

MANSFIELD TOWN HALL, MANSFIELD NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.

Report on a watching brief on trenching at the base of the south-east elevation of the Town Hall,



Mansfield Town Hall c. 1900

Prepared by: L.Platt

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Trent & Peak Archaeology
Unit 1, Holly Lane
Chilwell
Nottingham
NG9 4AB
Tel: 0115 896 7400
Email: trentpeak@yorkat.co.uk

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|----------------------|---|
| Prepared by | Laurence Platt, Project Officer |
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| Approved by | Howard Jones (Head of Operations) |
| Signed |  |
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Summary

- Trent & Peak Archaeology was contracted by Mansfield District Council to conduct an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of an exploratory trench on the south-west elevation of the Town Hall.
- The Town Hall is a Grade II listed building erected in 1832, Its construction had occasioned considerable re-development of the market place area and its enlargement to the south-west.
- The excavation of the trench was to assess whether or not water was seeping from ground level into the cellar and basements below the extension to the Town Hall that was constructed in 1877.
- The exploratory trench was excavated by hand and all intrusive groundwork was conducted under continuous archaeological supervision.
- The excavation revealed modern layers associated with the laying of a block pavement and the insertion of a vent pipe, this latter in the early 21st century. The outer face of the walling for the cellar was also revealed.
- No archaeological features or deposits were revealed or disturbed by the trenching and there were no finds or artefacts of any archaeological significance uncovered as a result of the excavation.
- The limited size of the trench, 2m x 0.3m x 800mm, does not provide an indication of the archaeological potential of the immediate area surrounding the Town Hall. Spittlehouse Gate, now renamed Market Street, suggests the existence of a medieval hospital in the vicinity. Medieval remains may still exist close to/adjacent to the Town Hall which is situated within the historic core of Mansfield.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Trent & Peak Archaeology was contracted by Mansfield District Council to carry out a watching brief on ground work, an exploratory trench, on the exterior of the south west elevation of the Town Hall.

1.2 The Town Hall is a Grade II listed building and lies within Mansfield District Council's Bridge Street and Market Place Conservation Area

1.3 The ground work was carried out in order to establish the cause of water collecting on the interior walls of the cellars.

1.4 The exploratory trench is located at SK53830 61046.

2. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Mansfield Town Hall was built in 1836 (date on the front of the building) with an extension to the rear designed by Nottingham Architect Watson Fothergill and constructed in the 1870s.

2.2 Approximately 500m to the south-west of the site medieval remains were revealed in advance of a new development (Tina Smith, MDC, pers com).

2.3 The thoroughfare on which the south-east elevation of the Town Hall stands was formally called Spittlehouse Gate suggesting that a medieval hospital may once stood in the vicinity.

2.4 Mansfield developed as a market town in the medieval period with a market charter being granted in 1227. Some industrial activity emerged concurrently but it was later during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, that industrial activity increased significantly based around a range of trades including malting, framework knitting and cotton production. MDC 2008.

3. OBJECTIVES

3.1 The objective of the watching brief was to identify and characterise (date, extent of) any archaeological features and deposits that may be impacted by the ground work. The reported results will inform the decision making process of the planning authority as to the need or otherwise for further archaeological monitoring in the event of further work in the area of the Town Hall, and form the basis of the agreement of an appropriate scheme of mitigation should this be required.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 All intrusive ground work was carried out under archaeological supervision.

4.2 All recorded layers and archaeological features were given a unique context number, e.g.0001. Finds were given a unique finds code, e.g. AAA and their location marked on the relevant section drawing or plan.

4.3 Trench sections and plans were recorded by scale drawing at a scale of 1:20 and by digital photographic images.

5. RESULTS

5.1 A single hand dug trench, 2m x 0.3m x 800mm was excavated along the south-west facing elevation of the Town Hall (Figure 2).

5.2 The block brickwork paving, 0001, that had been laid in 2004 was removed, the bricks being stored for later reinstatement. Below this a layer of sand, 0002, was revealed which had formed the underlay for the paving. Inclusions of tarmac pieces and modern detritus were observed. Below 0002 there was a layer of irregular sandstone laminate in a matrix of soft red clay, 0003.

