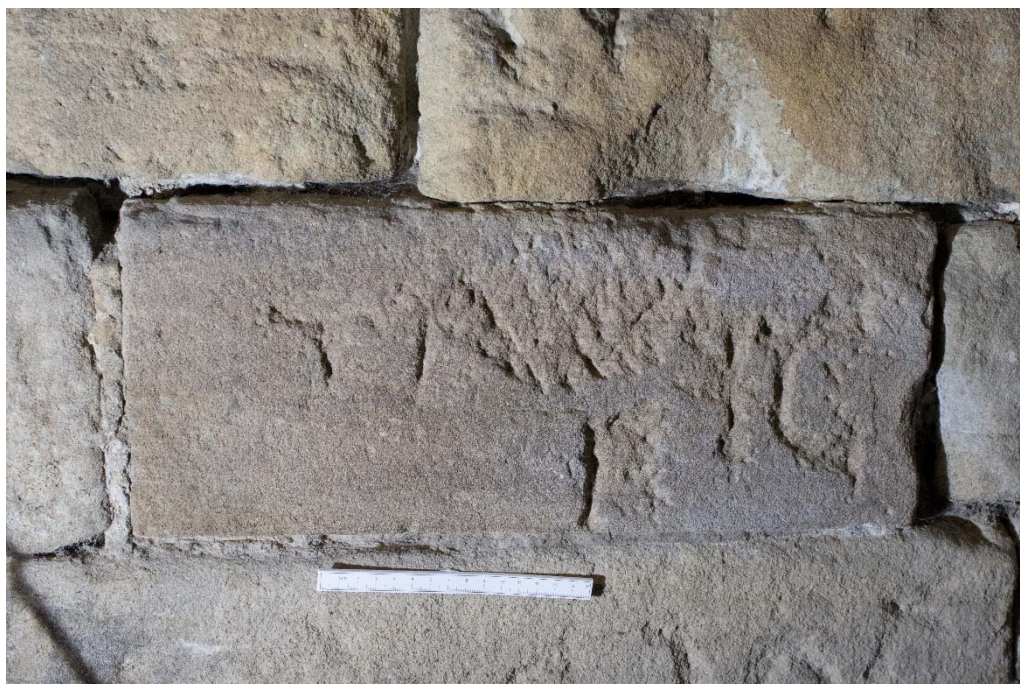


Photo 20 No. 8: T I W I G

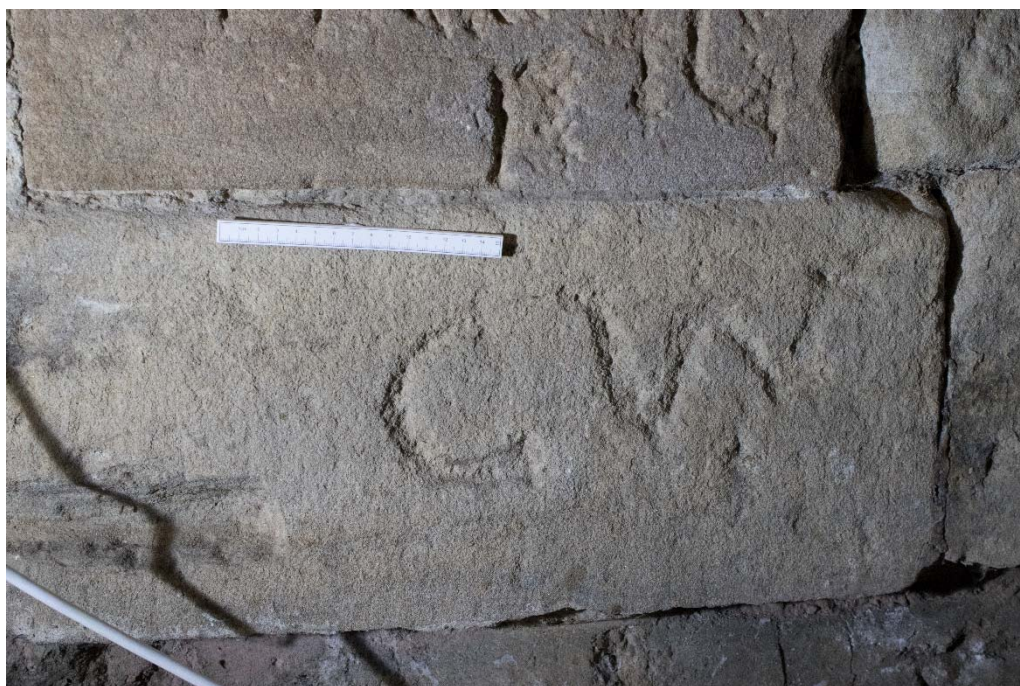


Photo 21 No. 9: C.W



Photo 22 No. 10: J

East elevation



Photo 23 No. 1 Multiple initials



Photo 24 No. 2: I O I.H.S



Photo 25 No. 3: Faint cursive initials

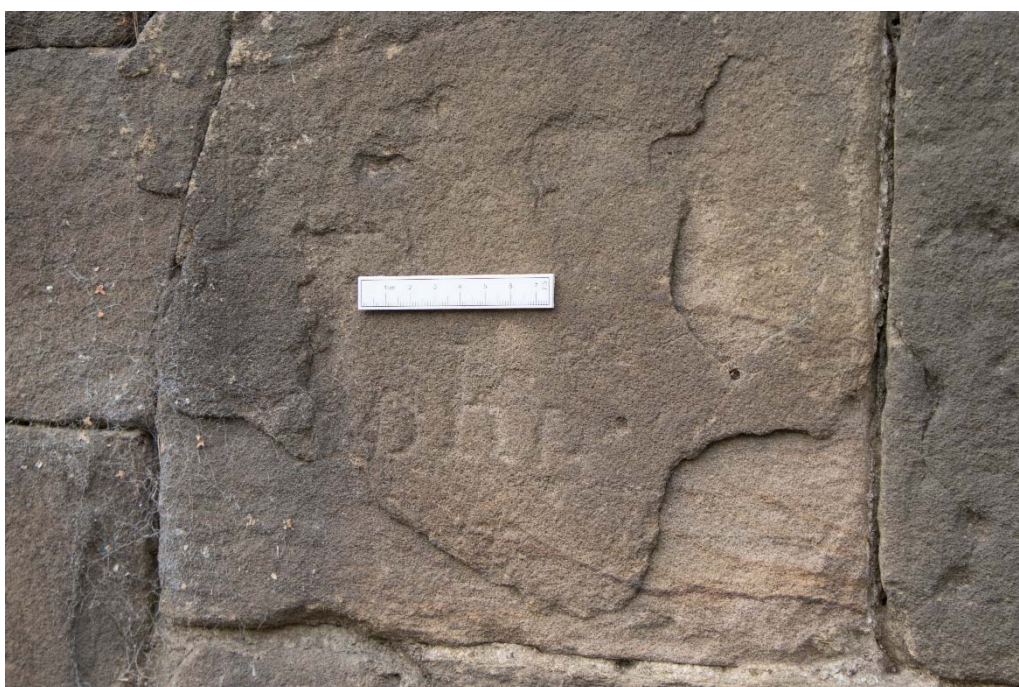


Photo 26 No. 4: John.

