

**Archaeological Watching Brief
on land off
Leek New Road / Sapphire Drive
Milton
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire
NGR SJ 89923 50543**

Planning Application No: SOT/49495

Site Code: LNRM 12

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Contents

	Non-technical summary	1
1.0	Introduction	1
2.0	Site location & character	1
3.0	Geology	2
4.0	Archaeological and historical background	2
	<i>Background history</i>	2
	<i>Site history</i>	3
	<i>Site development</i>	4
5.0	Methodology	5
	<i>Aims & objectives</i>	5
	<i>Method statement</i>	6
6.0	Results of the watching brief	6
7.0	Discussion	8
8.0	Conclusions	10
9.0	Acknowledgements	11
10.0	References	11
	FIG. 1: Site location	15
	FIG. 2: Site plan, with the boundary of the development area outlined in red and the location of structure (102) in blue	16
	FIG. 3: Extract from the 1843 tithe map showing Downfieldside Farm, with the development area outlined in red	17

FIG. 4: Extract from 1881 OS map, with the development area outlined in red	17
FIG. 5: Extract from 1925 OS map, with the development area outlined in red	18
FIG. 6: Extract from 1950 OS map, with the development area outlined in red	18
FIG. 7: Plan of cellar structure	19
FIG. 8: South west-facing elevation of cold-slab in Bay 1 (106)	20
PLATE 1: General view during removal of topsoil (100), looking north west	21
PLATE 2: Brick structure (102) revealed in plan, looking north	21
PLATE 3: General view of Bay 1 in foreground, looking north. Note steps (104) at lower left and cold-slab (106) on right	22
PLATE 4: General view across Bay 2, looking south. Note possible steps (109), centre left, and contrasting floor surfaces	22
PLATE 5: General view of the cold-slab (106), looking east. Note footings at right and portion of stepped out wall (102) surmounted by stone (107)	23
PLATE 6: Detail of steps (109) in Bay 1, looking south west	23
APPENDIX 1 Summary of census information	24
APPENDIX 2 Summary of tithe award information, 1843	28

Non-technical summary

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief conducted by Cramp Sutherland Archaeological Services in June 2012. This comprised monitoring groundworks undertaken in advance of a residential development on brownfield land adjacent to Leek New Road at Milton, in the north east of Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire.

Between the late 18th century and the mid 20th century the site was occupied by a farmstead known as Downfieldside. A cellar belonging to the farmhouse was uncovered during the project, the differing construction methods of which implied two separate phases of development.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Full planning consent for a single detached dwelling and driveway at Sapphire Drive, off Leek New Road, Milton, Stoke-on-Trent, was granted by the Local Planning Authority (LPA), Stoke-on-Trent City Council, on 10th June 2009 (ref. SOT/49495). This application supplemented an earlier one (SOT/39667) submitted in March 2002.

1.2 A condition for an archaeological watching brief to monitor groundworks in the development area (DA) was requested by the LPA's Planning Archaeologist. It was implemented in accordance with the Saved Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Strategic Plan Policy *NC14: Sites of archaeological importance* and conformed with statutory government legislation regarding national planning policies. Cramp Sutherland Archaeological Services (CSARC) was appointed by JPK Design Ltd to undertake the project.

2.0 Site location & character

2.1 The village of Milton is situated on the edge of the Staffordshire Moorlands, 1.3 km south of Norton-in-the-Moors and 3.0 km north east of Burslem, one of the six towns that form the city of Stoke-on-Trent (Fig. 1).

2.2 The DA is a brownfield site located on the north west outskirts of Milton, centred on NGR SJ 89923 50543. It is bounded to the east by new residential properties on Sapphire Drive, and to the north on Diamond Crescent (Fig. 2). To the west is waste ground, beyond which is Norton Lane. To the south is Leek New Road (A53), the main road from Newcastle-under-Lyme *via* Cobridge to the moorland market town of Leek.

2.3 The study site is broadly L-shaped in plan, aligned NW – SE, and constitutes a tract of rough ground, sloping down from west to east. It covers a gross area of c. 0.05 hectares (0.12 acres) and lies at an average elevation of approximately 146m aOD.

3.0 Geology

3.1 The geological setting of the DA is characterised by surface drifts of Quaternary glacial till containing diamicton, i.e. poorly sorted sediments of outwash sand and gravel, deposited during the last ice age. This overlies a solid geology (bedrock) of the Pennine Upper Coal Measures Formation, comprising sedimentary mudstone, siltstone and sandstone (British Geological Survey).

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

4.1 *Background history*

4.1.1 Historically, until its incorporation within the borough of Stoke-on-Trent in 1922, the rural hamlet of Milton lay within the ecclesiastical parish of Norton-in-the-Moors. The parish is described in 1842 (Ward, 532) as, '*rude and hilly ground ... within which are many good dairy and mixed farms, but the greater portion is bleak and barren*'.

4.1.2 The successive arrival in Milton of a canal, turnpike and railway infrastructure encouraged industrial development during the 19th century, including aluminium and chemical works, iron foundries and coal mining (Staffordshire Past-Track). In 1920 the electrical engineering company,

Bullers Ltd, opened a factory making porcelain insulators and high tension fittings for power distribution systems. The firm was consolidated as Allied Insulators in 1959, but ceased production at Milton in 2001 (Allied Insulators). The works was demolished in 2003 and replaced by the Moorland View housing estate by 2006.