5.3 A recently installed plastic vent pipe was revealed 100mm below the paving. This had been inserted after the paving. There was no discernible evidence of the cut for the pipe except for the tarmac and modern detritus which has been interpreted as the back fill for the trench, Figure 3.

5.4 There was no indication that water was seeping into the building either from the ground surface or from any damaged or broken drainage.

5.5 The stratigraphic sequence revealed in the north-west facing section of the trench, Figure 5a, is set out below:

| <u>Context</u> | <u>Thickness</u> | <u>Description</u> |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|--|
| 0001 | 100mm | Orange/brown bricks forming the block paving |
| 0002 | 400mm | Yellow sand forming the underlay for 0001 |
| 0003 | 400mm observed | Irregular sandstone laminate in a matrix of soft red clay. |

5.6 The south-east facing section of the trench exposed recent brickwork surmounting the original sandstone blocks of the cellars and basements of the late 19th century extension to the Town Hall.

5.7 The stratigraphic sequence revealed in the south-east facing section of the trench, Figure 5b, is set out below:

| <u>Context</u> | <u>Thickness</u> | <u>Description</u> |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|---|
| 0004 | 215mm | modern brickwork |
| 0005 | 600mm observed | sandstone blocks, upper courses of original wall of the cellar/basement |

5.7 There were no archaeological deposits or artefacts revealed as a result of the ground works.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 All deposits observed during the monitoring of the ground work were of modern origin.

6.2 The narrowness of the trench limited the scope for archaeological observations that may produce information on activity in the area prior to the construction of the extension at the rear of the Town Hall.

6.3 That no foundation cut for the Town Hall extension was apparent is probably due to the fact that the walls, below ground, were built up against the sides of an excavated pit which defined the extent of the cellar.

6.4 The area surrounding the Town Hall has undergone significant re development in the 19th and 20th centuries and the extent of this can be seen from the maps reproduced in Figure 2, Figure 3 and Figure 4.

7. CONCLUSION

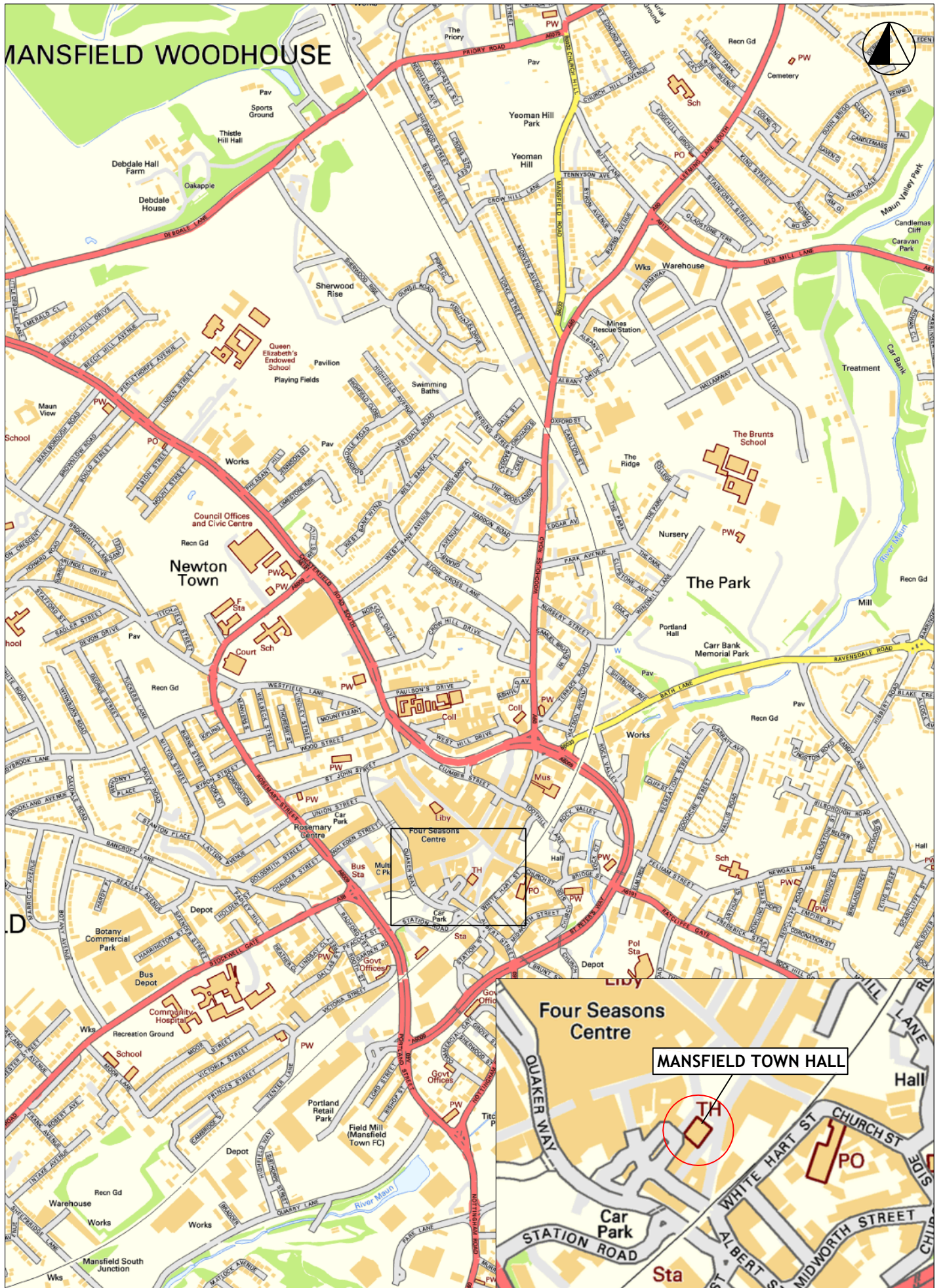
7.1 No significant archaeological features or deposits were revealed as a result of the groundworks associated with the exploratory trench.

