

**MOUNT HOUSE FARM, SMISBY,
DERBYSHIRE**

Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief

2011.

L.Platt

Project Code: MFS



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Summary

- Trent & Peak Archaeology was contracted by Mr Larry South to conduct an archaeological watching brief on ground works associated with the building of an extension to Mount House Farm Smisby, South Derbyshire.
- The west wing of the house was demolished and the removal of its concrete base, along with the excavation of three foundation trenches for the new build, were monitored during the course of the watching brief.
- No archaeological features, layers or deposits of archaeological or palaeo-environmental significance were observed during monitoring of the intrusive ground works.
- A small assemblage of late 19th/early 20th century pot was recovered from the site. Some pottery sherds possibly date to the late 18th and late 17th centuries. None were recovered from definable features and can be interpreted as re-deposited, relating to earlier domestic activity and disposal on the site.
- Monitoring and recording of the foundation trenches revealed that disturbed deposits relating to recent building lay directly over undisturbed geological layers.

Mount House Farm, Smisby, Derbyshire, Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief

CONTENTS

	Page
Summary.....	1
Contents.....	2
List of Figures.....	2
List of Plates.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	2
1 INTRODUCTION.....	3
2 SITE BACKGROUND AND TOPOGRAPHY.....	3
3 METHODOLOGY.....	3
4.RESULTS.....	4
5. CONCLUSIONS.....	4
References.	
Appendix 1 Summary context list.	
Appendix 2 Finds catalogue.	
Appendix 3 Index of archive and arrangements for deposition.	
Appendix 4 OASIS Report.	

List of Figures.

Figure 1 Site location

Figure 2 Site plan

Figure 3 South facing section of Area 03, representative of excavated footings footings.

List of Plates.

Plate 1. Area 01, looking east.

Plate 2. Low stone foundation, 0005, on south side of demolished extension, looking north.

Plate 3. 0001 being broken up prior to removal, looking north

Plate 4. Ground in Areas 01 and 02 being reduced to formation, looking north east.

Plate 5. View of completed ground works, looking east.

Plate 6. South facing section of Area 03, looking north.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Mr Smith and his contractors for their co-operation and assistance during the course of the watching brief. The field work was carried out by Laura Binns. The project was supervised by L.Platt and managed by Dr. Howard Jones of T&PA. Lee Elliott of T&PA commented on the pottery from the site.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Trent & Peak Archaeology was contracted by Mr Larry Smith to conduct a watching brief during intrusive ground works associated with the erection of an extension to the existing building at Mount House Farm, Smisby, Forties Lane, South Derbyshire, centred on SK 34775 19175 (Figure 1).

1.2 The proposed extension involved the demolition of an existing wing of the house, which also appeared to have been a recent extension to the original house. The new build reached a further 4m to the west (Figure 2).

1.3 The aim of the watching brief was to identify the presence of any archaeological remains which may be affected by the ground works, and to achieve an appropriate level of preservation by record. This included an assessment of the overall extent, date and state of preservation of archaeological remains and features of geoarchaeological and palaeoenvironmental significance.

2. SITE BACKGROUND AND TOPOGRAPHY.

2.1 Geology:

2.1.1 The site lay on Permian to Jurassic sandstone, Shepshed Sandstone member, abutted immediately to the north by Thrussington Till. (BGS 1:50,000 series, England and Wales Sheet 141, 2001).

2.2 Archaeological Background

2.2.1. The site lies within the historic settlement core of the village of Smisby, adjacent to St James' Church (a grade 1 listed building) and just to the north of a recorded manor whose surviving structure dates to the 16th century but whose origins lie in the 14th century (HER no. 25821). The church has fabric dating to the 13th and 14th centuries including the south arcade, the chancel and the tower as well as post reformation mullioned windows. (Salter M. 1998, p.82)

2.2.2. The first mention of the village itself is in the Domesday Book (1086) and pre-dates the Norman Conquest (Ekwall 1961). The name is hybrid having an Old English specific and an Old Danish generic; it means the village or settlement of the smiths, (Ekwall, E. 1961), and presumably was a local centre for metal working.