4.2 *Site history*

4.2.1 A farmstead known as Downfieldside was extant by 1805, in the tenancy of William Grindey (British Newspaper Archive). He was also named in the national Land Tax redemption schedule of 1798 (TNA, IR23/79/1), with the landowner identified as Hugh Ford. There are archived copyhold deeds pertaining to Downfieldside and the Ford family of nearby Ford Green Hall dating back to 1657 (BCA, MS 3558/171).

4.2.2 In 1805 the farm was put up for public auction. It is described as '*a very valuable estate*', comprising a house with yard, various outbuildings, two barns and 67 acres of unimproved land (British Newspaper Archive). It is conceivable this sale relates to the surrender by Hugh Ford of the '*messuage called Downfield*' to the lord of the manor, John Sparrow, in 1806 (SRO, D1798/174). Following the latter's decease in 1821 (Staffordshire Past-Track), the property passed to Sir George Chetwynd, MP for Stafford, in right of his wife, who was Sparrow's eldest daughter and co-heiress.

4.2.3 Thomas Woolliscroft was tenant in 1834 (White, 664). He was also enumerated in the 1841 national census (see Appendix 1) and the 1843 tithe award schedule. The latter document confirms that Sir George was the owner, and shows that the holding had shrunk to just under 33 acres. The land is recorded as being mostly laid to grass, indicative of pastoral husbandry (Appendix 2). The tithe map (Fig. 3) also shows that the farm was bisected by the turnpike, now Leek New Road, construction of which started in c. 1840.

4.2.4 Woolliscroft died in 1849 (FreeBMD) and there is no mention of the farm in the 1851 census. William Kirkham is the next known occupant in 1861; in the census of that year he states he is farming 30 acres. By 1871, the census records reveal that the estate had shrunk to 26 acres. In 1883 Kirkham applied for a license to slaughter horses at Downfieldside (SRO, Q/SB 1883 E/31). It is unclear whether his application was granted, as he is listed only as a farmer in 1896 (Kelly, 277).

4.2.5 William and his wife both died in 1900 (FreeBMD) and the 1901 census relates that Downfieldside Farm is 'uninhabited'. William Kirkham, the occupant recorded in 1904 (Kelly, 295) and 1907 (Staffs Sentinel, 1130), was probably the grandson enumerated in the 1881 and 1891 censuses. By 1911 the tenancy was held by Charles Bowyer. This is the last direct reference to Downfieldside Farm. Bowyer was still farming in Milton up to 1924 (Kelly, 315), but the name of his holding is not identified and Kelly's 1928 directory shows he had left the district.

4.2.6 The subsequent history of the site is vague. The farmhouse might have become a private residence after 1911 or been acquired by Bullers Ltd, probably by 1937. By 1950 it was known as Lodge House and may have become a reception centre for the works. A former employee recalls being directed to 'the lodge' on her first day in 1949 (This is Staffordshire).

4.3 *Site development*

4.3.1 The 1843 tithe schedule (SRO, D5080) (Fig. 3) provides the earliest plan of Downfieldside. It shows a T-shaped farmhouse on the north side of the road, identified as plot 101 in the accompanying apportionment (transcribed in Appendix 2). The main farmyard (plot 101a) appears to be on the south side of the road.

4.3.2 On the 1881 Ordnance Survey (OS) map (Fig. 4) there is now a small free-standing structure east of the house, probably a pen-and-run pigsty. There

1913 Inland Revenue edition. The 1925 map (Fig. 5) shows the Milton Works is extant, located immediately to the north east of the DA. The farmhouse has been reconfigured since 1913, with the addition of a projection at its northern end, creating a cross-shaped plan. The sty is gone, replaced by a rectangular building, possibly associated with the factory.

4.3.3 The Downfieldside homestead remains intrinsically unaltered in 1937 (Fig. 6), although the adjacent property has been substantially extended. By 1950 (Fig. 7) the old farmhouse is labelled as Lodge House and sits beside a track that appears to provide access to the Milton Works. The house is present on the 1977 OS map, but gone from the 1986 edition.

5.0 Methodology

5.1 Aims & objectives

5.1.1 A watching brief is defined by the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* as a programme of observation and investigation conducted during any work carried out for non-archaeological reasons (IfA 2008).

5.1.2 Site procedures were conducted in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), produced by CSARC (Sutherland 2012). The project adhered to current best archaeological practice and the relevant national codes of conduct, standards and guidance advocated in the *By-laws of the Institute for Archaeologists* (IfA 2010).

5.1.3 Within the limitations of the development, the specified aims and objectives of the project were to:

- monitor the removal of topsoil and overburden,
- inspect exposed sub-soil horizons for archaeological features or deposits,
- examine the spoil heaps for archaeological material,

- mitigate the effect of the development on any existing archaeology, through appropriate preservation by record.

5.2 Method statement

5.2.1 The watching brief was conducted on 7th June 2012, monitoring the reduction and levelling of the sloping ground for a raft foundation by a 360° tracked excavator using toothless ditching buckets (Plate 1). All machine excavation in the designated area was observed by the attending archaeologist to check for archaeological remains.