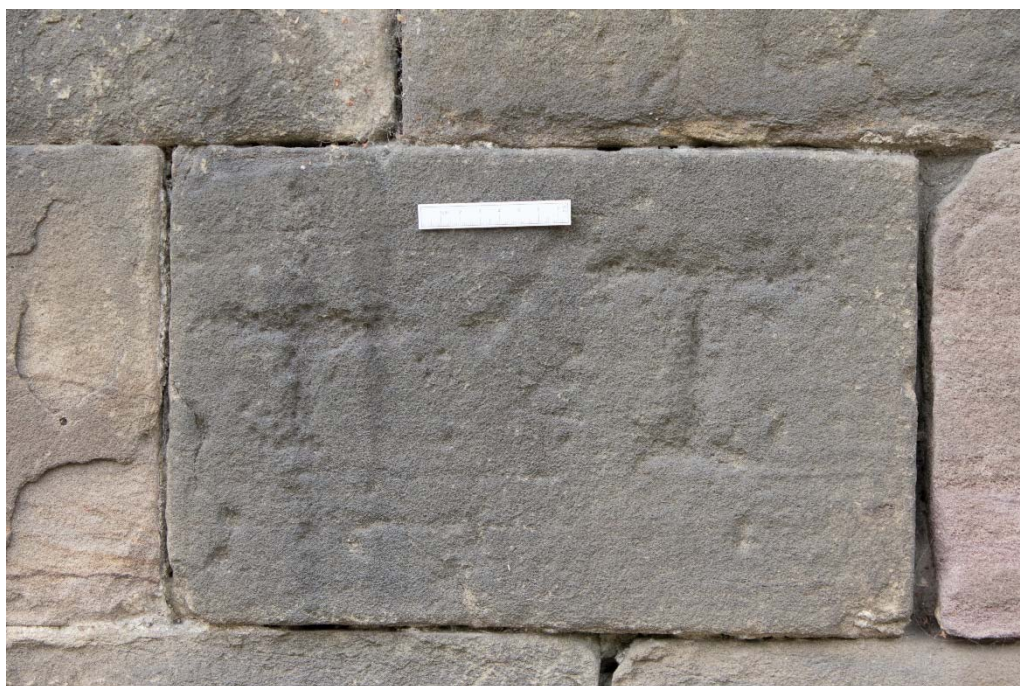


Photo 27 No. 5: T T



Photo 28 No. 6: Very faint writing



Photo 29 No. 7: Very faint writing



Photo 30 No. 8: W.S

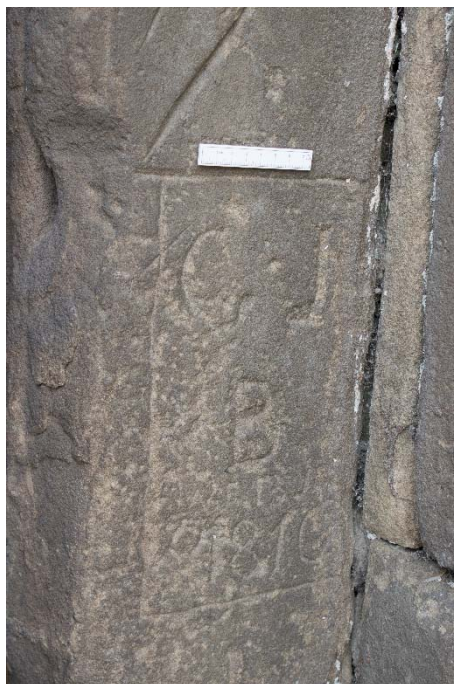


Photo 31 No. 9: G.I B 1816



Photo 32 No.10: J



Photo 33 No 11: W



Photo 34 No. 12: TS? (backwards s)



