

Marches Archaeology

**Primary Health Care Centre
Albert Street
Oldbury
West Midlands**

A report on archaeological watching brief

May 2004

Marches Archaeology Series 343

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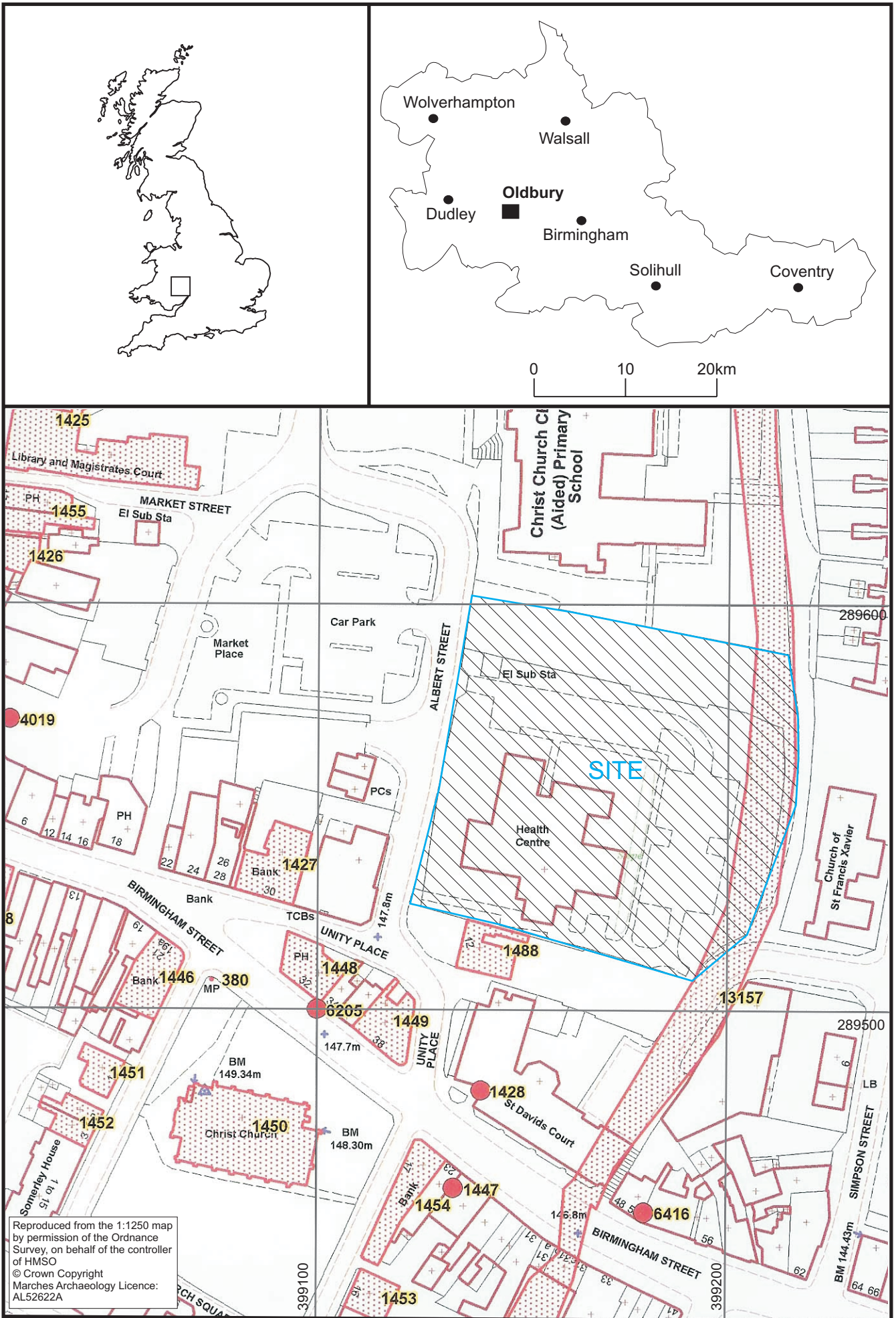