5.2.2 The project was documented through site notes, annotated sketches and *pro-forma* context sheets. A measured plan was produced at a scale of 1:20. The written record was augmented by high-resolution colour digital and 35mm monochrome print photography to record specific stages of the fieldwork. References to cardinal directions in this report relate to site grid north, aligned approximately with Ordnance Survey grid north.

5.2.4 CSARC intends to deposit an ordered archive of data collated during the project at *The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery*, Bethesda Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent (site code **LNRM12**, accession number **2012.LH.51**).

6.0 Results

6.1 Description of the watching brief

6.1.1 The topsoil horizon (**100**) comprised a loose, dark brown sandy-silt loam, extending between 0.15m to 0.40m below ground level (bgl), with moderate inclusions of ceramic building material (CBM). Underlying the topsoil was a made ground stratum of brown, clay-silt (**101**), interpreted as a levelling layer, between c. 0.20m-0.60m thick, with inclusions of CBM and modern rubbish. The natural geology, a brown-red clay (**103**), was encountered under (**101**), between c. 0.35m-1.0m bgl.

6.1.2 Within **(103)** the plan of a sub-ground structure was revealed (Plate 2), a substantial part of which was excavated by machine. This exposed a well-preserved compartmentalized cellar or basement, built of un-frogged red brick and measuring c. 4.80m NW-SE x 4.30m NE-SW (20.64m²). The external walls **(102)** were triple-skinned (0.36m wide) and survived to between 0.71m and 0.87m in height. The north west corner had been truncated by a modern utilities trench (Fig. 8). Site constraints prevented observation of the eastern and western wall elevations.

6.1.3 The structure was divided into two chambers or bays, designated as Bay 1 and Bay 2. At c. 1.20m the interior width of the northern bay (Bay 2) (Fig. 8; Plates 3 & 4) was substantially narrower than Bay 1, which was c. 2.25m wide. The bays were separated by a partition wall **(110)**, two rows wide (0.23m) that abutted the external wall at its east end. Its south-facing side exhibited traces of white limewash. The northern face was not observed. At the centre of this wall was a doorway 1.0m wide, with a threshold comprising two stones with a c. 0.10m-wide gap between them.

6.2 Bay 1

6.2.1 The exposed brickwork of the southern wall in this bay was English bond (alternate courses of headers and stretchers), jointed with grey cement mortar. The bottom two courses were headers stepped out half a brick. There was no indication that this wall had been whitewashed. A large, flat stone **(107)** surmounted the wall towards its east end, next to the cold-slab (see **6.2.2**). The section of wall directly beneath the stone, approximately 0.45m high and 0.50m wide, was also stepped out. This part of the wall had, however, been whitewashed. Leaning against it was a large square stone, with chamfered edges (Plate 5).

6.2.2 The bay had a floor of blue engineering bricks laid flat **(105)**. At its eastern end was a brick-built stillage or cold-slab **(106)** (Fig. 9; Plate 5). This feature extended across the full width of the bay and was 0.71m high and

0.65m deep. It was topped with brick tiles, each measuring 0.23m x 0.26m, and underneath were two openings with round-headed segmental arches, each with a span of 0.62m and a maximum internal height of 0.38m.

6.2.3 A flight of stone stairs (**104**) in the south west corner of Bay 1 provided access to the cellar. The overall height of the surviving two steps was 0.40m and they were 0.84m wide (Plate 6). Moderate tread wear was visible in the centre of the steps. As revealed, several of the steps were evidently missing as well as the ends of the walls forming the south west corner, which did not continue to the full depth of the cellar.

6.3 Bay 2

6.3.1 In contrast to the brickwork in Bay 1, the north wall of the northern bay appeared to be laid to stretcher bond, with the lowest 0.30m consisting of angular stone blocks, with no stepped footings. The interior face of the wall had been whitewashed.

6.3.2 The floor of Bay 2 was paved with large, square flag stones (**108**). It is possible this was the source of the stone found leaning against the south wall in Bay 1. In the south-east corner, abutting walls (**102**) and (**110**), was a double-skin rectangular feature measuring c. 0.90m NW-SE x 0.50m NE-SW (**109**), built of red frogged brick with an internal cavity (Plate 4). This feature could not be fully excavated and its function could not be determined.

7.0 Discussion

7.1 Downfieldside Farm lost about one third of its land between 1805 and 1871, almost certainly due to encroachment by colliery workings and the railway cutting. William Kirkham's application to slaughter horses in 1883 could be an early attempt at farm diversification in order to pay his rent. The knacker's trade was of a lucrative one between c. 1850-1900, especially in the vicinity of urban centres, as human and animal populations

multiplied (Hardy 2002, 386). Kirkham was either successful in his venture or weathered the depression that affected farming from the late 1870s through other means.