2.2.3 The location of the site within the core of the historic settlement and its proximity to the church present a heightened potential for archaeological discovery.

2.3 Site Topography

2.3.1 The site lies on rising ground at 170m OD, immediately to the north of St James' Church on land that rises to the north. Access to the site from Forties Lane is along a hollow way (Forties Lane itself is also a sunken lane). To the north and east of Mount House Farm, within the grounds of the house, there are what appears to be earth-works which may relate to an earlier period of landscaping in the immediate vicinity of the house.

2.3. The house itself is situated within what appears to be an intrusion into the churchyard of St James' and is perhaps built on land that once fell within the bounds of the church.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 All intrusive groundwork was carried out by a mini digger using a smooth-edged ditching bucket.

3.2 Any archaeological deposits were recorded by scale drawing, sections at 1:20, plans at 1:50, and photography (digital and black and white). All recorded sections were hand cleaned prior to recording. Any finds of archaeological significance were given a unique three letter code, e.g. AAA and their location marked on the site plan or on the relevant section drawing. Any archaeological features or layers were given an individual context number, e.g. 0001. The site was divided into five areas (Figure 1), each of which is reported on below.

4. RESULTS.

Area 01

4.1 The western extension of the existing building, itself a recent addition to the building, was taken down and a concrete slab (0001), which had formed the base for the floor was removed. Below the slab was a layer of modern rubble (0002) which overlay a mid orange/brown layer of silty loam (0003).

4.1.2 On the south side of Area 01 a section of the wall of the demolished extension nearest to the house itself was built of brick resting on a low stone foundation (0005) comprised of irregular angular blocks set in a greyish/yellow mortar butting up to the main wall of the house. This foundation which did not continue to the east below the house was removed during the course of the demolition of the extension and the subsequent ground works for the new built (Plate 5 and Figure 1).

Area 02,

4.2 Area 02 comprised the ground immediately west of the demolished part of the existing building (Figure 2). Ground clearance revealed a deposit of mid brown silty clay (0004), which overlay layer 0003. Included within the disturbed surface of 0003 were flecks of charcoal suggesting that it may have been a dump of material perhaps from bonfires in the immediate vicinity. Further reduction of the ground level led to the removal of 0004 revealing the continuation of layer 0003 beneath.

Area 03

4.3 Area 03 comprised the foundation trench for the north wall of the extension, extending for c. 9m. The trench was excavated by a mini digger using a smooth-edged ditching bucket to a depth of 900mm and a width of 300mm. Hand cleaning and examination of the sections revealed no archaeological features or deposits. As in Area 04 and 05, the layers comprising the natural subsoil (0003) extended to a maximum depth of 800mm. This overlay a further subsoil, 0006 (maximum depth 500mm) which directly overlay bedrock (Figure 3).

Area 04

4.4 Area 04 comprised the foundation trench for the west end-wall of the extension, extending north-south for c.4.2m. The trench was excavated by a mini digger using a smooth-edged ditching bucket to a depth of 900mm and a width of 300mm. Hand cleaning and examination of the sections revealed no archaeological features or deposits. As in Area 03 and 05, the layers comprising the natural subsoil (0003) extended to a maximum depth of 800mm. This overlay a further subsoil, 0006 (maximum depth 500mm) which directly overlay bedrock.

Area 05

4.5 Area 05 comprised the foundation trench for the southern wall of the extension, extending east-west for c. 9m (Figure 2). The trench was excavated by a mini digger using a smooth-edged ditching bucket to a depth of 900mm and a width of 300mm. Hand cleaning and examination of the sections revealed no archaeological features or deposits. As in Area 03 and 05, the layers comprising the natural subsoil (0003) extended to a maximum depth of 800mm. This overlay a further subsoil, 0006 (maximum depth 500mm) which directly overlay bedrock (Figure 4).

5. CONCLUSIONS.

5.1 No features, finds or deposits or archaeological significance were exposed during the ground works associated with the extension to Mount House Farm.