Fig. 1 Location of the site

Primary Healthcare Centre
Albert Street
Oldbury
West Midlands

A report on an archaeological watching brief

NGR: SP 9913 8954

Report by
Adrian F. Nash

Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Summary</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>1 Introduction</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>2 Aims and objectives</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>3 Methodology</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>4 Archaeological and historical background</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>5 The watching brief</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>6 Discussion and conclusions</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>7 References</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>8 The archive</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Appendix I: Record numbers listed by the Black Country SMR</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Appendix II: List of contexts</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Appendix III: The brief</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Appendix IV: Summary Sheet</i>	<i>19</i>

May 2003

Marches Archaeology Series 343

List of illustrations

- Fig. 1 Location of site
- Fig. 2 Tithe map of 1845
- Fig. 3 Ordnance Survey plan of 1890, 25" to 1 mile
- Fig. 4 Ordnance Survey plan of 1904, 25" to 1 mile
- Fig. 5 Ordnance Survey plan of 1919, 25" to 1 mile
- Fig. 6 Ordnance Survey plan of 1938, 25" to 1 mile
- Fig. 7 Plan of the development showing trenches and topsoil stripped area

Primary Healthcare Centre
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Summary

The earliest known activity on the site occurred on the east side in the 18th century when the canal was built. In the mid 19th century development had not fully encroached upon the site though industrial activity was occurring in the north plot and properties were along southern edge. The centre of the site was still a field.

At the end of that century the open areas on the site and in the surrounding area had been given over to industry and housing. The most radical changes occurred in around 1971 when the buildings were cleared and the canal was backfilled. A new health centre was erected on the site, which was recently demolished.

A watching brief during the construction of a new Health Centre revealed that the site had been disturbed during the demolition phases prior to the construction of the first centre and during its demolition. The only significant archaeology encountered was the west side of the back filled canal.

1 Introduction

Planning permission was granted by the local planning authority to redevelop the site of Oldbury Health Centre, Albert Street, Oldbury (ref. DC/03/40800). The site is situated at NGR: SP 9913 8954. The site lies within the historic core of Oldbury and had been identified as a site of archaeological potential. The Local Planning Authority's Archaeology Advisor advised that in order that the archaeological resource was adequately protected an archaeological watching brief was carried out during ground works associated with the proposed development.

The Local Planning Authority's Archaeology Advisor produced a "Brief for an archaeological watching brief". Aedas Architects Ltd., on behalf of the client, Oldbury and Smethwick Primary Care Trust, appointed Marches Archaeology to provide the archaeological services detailed in the Brief. The fieldwork phase of the project started 15th March 2004.

An existing health centre was demolished before Marches Archaeology was commissioned to undertake the archaeological watching brief. The client provided Marches Archaeology with an 'Outline Dig Programme' in preparation of the archaeological watching brief (Anon, 2003). The programme stated that:

‘All obstructions encountered in the ground in the course of demolitions have been grubbed up to a depth of 2m’.

Thus it was anticipated by the report that the ‘first 2.0metres of the sub-strata will have suffered significant disturbance’ (*Anon*, 2003).

In the early stages of the development, 16th March 2004, a site meeting was held between the acting Borough Archaeological Advisor and Marches Archaeology. The meeting discussed the above statement and the potential for the surviving archaeology. It was agreed that it was unlikely any archaeology was surviving within the footprint of the demolished health centre. The meeting also discussed the areas outside of the old building in the area that was previously used as car parking. Surface stripping with a toothless bucket along the north and east boundaries of the area revealed that the surface had been disturbed and that only modern deposits would be seen during this process. It was therefore concluded that the supervision of the topsoil stripping to impact level, as required by the brief, would not reveal any significant archaeology. The conclusion of the meeting was that Marches Archaeology would observe the excavation of the drainage trenches in the car parking area, as these would be the only likely areas that archaeology would be surviving and be exposed.

On the 31st March 2004 the project, with the agreement of the Borough Archaeologist, was reduced to an intermittent watching brief. The last site attendance was on the 8th April 2004.

2 Aims and objectives

The site-specific aims of the project were defined in the Brief as:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the development area
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered
- To provide further information on the origins and development of Oldbury

The Institute of Field Archaeologists defines the purpose of an archaeological watching brief as:

‘to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works’

and:

‘to provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support a treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard’.