- 7.2** The position and dimensions of the brick structure encountered during the project correspond with the east wing of the Downfieldside farmhouse, first shown on the 1843 tithe map (Fig. 3). The thickness of the structure's external walls (**102**) indicates load-bearing capabilities and building conventions dictate that they could have carried a two-storey elevation (Eveleigh 2006). In plan the structure is typical of a standard domestic cellar. It resembles one excavated in an 1860s house in Etruria, Stoke-on-Trent, which possessed a floor of engineering bricks and a cold-slab of similar dimensions (Cramp & Goodwin 2008, 12).
- 7.3** The contrasting styles of floor paving and brick bonding in the two bays, as well as stone footings in the northern wall and stepped footings in the southern, suggest different phases of construction. Beyond the prospect that narrow stone foundations imply the northern wall is earlier in date than the broader pad of the opposing brick stepped footings, it is not possible to ascertain a more precise chronology for the different phases. The historical maps show no manifest changes to the footprint of the house before 1925, so the changes may pre-date 1843 or even belong to the 1913-25 reconfiguration.
- 7.4** The set of steps (**104**) in Bay 1 would have enabled access from within the farmhouse. The cold-slab suggests this portion of the cellar was for storage of foodstuffs. The projecting section in the southern wall is difficult to interpret, as is the presence of the stone surmounting it, which looks to have been deliberately placed. It is not clear if it represents a blocked-up aperture, perhaps a window. Whether a window would be located so close to the cold-slab is contestable.

7.5 The unidentified brick feature **(109)** in Bay 2 could be the remains of a separate flight of stairs. If so, their position would indicate independent external access from the east side of the building, perhaps for tradesmen. It is possible therefore that this bay was used for storing coal. A door to close the opening in the partition wall **(110)** would have provided security, preventing unauthorised access to the rest of the cellar and the farmhouse beyond. However, as this feature was not fully exposed this remains a matter of speculation.

8.0 Conclusions

8.1 The watching brief fulfilled its primary objective of monitoring all groundworks associated with the development. The recorded sequence of deposits identified a uniform stratigraphic profile, with the horizons of all the strata clearly defined. In general, the natural subsoil **(103)** was encountered at relatively shallow depths, indicating that the site had been impacted by modern landscaping and levelling, represented by layer **(101)**, some time between 1977 and 2003.

8.2 The documentary evidence shows the DA was partially occupied by a farm dwelling known as Downfieldside from at least the late 18th until the mid 20th century, when the area begins to be developed, probably in association with the nearby factory. The project revealed and recorded a brick built structure, interpreted as a cellar or basement belonging to Downfieldside Farm. Contrasting styles of brickwork suggest separate phases of development, although no dates can be ascribed. No finds were recovered from the site and no other archaeological features or deposits were encountered.

9.0 Acknowledgements

9.1 Fieldwork and illustrations were undertaken by Zoë Sutherland of CSARC. Thanks are extended to the Stoke-on-Trent Planning Archaeologist, Jonathan Goodwin MIfA; Staffordshire Record Office, Stafford; the client, JPK Design Ltd; and the groundwork contractors, Clorley Construction, for their valuable assistance and co-operation.

9.2 Map data is reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of H.M.S.O. © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. License No. 1000551532.

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1871. *Downfieldside*. RG10/piece 2879/folio 77/page 36.

1881. *Downfieldside*. RG11/piece 2737/folio 101/page 54.

1891. *Downfieldside*. RG12/piece 2184/folio 72/page 7.

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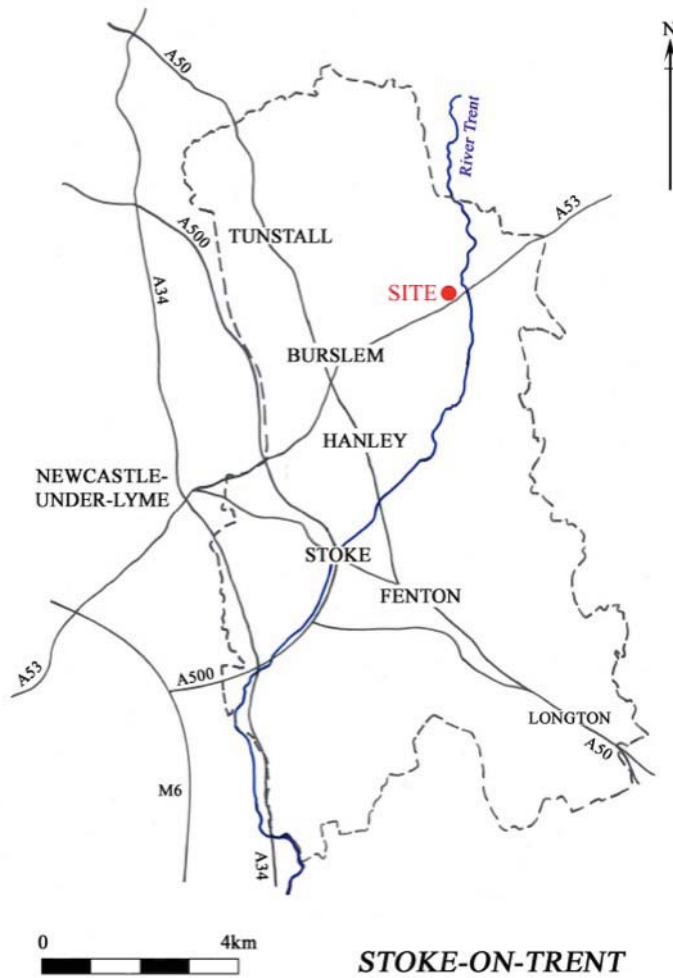