Photo 35 No. 13: Very faint writing



Photo 36 No. 14: H



Photo 37 No. 15: -AF

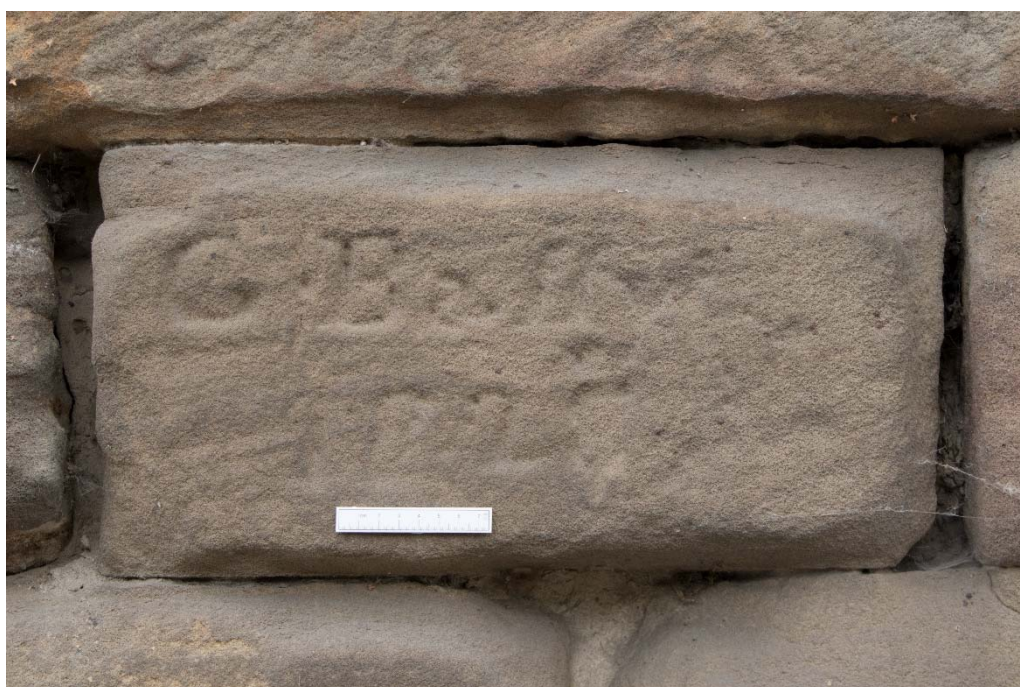


Photo 38 No 1. G. Bally 1820



Photo 39 No. 2: I.B



Photo 40 No. 3: 1880 (very faint)