7.2 This is due mainly to the limited extent of the trench, 2m x 0.3m x 800mm. The trench was excavated through modern disturbance associated with the laying of block paving and the subsequent insertion of a vent pipe on the early 21st century.

7.3 The area itself remains one in which there is archaeological potential given its association with the historic market place whose origins lie in the medieval period, the indication in the street name Spittlehouse Gate that there was a medieval hospital in the vicinity and the subsequent industrial development of Mansfield which would have had an impact direct or indirect on the development of the market place and surrounding area.

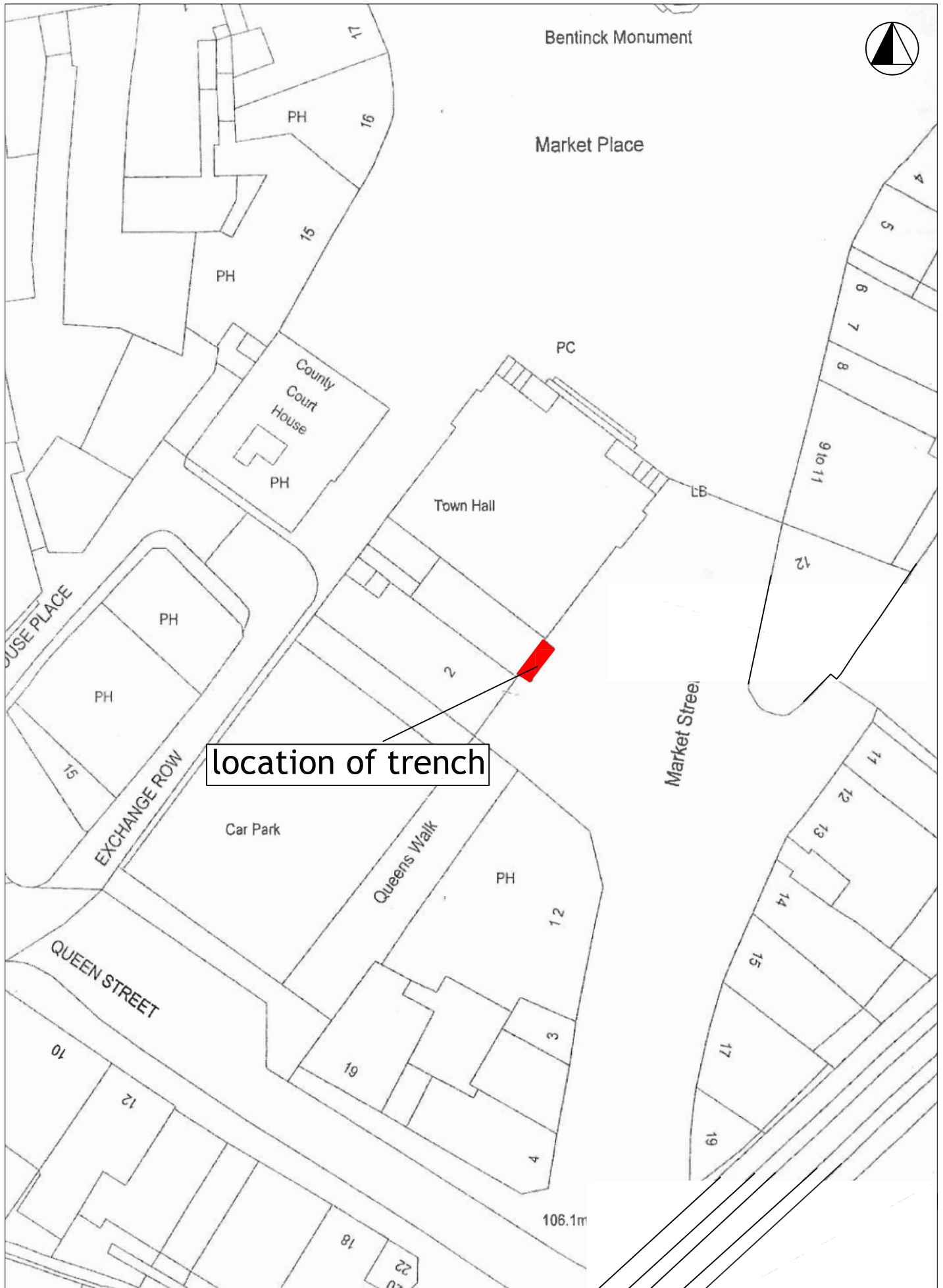
Reference.