FIG. 1

Site location

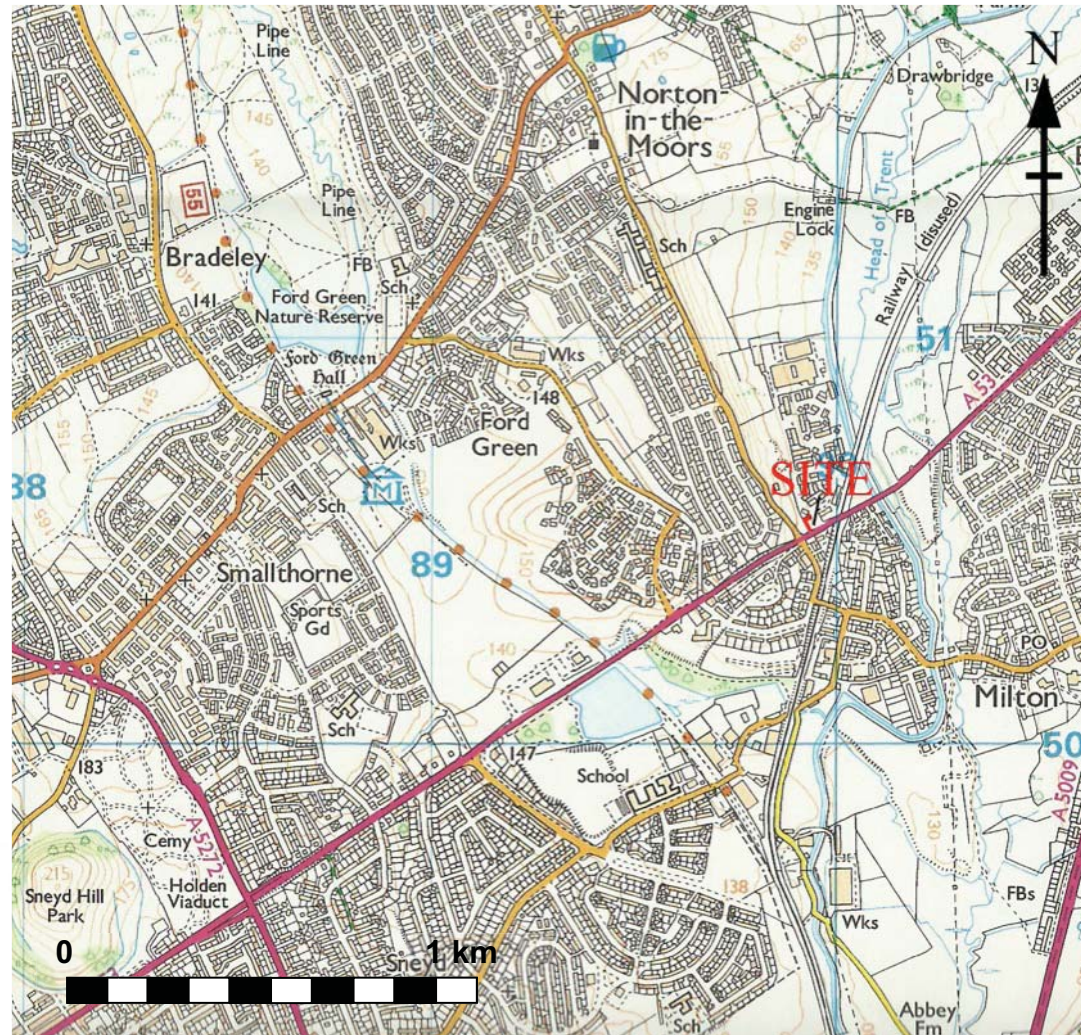




FIG. 2

Site plan, with the boundary of the development outlined in red and the location of structure **(102)** in blue.



FIG. 3

Extract from the 1843 tithe map showing Downfieldside Farm,
with the development area outlined in red.