Photo 41 No. 4: Faint writing

FIGURES

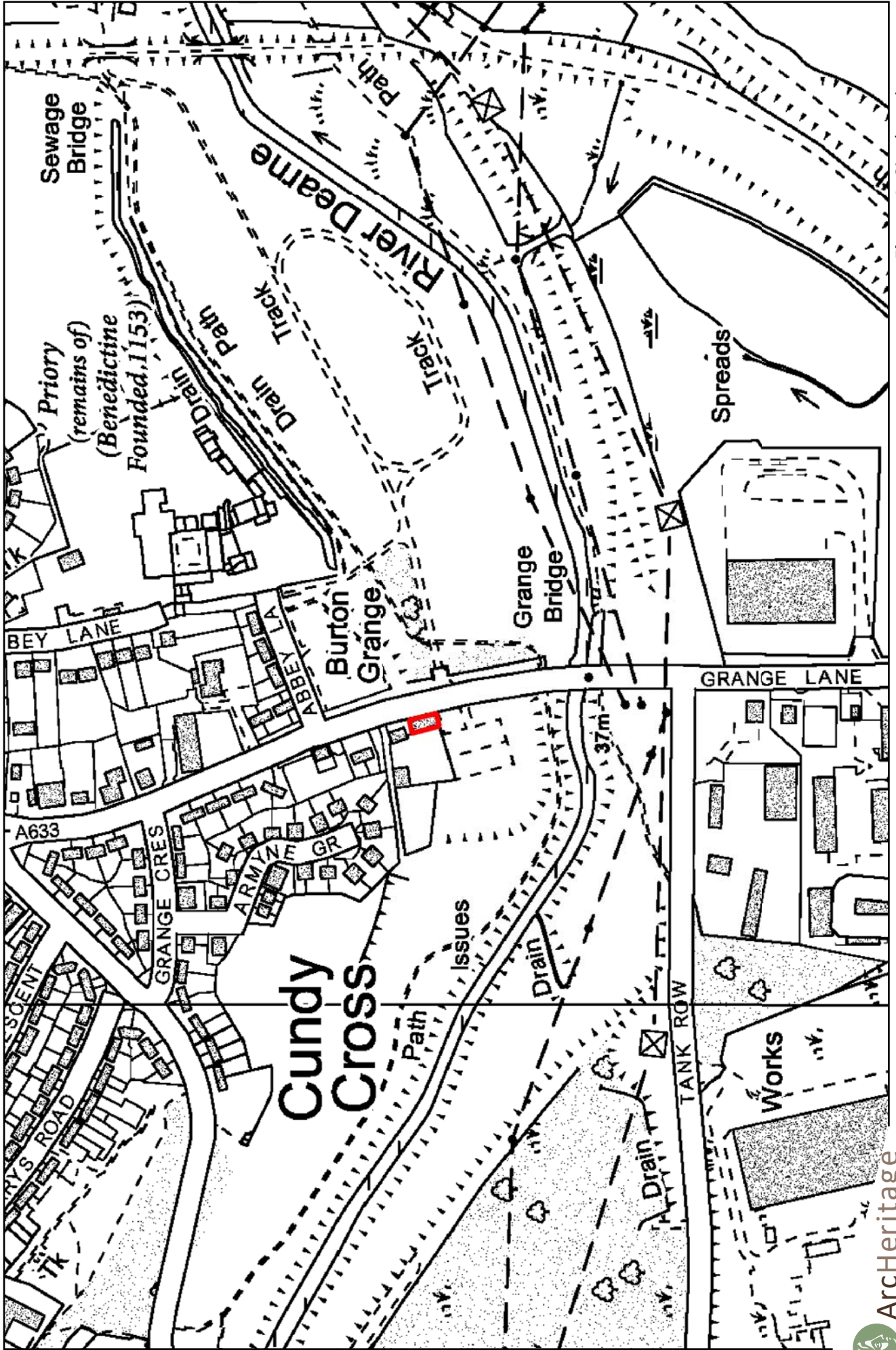


Figure 1: Site location



The site

Figure 2: 1855 OS map