MDC, 2008, *Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, Bridge Street and Market Place Conservation Areas*. Mansfield District Council



tp MTT. Figure 1. Location of Mansfield Town Hall. Scale 1:1250@A4, Inset Scale 1:500@A4.

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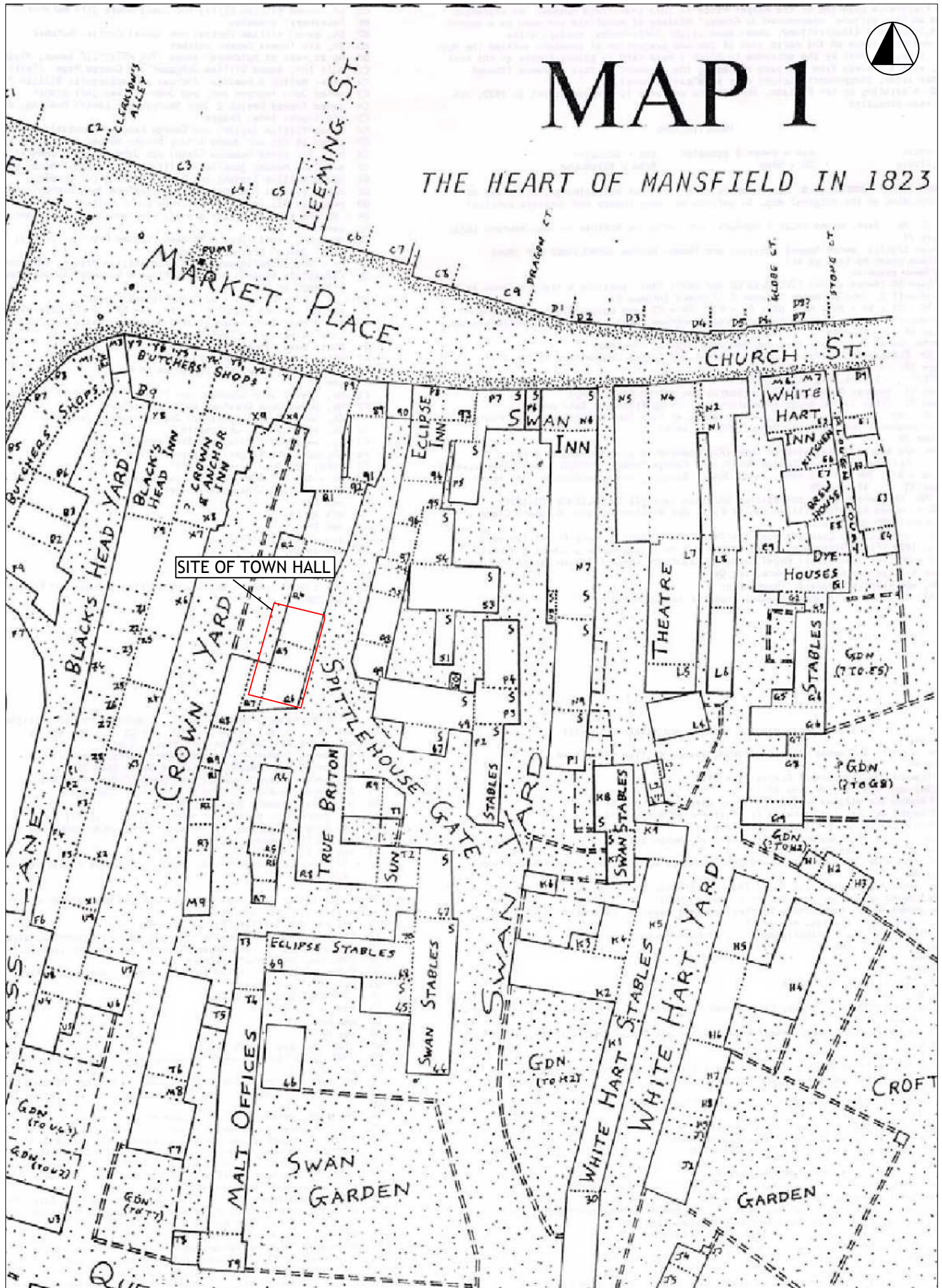
location of trench