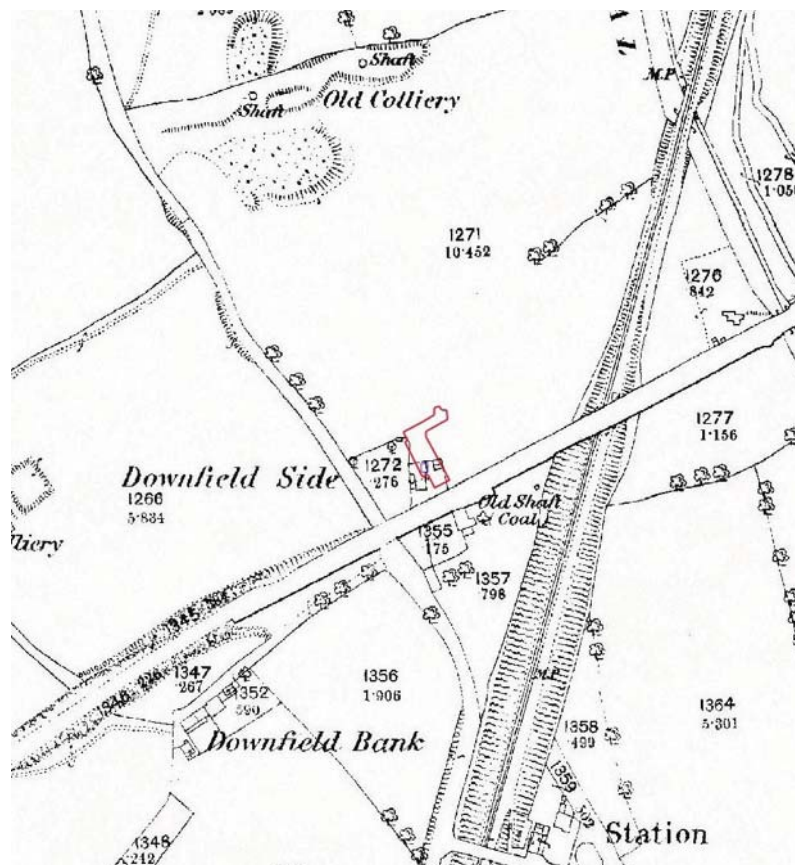


FIG. 4

Extract from 1881 OS map, with the development area outlined in red.

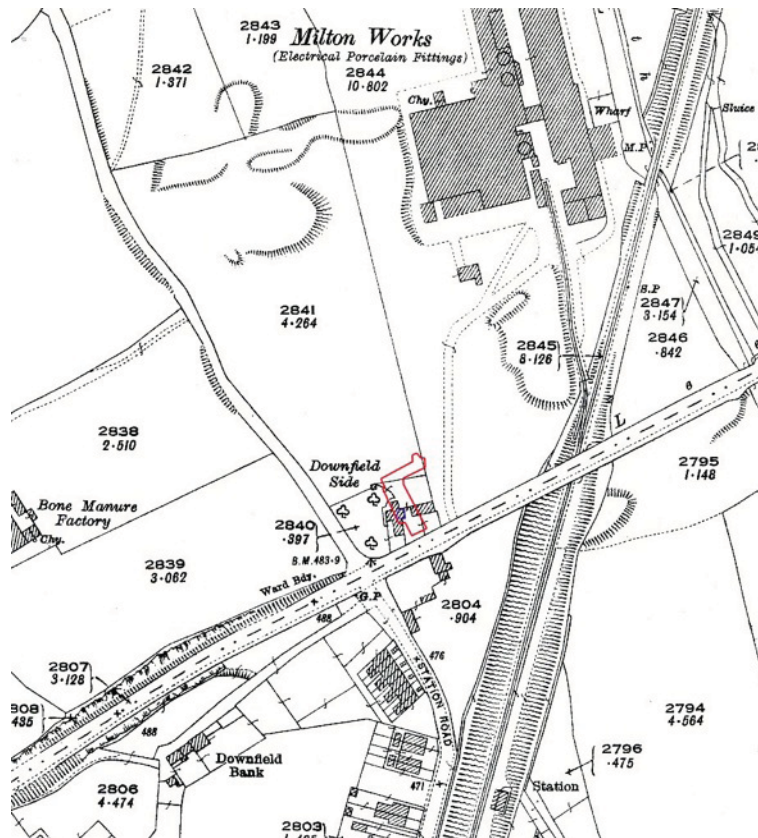


FIG. 5

Extract from 1925 OS map, with the development area outlined in red.

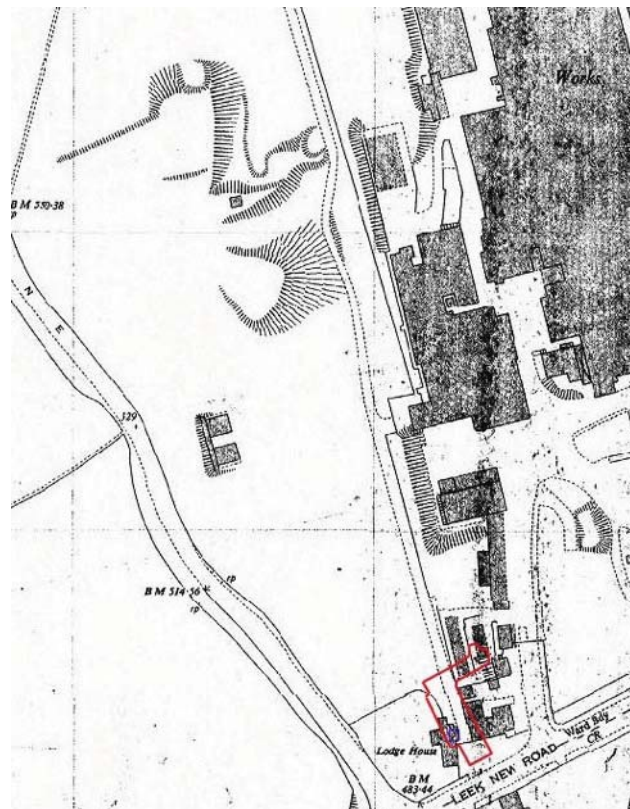


FIG. 6

Extract from 1950 OS map, with the development area outlined in red.