The objectives of this watching brief, based on the above stated aim, were

- to supervise the top soil stripping of the new car parking area by machine excavation using a toothless ditching bucket to impact level
- to hand clean this area where appropriate
- the sequence of soil deposits present and all archaeological deposits and features shall be recorded
- all artefacts shall be collected, identified and catalogued
- if significant archaeology is identified provision should be made for their investigation and the archaeologist on site should inform the Borough Archaeologist and Project Engineer immediately in order that appropriate action may be taken to minimise the damage to such deposits and to record them appropriately as specified in the brief

3 Methodology

Documentary research

The archaeological assessment consulted primary and secondary sources in order to inform the fieldwork phase. The Black Country Sites and Monuments Record was consulted as was the Local Studies Section of Smethwick Library where a rapid map regression exercise was undertaken. The following sources were also considered:

Ordnance Survey maps; Tithe maps; Estate maps and other historical maps;
Previous published and unpublished archaeological reports and archive work;
Written non-archaeological sources and geological maps.

Fieldwork

Observations of groundbreaking activity in association with the development and appropriate recording were undertaken.

The recording system includes written, drawn and photographic data. Context numbers were allocated and context record sheets completed. Plans were drawn showing the location of the trenches with detail plans of archaeological features drawn at 1:20, sections were drawn at 1:10 or 1:20. The photographic record consists of black and white negative and colour transparency film.

Office work

On completion of fieldwork a site archive was prepared. The written, drawn and photographic data was catalogued and cross-referenced and a summary produced. The artefactual data was processed, catalogued and cross-referenced.

4 Archaeological and historical background

Oldbury

The town of Oldbury (Black Country Sites and Monuments Record 6205) is situated between the towns of Birmingham, Halesowen, West Bromwich and Dudley, at the centre of the area now known as Sandwell. Oldbury was part of the parish of Halesowen but was hemmed in on three sides by Smethwick, West Bromwich and Rowley, which were all part of Staffordshire. Halesowen was either part of the county of Worcestershire or sometimes part of Shropshire. It became part of Worcestershire in 1832 but now part of the West Midlands County.

Oldbury, in Anglo Saxon was called Ealdenbyrig, which means ‘Old burh’ and is likely to have derived its name from an Iron Age hillfort in the area (Hackwood, 1915, 17). There are no visible signs of the hillfort but the town is situated on a slight rise and there was a field named Castle Field on the 1841 Tithe Award (BCSMR 4020).

In the 12th century the town was referred to by its Middle English name of Aldeberia (BCSMR 6205). Evidence for medieval Oldbury have been found in excavations to the rear of properties in Orchard Street, by pupils from Oldbury Technical School in 1967 (BCSMR 1732), and in an excavation off New Meeting Street in 1998 (BCSMR 13126). Both excavations revealed evidence of medieval cultivation but there was an absence of densely packed and intercut features. The evidence suggests non-intensive occupation in a settlement of village size and that it was not a nucleated settlement until the later Middle Ages (Hodder, 1992, 179).

A chapel dedicated to St Nicholas in the Parish of Halesowen was erected at Oldbury in 1529. The chapel was superseded by Christ Church and demolished in 1840 (BCSMR 2828). The manor of Oldbury is first described in 1557 when Sir Robert Dudley settled it on himself and Amy Robsart, his wife (Hackwood, 1915, 83). Blakeley Hall was the ancient manor house (BCSMR 2815).

The earliest map is John Ogilby’s road map of 1675 which shows settlement along Church Street and West Bromwich Street (BCSMR 6205). The extent of the settlement may not be fully recorded, as it is a road map. Features associated with these buildings were found in the excavations to the rear of Orchard Street (1967), between Church Street and Freeth Street (1987) and between Church Street and Birmingham Street (1988) (Hodder, 1992, 179).

Oldbury in the 18th century was still a settlement based largely on its agricultural economy but settlement had at least occurred along Birmingham Street as William Yates’ Map of Staffordshire dated 1775 shows. The oldest building in Oldbury dates to this period, it is situated in Church Street and is called the Big House, it was built in 1705 (BCSMR 1424).