5.2 Within Area 01 a low stone footing (0005) for the brick built south wall of the demolished modern extension, may have originated in an earlier structure. However there was no sign of its continuation to the west in either the stripped surface of Area 01 or in the foundation trench, Area 05.

5.3 A small collection of post-medieval – modern pottery was recovered from the site. The assemblage was dominated by fabrics and forms dating to the 19th and 20th centuries, but also included a number attributable to the latter part of the 18th century, and some 14 sherds derived from two or three vessels may date to the late 17th century (Appendix 2). All of these were recovered from the upper levels of the stripped surface in Areas 02 and 03, contexts 0004, 0002 and 0003. None were recovered from definable features and can be interpreted as re-deposited, relating to earlier domestic activity and disposal on the site. No material dating to the medieval or earlier periods was present.

5.4 Given that the study area had already been subjected to building works it is possible that any archaeological deposits or remains had been removed prior to the present watching brief taking place.

5.6 There were no palaeo-environmental deposits exposed during the course of the ground works.

References

Slater, M. 1998, The Old Parish Churches of Derbyshire, Folly Publications.

Ekwall, E. 1961, Dictionary of English Place Names, Oxford University Press.

Appendix 1. Summary Context List.

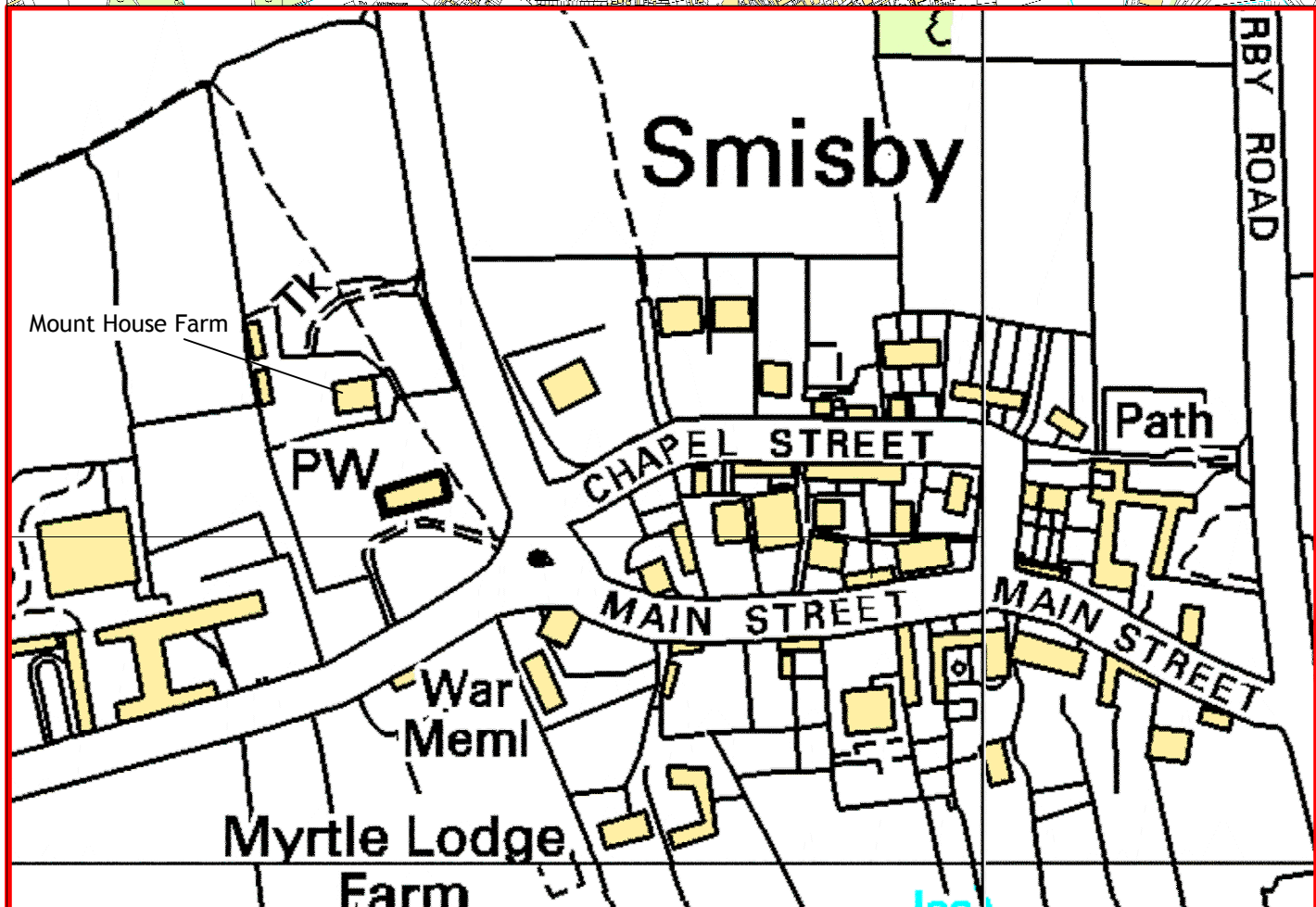
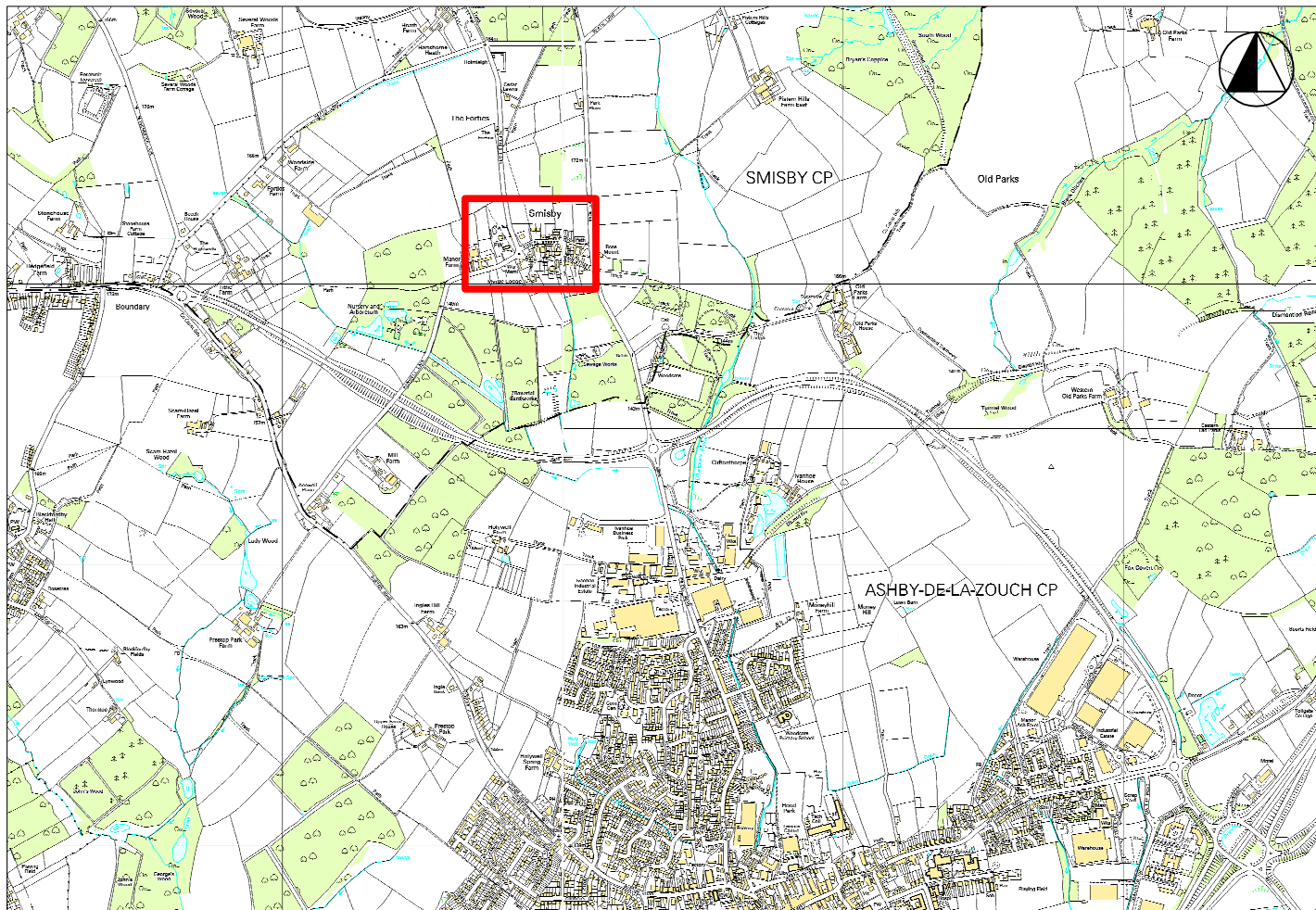
CONTEXT	DESCRIPTION	THICKNESS	AREA
0001	Modern concrete pad	100mm	01
0002	Rubble	40mm	01
0003	mid orange/brown silt	800mm, maximum	01, 02,03, 04, 05.
0004	dark brown clay	90mm, average	02
0005	Stone foundation	300mm high	01
0006	Light brown/yellow sandy silt with limestone inclusions.	400mm	03, 04, 05.
0007	Firm yellow/orange clay with white laminations.	100mm	05, 04
0008	Red sand	200mm observed	03, 04, 05