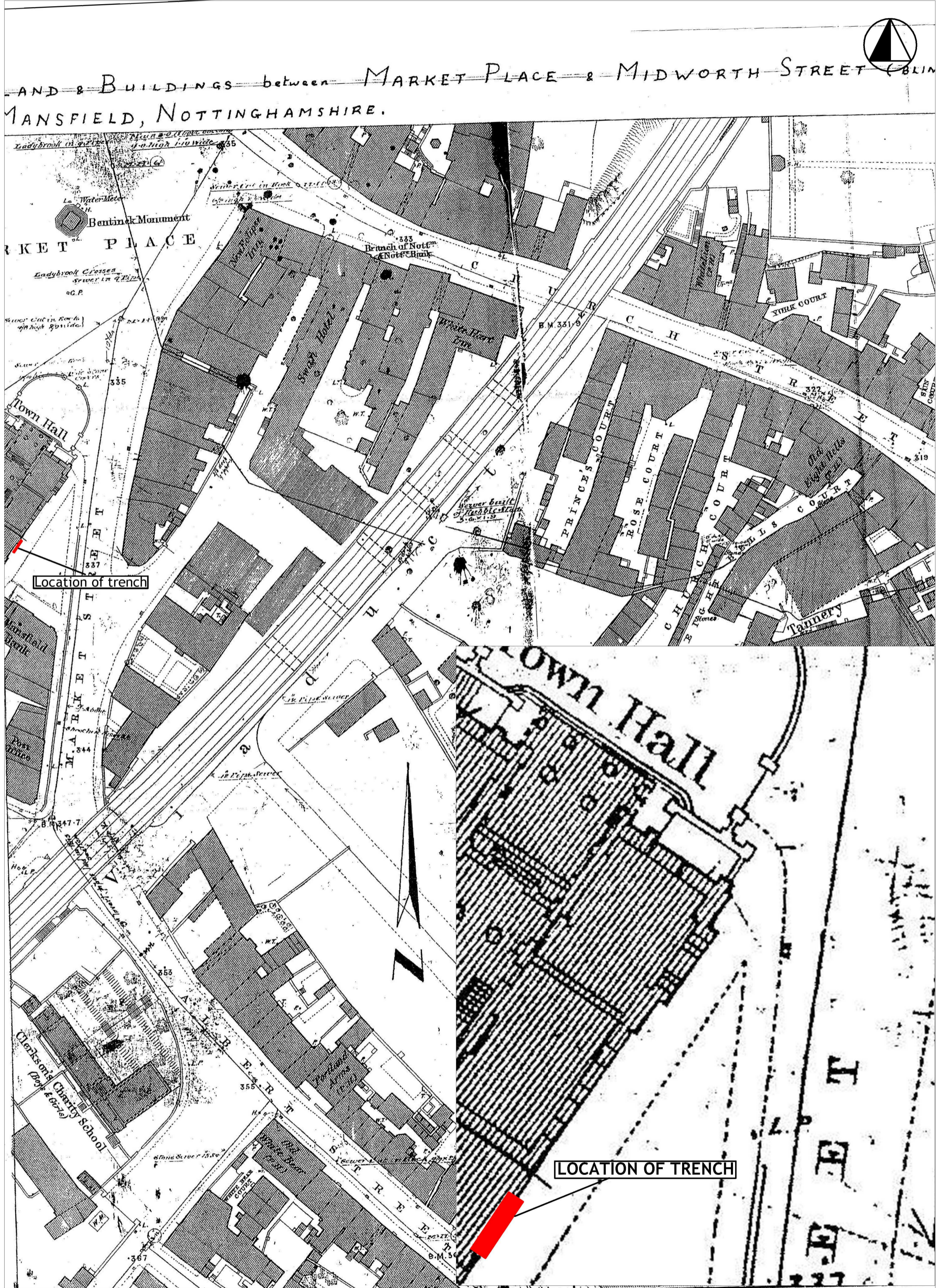
tp MTT Figure 2. Modern street layout surrounding the Town Hall. Scale 1:500@A4.
 Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2012.