The town did not grow, as with many towns in the area, until a transition occurred from a rural economy to that of an industrial one. This process occurred due to the town’s position on the South Staffordshire coalfield but was set in motion by firstly the improvements of the roads in the 18th century and then more significantly by the building of the Oldbury loop of the Birmingham Canal. The canal was built in 1770 but was later rebuilt in 1821 (BCSMR 13157). The town’s prospects for growth were then improved by the transportation and communication links brought by the railway in the 1830s. By the mid 19th century the town was an important industrial manufacturing centre.

The Black Country Sites and Monuments Record notes several buildings from this period. Those within the vicinity of the site are listed in Appendix 1 and are shown on Fig. 1.

The site

The c. 1845 Tithe Map of Oldbury shows that the site spans three plots: part of 244, the whole of 247 and 248 (Fig. 2). The apportionment notes that the No. 244 was a chapel, house, yards and gardens (Table 1). From the map evidence it is difficult to determine what form of buildings were on the site, though they look more likely to be outbuildings rather than the chapel or house. Across the centre band of the site is plot No. 247, which is an open area and is described on the apportionment as a meadow (Table 1). Plot No. 248 is described as a

NO.	LANDOWNER	OCCUPIER	NAME & DESCRIPTION OF LAND, PREMISES
242	Nickless Ann	In hand	House and garden
243	Waterman, Thomas, Enoch & ors	In hand	Flour mill, House, gardens and building lots
244	Unitarian Society Trustees, Hunt, Thos and Samuel	David Timothy brothers	Chapel, house, yards and gardens
245	Dunn Dr. and others	In hand	Building lots
246	Cooper Thomas, R ^d and others	In hand and others	House building yard and garden
247	Nightingale D ^c	In hand	Meadow
248	Cheshire, Priscilla and others	Jones, Robert and Millington and Co. and others	House, yard, building and machinery etc.
249	Pope John and sons	Mathews Jos ^h and others	Gardens
250	Plant, Joseph	Mathews Jos ^h and others	House and gardens
251	Palmer, Edward	Parish, Samuel	Over Blue doublet [Pasture]
252	Trustees of Wesleyan Chapel, Jos ^h , Millington	In hand	Wesleyan Chapel and burying ground
253	Palmer, Edward	Joy John	House and gardens
550	Church and church yard		
552	Taylor, David and others	In hand and others	Pitt house buildings & co
273	Perry, Williams	Parkes, Joseph	Field back of court house [arable]
274	Perry, Williams	Parkes, Joseph	Field back of court house [pasture]
275	Comm. of court of requests Nicklin & Parker, Antony	Perrins, Edward	Garden
Table 1: Tithe Apportionment			

house, yard, building and machinery etc. Presumably the building fronting Albert Street that had encroached into the meadow is the house with its garden and then the buildings that occupied the rest of the plot were industrial units with the machinery. Along the east edge of the site is the line of the Birmingham Canal. The area surrounding the site is still largely

undeveloped with fields and gardens.

In contrast the 1890 Ordnance Survey map shows that development has taken place in the area around the site since the Tithe map was surveyed (Fig. 3). Many of the open areas have now gone, replaced by housing and industrial units. On the site there are a mixture of small properties and large buildings, which are probably industrial. On the south side of the site, in what was plot 244 on the Tithe plan are two roads Unitary Place and Marsh's Square. The buildings along the north side and east side of Marsh's Square are shown on the earlier map; all the other buildings on the plot are new or have been altered. The industrial buildings on plot 248, along the north side of the site, have not altered from the earlier Tithe map. The central portion of the site, that was in the 1840s a meadow, has been built over with a small complex of buildings on the Albert Street frontage and along an access route to the east side of the site. The access route leads to a series of large buildings that appear to be industrial.

The 1904 edition of the Ordnance Survey map shows that along the Albert Street frontage, Unitary Place and Marsh's Square nothing has changed (Fig. 4). The changes are in the industrial properties at the centre and north of the site. New buildings have been erected in the central sector and some of the buildings in the north plot have been demolished.