Appendix 2. Finds catalogue.

Find Code	Material	Description	Context	Date
AAA	Pot	Rim with handle, red fabric with brown/purple glaze	0004, surface	Late 17 th century
AAB	Pot	Rim, red fabric with brown/purple glaze, same vessel as AAA	0004, surface	Late 17 th century
AAC	Pot	Rim orange fabric with brown salt glaze interior, part of large bowl	0004, surface	Late 18 th century
AAD	Pot	Rim, orange fabric with brown salt glaze interior, same vessel as AAC	0004, surface	Late 18 th century
AAE	Pot	Base, orange fabric with brown salt glaze interior, part of butter pot	0004, surface	Late 18 th century
AAF	Pot	Base, orange fabric with brown salt glaze interior from same vessel as AAE	0004, surface	Late 18 th century
AAG	Pot	Base, orange fabric with brown salt glaze interior, part of butter pot, same as AAE	0004, surface	Late 18 th century

AAH	Pot	Rim, square profile, orange fabric with brown salt glaze interior, part of large bowl	0004, surface	Late 18 th century
AAI	Pot	Body, orange fabric with brown salt glaze interior	0004, surface	Late 18 th century
AAJ	Pot	Body, orange fabric with brown salt glaze interior	0004, surface	Late 18 th century
AAK	Pot	Base, orange fabric with brown salt glaze interior	0004, surface	Late 18 th century
AAL	Pot	Body, fragment, orange fabric with trace of brown salt glaze interior	0004, surface	Late 18 th century
AAM	Pot	Body, fragment, orange/red fabric with brown salt glaze interior	0004, surface	Late 18 th century
AAN	Pot	Body, fragment, orange fabric with brown salt glaze	0004, surface	Late 18 th century
AAO	Pot	Rim, yellow glaze exterior, white glaze interior, Exterior decoration of diagonal rope motif. Cream fabric	0004, 20-40cms	19 th /20 th century
AAP	Pot	Body, white glaze interior and exterior, white/cream fabric	0004, 20-40cms	19 th /20 th century
AAQ	Pot	Body, same vessel as AAP	0004, 20-40cms	19 th /20 th century
AAR	Pot	Body, same vessel as AAP	0004, 20-40cms	19 th /20 th century
AAS	Pot	Rim, square profile, orange fabric with brown salt glaze interior, part of large bowl	0004, surface	Late 18 th century
AAT	Pot	Rim,	0004, surface	19 th /20 century
AAU	Pot	Rim with applied coarse sand decoration	0004, surface	modern
AAV	Pot	Body, white glaze interior and exterior with blue transfer print flower motif	0002, surface	19 th /20 century
AAW	Pot	Body, same vessel as AAV	0002, surface	19 th /20 century
AAX	Glass	Green window glass	0003, surface	modern