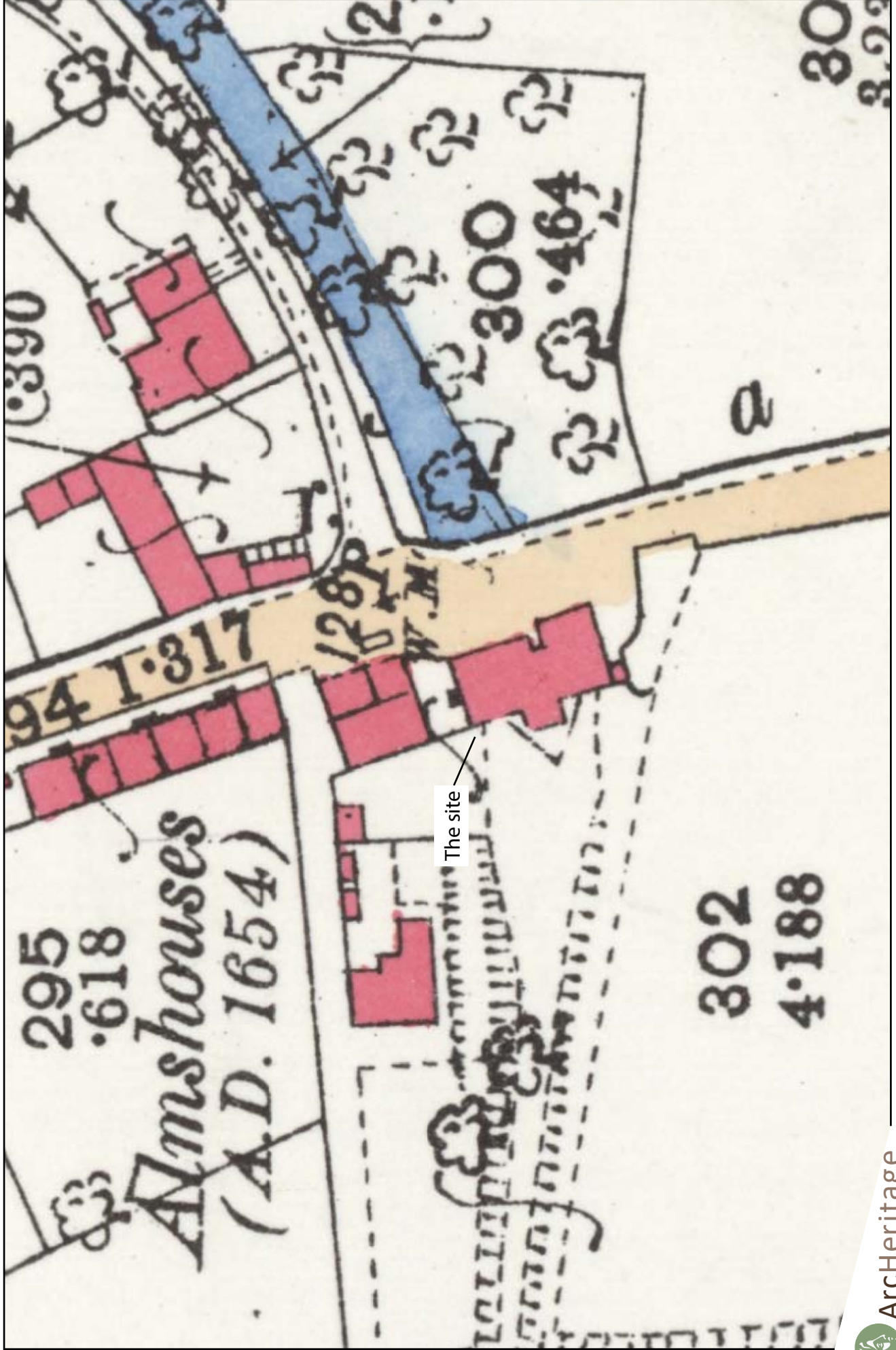


Figure 3: 1892 OS map

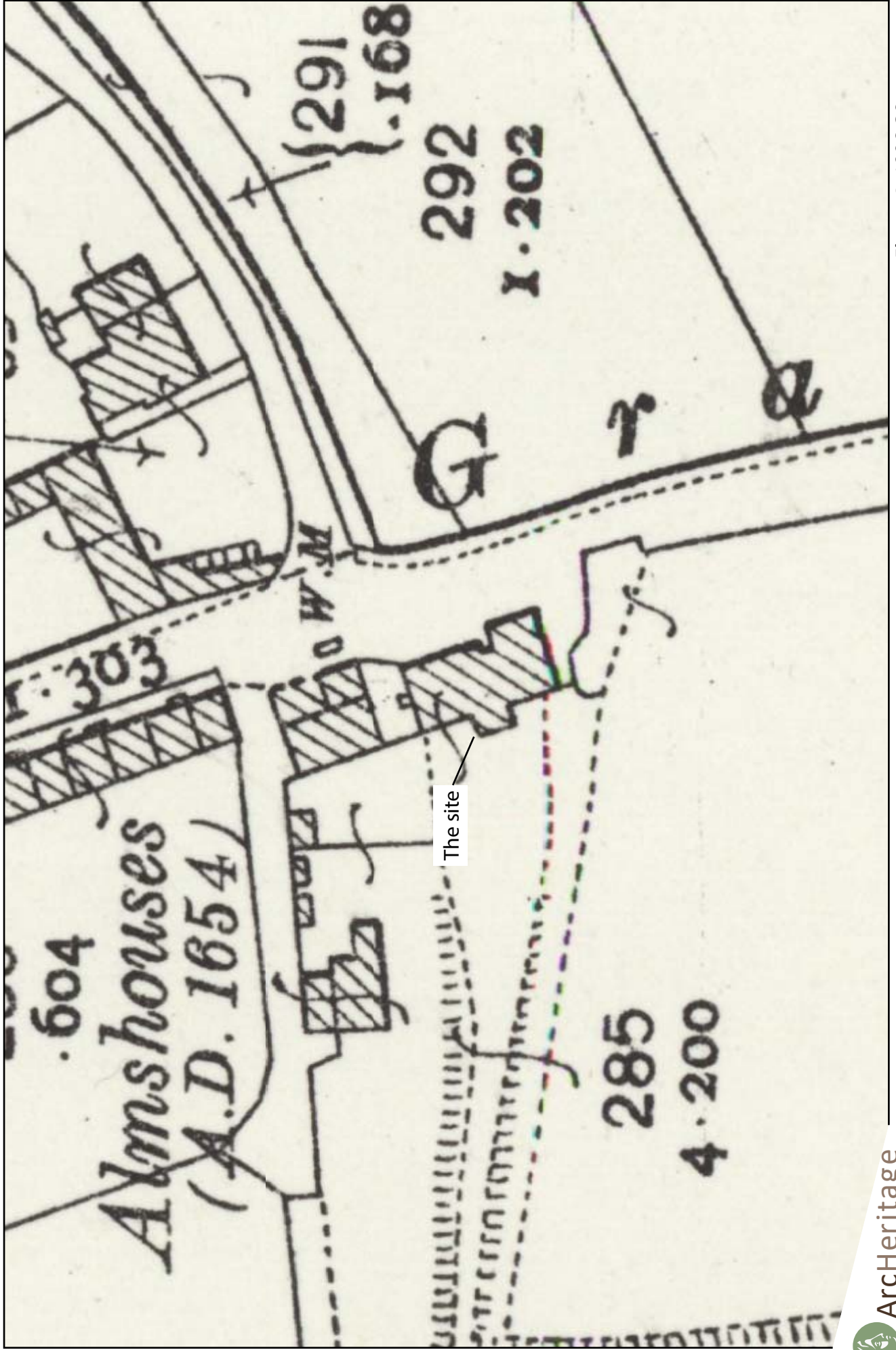


Figure 4: 1906 OS map

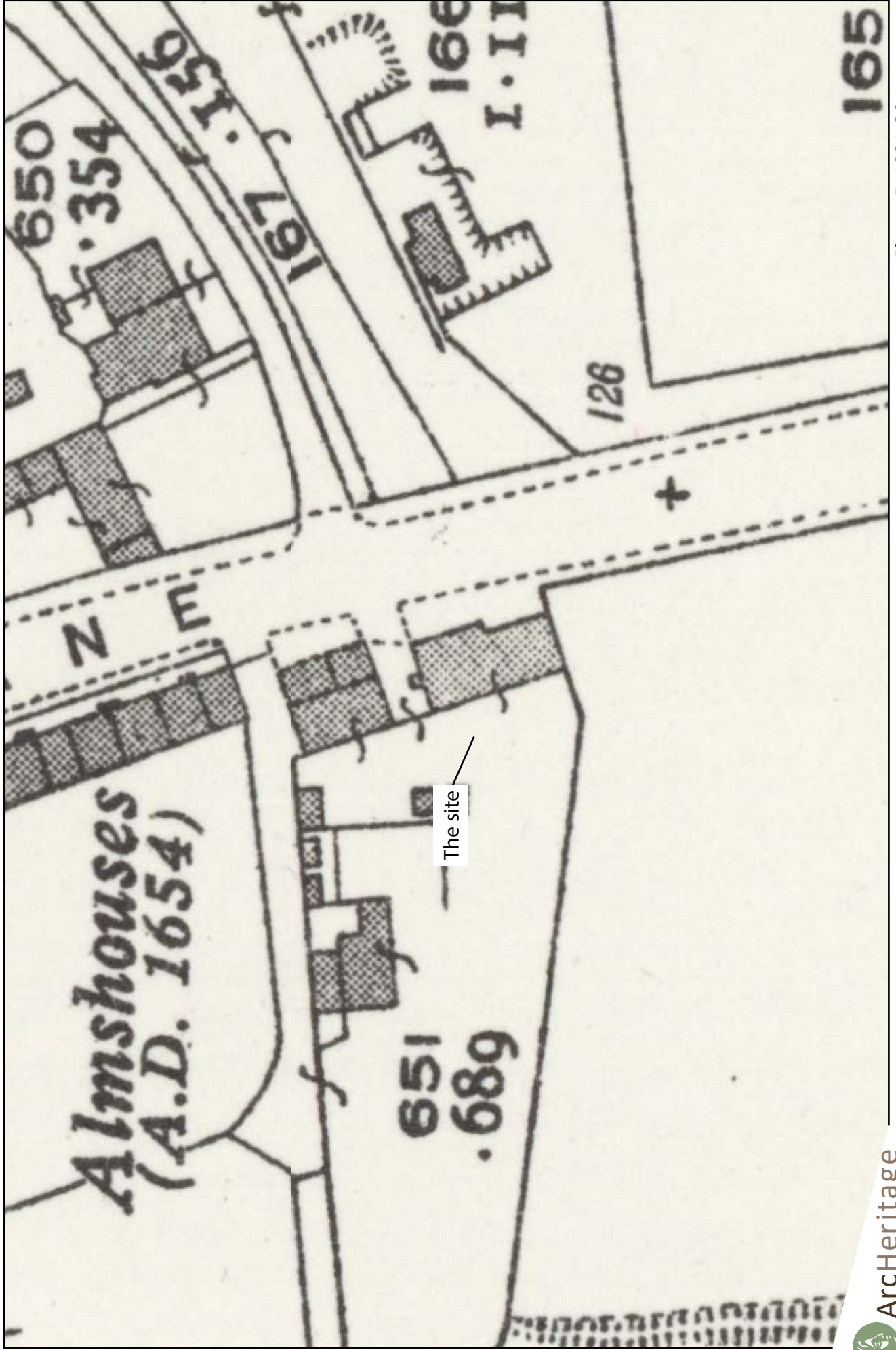


Figure 5: 1931 OS map



APPENDIX 1: INDEX TO ARCHIVE

The site archive is held by Barnsley Museum. Accession Number **BMBC.TH.2535**.

Detail of the archive content is listed below.

Item	Quantity
Graffiti Survey Sheets	21

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