The 1919 Ordnance Survey map shows that few significant changes occurred on the site since the 1904 map was published (Fig. 5). A couple of changes occurred to the industrial units where a unit has been extended or replaced and a building has gone from the northern industrial complex.

In the period between the 1919 survey and the 1938 Ordnance Survey map significant changes to the site occurred (Fig. 6). The industrial buildings running along the north edge of the site, that were shown on the Tithe plan, have been demolished and the strip of land is vacant. The complex of properties on the Albert Street and access road frontages, first noted on the 1st edition map have gone and the area is shown as open land. Similarly, Marsh's Square has been cleared and has become a car park.

The 1956 Ordnance survey plan shows the northern part of the site has a small engineering works and coal yard. At the centre of the site is a 'Blacking Works', which is a metal finishing/processing factory (Anon, 2002, 3). The 1971 Ordnance Survey map shows the site of the blacking works as now vacant and the canal has been filled along its length (*op. cit.*). The 1994 Ordnance Survey map shows the recently demolished health centre, with its access routes and its car parks (Fig. 1).

5 The watching brief

Topsoil stripping with a toothless ditch bucket down to the impact level along the north and east boundaries revealed that the car park areas had been disturbed recently in the demolition phase and earlier in the 20th century. The stripping encountered patches of mid brown loams and black silt ashes. The black silt ashes were industrial waste deposits. As only modern deposits were encountered it was evident that supervision of the surface stripping was not going to encounter any significant archaeology within the impact levels of the development.

Trench 1 (Fig. 7)

Surface stripping along the edge of the proposed building was watched in order to ascertain that no archaeology was present along the west and south edges of the previous centre's

footprint. The observations were made before the site was vibro-piled. The lowest level impacted upon was orange brown sand and gravel [102], natural, that had been cut by features that dated from the 19th century onwards including the demolition phase. The surface was 146.5m O.D.. The layer was covered over by a mid brown sandy loam with a high content of bricks, mortar, pipes, cables and other items from the demolition of the previous centre [101].

Trench 2 (Fig. 7) was a 3.1m x 3.4m x 2.7m deep trench excavated for a new manhole. It was not possible to draw accurate trench sections as a trench box system was used to secure the sides from collapse. The natural was 1.02m below the surface at 143.7m O.D. and consisted of orange marl with few sub rounded pebbles [205] with a layer above of orange sand with a 40% inclusion of sub-rounded pebbles [204]. Running from the north-west towards the south-east was a brick drain. The cut for the drain had vertical sides 0.37m from the top of natural. The vertical sides ended with a sharp break of slope and the flat bottom was 0.34m wide. The cut contained a drain formed by specially made red bricks [202]. The bricks used to form the top and bottom of the drain were 0.26m wide x 0.3m long x 0.14m high. A 0.26m wide section of each brick had a rounded slot used to form the channel. A single brick on each side with the narrow side of the bricks against the specially made top and bottom bricks formed the sides of the channel. In between the drain and the cut was black silt similar to the layer above.

Above the natural and sealing the drain was a 1m thick layer of black silt material that was consistent with industrial waste so often found on Black Country sites [201].

Trench 3 [Fig. 7] continued from the manhole and extended westward towards Albert Street. Its depth meant that the methodology undertaken to excavate it required the use of box shoring. The trench was excavated in short sections with stepped sides to stop trench collapse, which were backfilled before the next section was started. Along the north section the stratigraphy was exactly the same as in trench 2, where the natural [303] was directly covered over with a 0.74m layer of industrial waste [301]. The drain [202] continued from trench 2 for 6.6m where it disappeared in to the north section. Along the south section 3.6m west of trench 2 were the remains of brick structures [302]. The structural remains were constructed with red bricks 0.23m x 0.1m x 0.08m and extended 9.2m where they ended with a substantial wall that was 1.98m wide that had been rendered on the west side. The structures were built directly on to the natural and had a substantial base of 0.4m thick. The walls of the structure were 0.33m high and were covered by 0.27m of demolition rubble dating from when these structure were demolished [304]. At 6.6m from trench 2 a wall crossed the trench. It was constructed from red brick and was clearly associated with the other structures though this wall was constructed at a much lower level as it extended below the limit of excavation, which was 1.7m below the ground surface.