AAY	Glass	Brown, part of bottle neck	0003, surface	19 th /20 th century
AAZ	Glass	Whole bottle, clear glass	0003, surface	modern




 MFS Mount House Farm, Smisby
 Figure 1 Site location plan
 Scale at A4 1:25000 / 1:2500

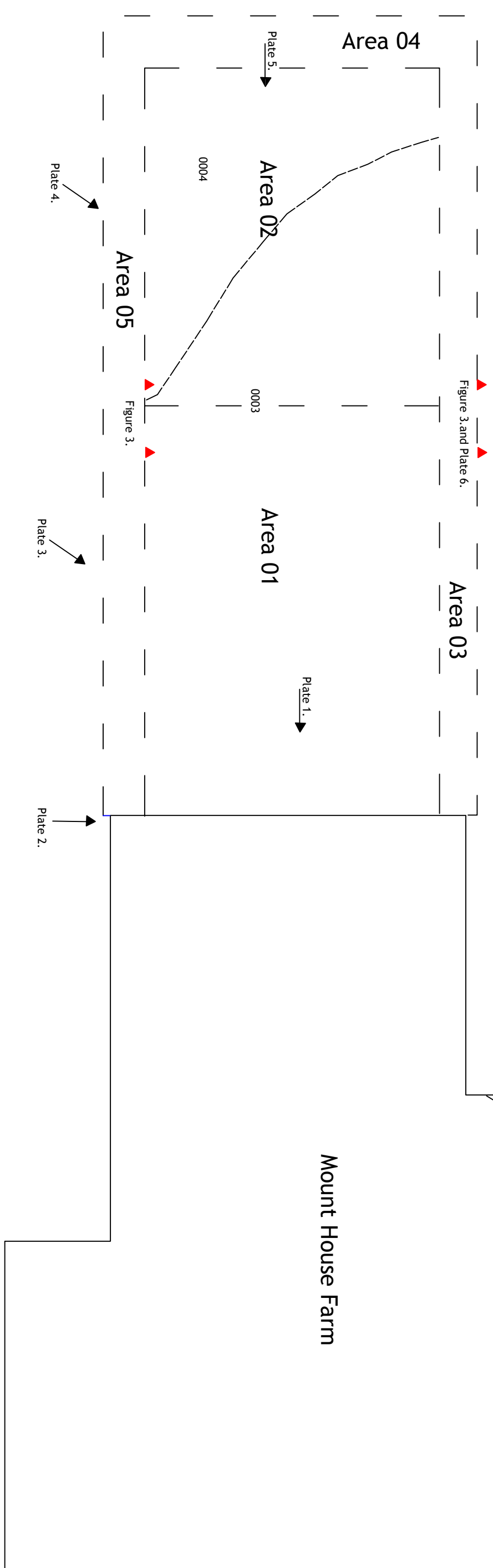
Ordnance Survey map reproduced with the permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office
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Site of demolished ancillary buildings
(not included in watching brief)