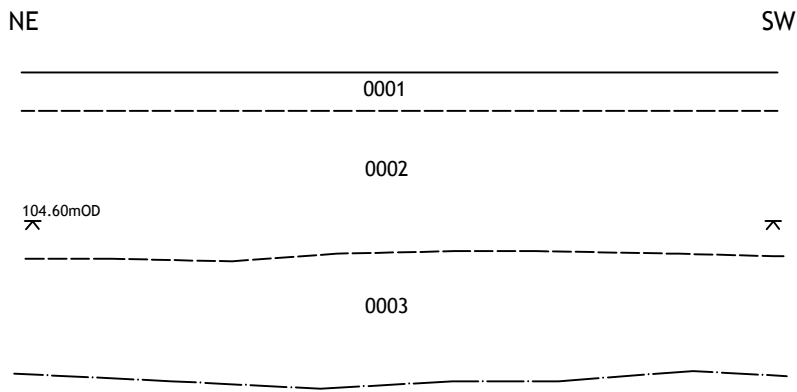
MAP 1

THE HEART OF MANSFIELD IN 1823



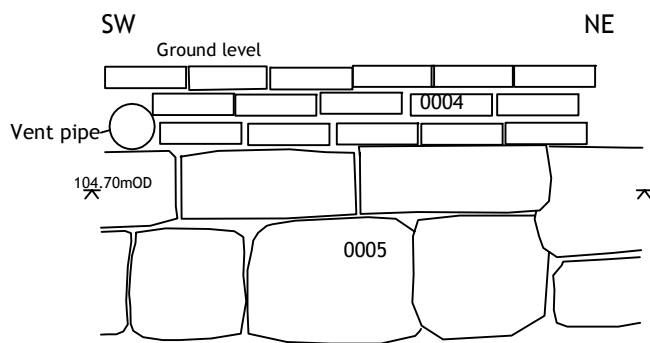


tp MTT Figure 4. Extract from the Captain Beamish Plan, 1877 showing the market place and the location of the location of the trench. Scale 1:1000@A4. Inset scale 1:250@A4.
 Trent & Peak
 With permission of Mansfield District Council.



0001 block paving
 0002 yellow sand
 0003 sandstone irregular laminates in matrix of red clay

Figure 5a representative section of trench, facing north-west.



0004 modern brickwork
 0005 sandstone foundation of Town Hall cellar

Figure 5b representative section of trench, facing south-east.



Plate 1. South-east facing section of trench with vent pipe in situ. Looking south-west.



Plate 2. North-west facing section of trench. Looking north-east.