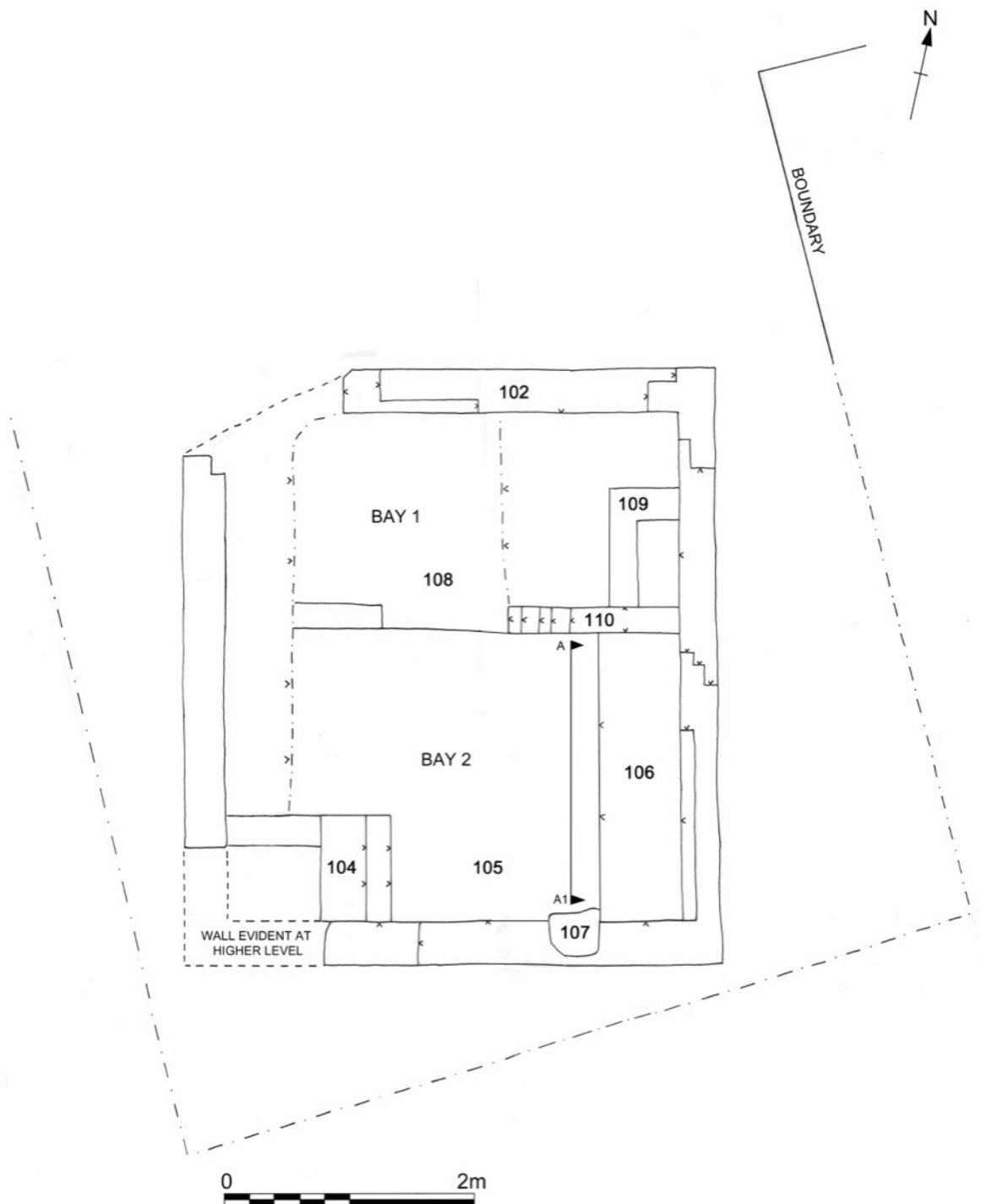


FIG. 8
Plan of cellar structure.

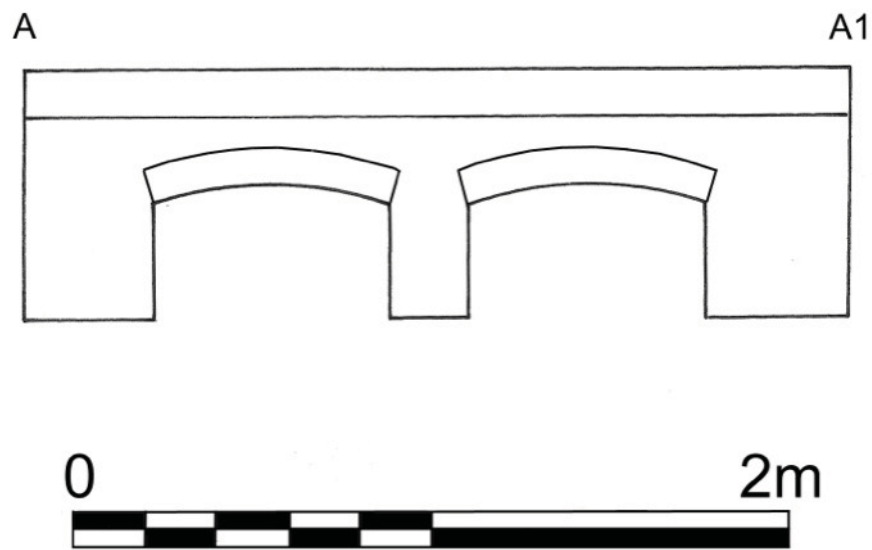


FIG. 9
South west-facing elevation of cold slab in Bay 1 (106)



PLATE 1

General view during removal of topsoil (100), looking north west.