path

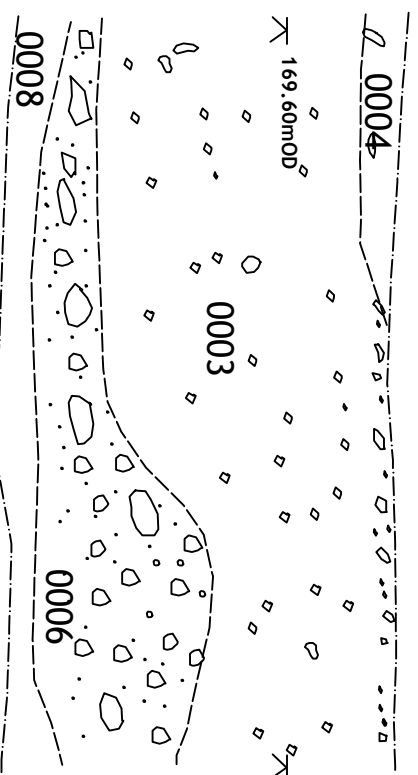
door



Mount House Farm

W

E

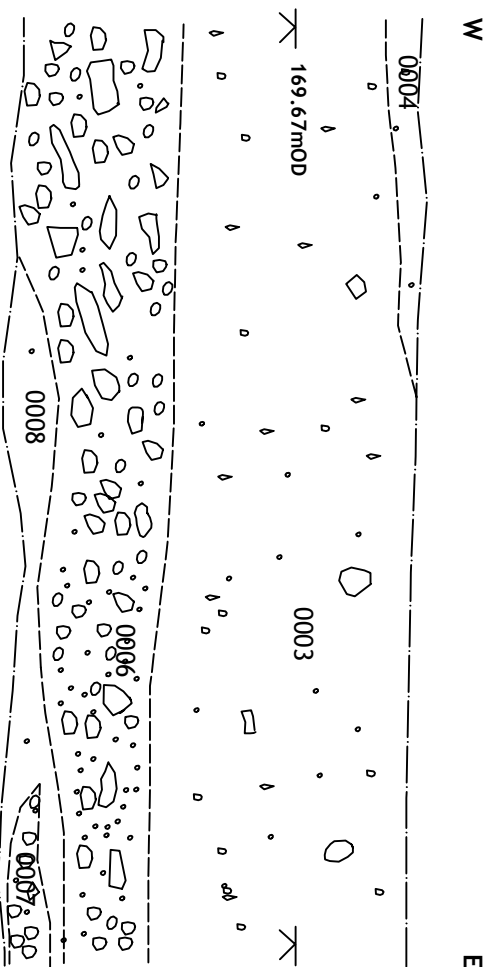


0003 - mid orange/brown sandy silt

0004 - dark brown silty clay with modern rubble inclusions

0006 - light brown/yellow sandy silt with sandstone inclusions

0008 - red sand above natural sandstone bedrock



- 0003 - mid orange/brown sandy silt
- 0004 - dark brown silty clay with modern rubble inclusions.
- 0006 - light brown/yellow sandy silt with sandstone inclusions.
- 0007 - firm yellow/orange clay with white laminations.
- 0008 - Red sand above natural sandstone bedrock.

MFS Figure 4. South facing section of Area 05. Scale 1:20 @ A4



PLATE 1. Area 01 with modern extension in the process of demolition. The concrete slab, 0001 can be seen on the background and 0002 and 0003 in the mid and foreground respectively. Looking east.



PLATE 2. The low stone foundation, 0005, in part of the south wall of the demolished extension. Looking north.



PLATE 3. 0001 being broken up prior to removal
Looking north.



PLATE 4. Ground in Areas 01 and 02 being reduced to formation. Looking north east.



PLATE 5. View of completed ground works. Looking east.



PLATE 6. South facing section of Area 03. This section is broadly representative of the footing trenches that were observed during the course of the watching brief.

APPENDIX 3 Index of Archive and arrangements for deposition

<i>Field Records</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Number</i>
Watching brief sheet	Record of visit and work carried out	4
Drawing record	List of drawings made on site	1
Photographic record	List of photographs taken on site	1
Context records	Record of contexts recorded on site	8
Site drawings on A3 sheets	Site plan @1:200 Section drawings @1:20 on A3 permatrace	1 3
Photographs:- Digital B&W (with negatives)	All views Recorded sections	61 16
Finds	Post med pot Glass shreds (modern) Bottle, complete, modern	18 2 1
<i>Documents</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Number</i>
Written scheme of investigation	Statement of the aims, objectives and methodology for the project.	1
Report to client	Report of findings of the watching brief.	1

Archive Deposition.

The archive is currently held in the offices of Trent & Peak Archaeology, Lenton House, University of Nottingham. It will be deposited at the Derby Museum and Art Gallery, project code MFS, accession number DBYMU2011-4. The archive will be deposited by the end of January 2012.