PLATE 2

Brick structure (102) revealed in plan, looking north (scales: 1.0m).



PLATE 3

General view with Bay 1 in foreground, looking north. Note steps (104) at lower left and cold-slab (106) on right (scales: 1.0m).



PLATE 4

General view across Bay 2, looking south. Note possible steps (109), centre left, and contrasting floor surfaces (scales: 1.0m).



PLATE 5

General view of the cold-slab (106), looking east. Note footings at right and portion of stepped out wall (102) surmounted by stone (107) (scales: 1.0m).



PLATE 6

Detail of steps (109) in Bay 1, looking south west (scales: 1.0m).

Appendix 1: Summary of census information

Address	Name	Relation to head of household	Sex	Age	Birth year	Occupation	Where born
1841							
Downfield Side, Norton in the Moors	Thomas Woolliscroft	Head	M	65	1776	Farmer	Kingsley, Staffs
	Martha Woolliscroft	Wife	F	35	1806		Norton-in-the-Moors, Staffs
	William Collis		M	15	1826	Male servant	Staffs
	Eliza Wood		M	12	1829	Female servant	"
1861							
Downfield Side, Norton in the Moors	William Kirkham	Head	M	39	1822	Farmer of 30 acres	Horton, Staffs
	Sarah Kirkham	Wife	F	37	1824	Farmer's wife	Stoke Lane, Staffs
	Andrew Kirkham	Son	M	16	1845	House servant	Bagnall, Staffs
	Joseph Kirkham	Son	M	12	1849	Scholar	Fenton, Staffs

	Sarah Kirkham	Daughter	F	7	1854		Fenton
	James Kirkham	Son	M	5	1856		Norton Green, Staffs
	Mary Kirkham	Daughter	F	3	1858		"
1871							
Downfield Side, Norton	William Kirkham	Head	M	48	1823	Farmer of 26 acres, employing 1 boy	Horton
	Sarah Kirkham	Wife	F	46	1825		Stoke
	James Kirkham	Son	M	16	1855	Labourer	Norton
	Mary Kirkham	Daughter	F	14	1857	General servant	"
	George Kirkham	Son	M	10	1861		"
	William Bowyer	Servant	M	14	1857	Farm servant (indoor)	Endon, Staffs
	Eliza Harrison	Visitor	F	43	1828	No occupation	Newcastle-under-Lyme
	Sarah Harrison	"	F	9	1862		Norton
	Ellen Harrison	"	F	5	1866		Norton

	George Harrison	“	F	3	1868		“
	Ann Kirkham	Visitor	F	20	1851	General servant	Wolstanton, Staffs
1881							
Milton, Norton in the Moors	William Kirkham	Head	M	58	1823	Farmer of 26 acres & road surveyor	Horton
	Sarah Kirkham	Wife	F	57	1824		Hartshill, Staffs
	Hannah Kirkham	Niece	F	31	1850	Housekeeper	Bagnall
	Frederick Frampton	Servant	M	21	1860	Farm servant (indoor)	London, Middlesex
	William Kirkham	Grandson	M	10	1871	Farm servant (indoor)	Milton, Staffs
1891							
Downfield Side, Norton Green, Norton in the Moors	William Kirkham	Head	M	70	1821	Farmer	Horton
	Sarah Kirkham	Wife	F	69	1822		Hartshill
	George Kirkham	Son	M	29	1862	Farmer's son	Norton
	Harriet Kirkham	Grand daughter	F	18	1873	Domestic servant	“

	William Sargeant	Grandson	M	15	1876	Carter	“
	Sarah Sargeant	Daughter	F	13	1878		“
	William Kirkham	Grandson	M	13	1878	Cow boy	“
1911							
Downfield Side Farm, Leek Road, Milton	Charles Bowyer	Head	M	31	1880	Farmer	Milton
	Charlotte Alice Bowyer	Wife	F	31	1880		Norton-in-the-Moors
	Arthur Bowyer	Son	M	9	1902		Norton-in-the-Moors
	Percy Williams	Boarder	M	14	1897	Working on farm	Burslem

Appendix 2: Summary of tithe award information, 1843.

Plot No.	Name & description of land and premises	State of cultivation
814	Far and Near Bank	Pasture
814a	Far and Near Bank	Pasture
815	Down Field Bank	Pasture
816	Engine House and Buildings	-
897	Far Broad Croft	Arable
898	Rough Meadows	Arable
899	Rough Moor, adjoining Fold	Pasture
899a	Rough Moor, adjoining Fold	Pasture
900	Near Broad Croft	Pasture
901	House and Outbuildings	-
901a	Part of Homestead	-
902	Orchard	-
903	Calf Croft	Mowing
951	Moor Meadow	Mowing
951a	Moor Meadow	Mowing