The natural at 4m west of the east end of the structure was 144.346m O. D. and was rising as the trench neared Albert Street where it was 145.58m O.D. near to the manhole at the end of trench 3. The topsoil was 145.33m O.D. near to the first reading and 146.81m O. D. at the west end of trench 3. At 27.6m west of trench 2 above the natural was a thin layer, 0.12m thick, of grey brown friable loam with a fleck of charcoal and sub-rounded pebbles. The layer contained fragments of mortar and 19th century pottery. This layer may have been topsoil from the period before the site was fully developed in the 19th century.

A cut 4.8m from the west end of the trench was 0.6m wide and had shallow sides sloping to a concave bottom [307]. The cut penetrated the natural 0.25m and was filled by [306] a similar

material to layer [305]. There was no discernable cut in layer [305] to distinguish the fill from the layer. There was an absence of dating evidence within the fill but its characteristics would suggest a contemporary date to layer [305].

Trench 4 (Fig. 7) was orientated north-east to south-west was excavated using a series of steps. The trench was stepped until it reached a depth of 2.5m. The trench from the manhole trench (not observed) was at its limit of excavation still in made-up ground. The earliest fill consisted of dark brown, almost black humic loam that was smelly and wet [402]. Above this was a mixed brown loam with high content of brick etc [401]. These fills were the backfill of the canal. The west edge of the canal cut [403] was seen in both trench sections 8.9m from the centre of the north-east manhole. A brick structure [404] in the east section was probably part of the rear of the towpath. The trench beyond the canal cut the natural and no features were seen.

Part of *Trench 5* (Fig. 7) was excavated without observation. The trench sections were examined and no features were observed. In the west at 20.8m from trench 2 a 0.4m wide x 5m long section of the canal towpath and wall was revealed. The top of the towpath was 144.09m O.D. and had 0.82m of demolition layer above it. The towpath and the canal wall were constructed with red bricks 0.24m x 0.1m x 0.08m. The fill of the canal was the same as that seen in trench 4.

Trench 6 (Fig. 7) was 4.3m deep and was excavated in small sections as a box shoring system was used to excavate safely. Above the natural [603] was a grey brown layer [602] the same as [305]. The layer was 0.3 to 0.4m thick. Above the grey brown layer was a layer of industrial waste mixed with debris from the demolition, which was 0.7 to 0.9m thick [601].

The sections of the upper levels of *Trench 7* were checked after excavation and construction of the manhole. The sections of the trench had only demolition layers above the natural with no archaeological features.

Trench 8 was excavated to locate the existing drainage pipe. Only natural and then 2.04m of landfill were seen. The observed fill may have been part of the canal backfill.

Trench 9 was a continuation of trench 4 and was only checked after excavation. The trench sections had no archaeological feature cutting the natural apart from disturbances caused during the demolition phase. Over the natural was a mix of demolition debris and industrial waste.

6 Discussion and conclusions

The documentary research revealed no evidence about the site that was earlier than the 18th century when the canal was built along the east edge of the site. Little is known about the site until the mid 19th century when the site was part of an area that development had not fully encroached upon. The name of the street may suggest that it was a new road if it was named after Queen Victoria's husband Prince Albert, whom she married in 1840. However, it is possible that the street was simply renamed in his honour. Industrial activity on the site was occurring in the north plot, properties were along the southern edge and the canal was open along the west edge. The centre of the site was still a field. At the end of that century the open areas on the site and in the surrounding area had given over to industry and housing.

Little changed on the site until the period between 1919 and 1938, when the old factory buildings shown on the tithe map and domestic properties on Albert Street and Marsh's Square were demolished. The open area that was Marsh's Square became a car park. The most significant changes occurred before 1971 when the site was cleared and the canal was backfilled. The health centre that was demolished recently was built after this period.

The watching brief located the edge of the backfilled canal and structures from the 19th century but no earlier archaeology. The demolition from this phase and from previous works had caused significant disturbance to the site that would have disturbed any potential archaeology. The depth of the top layer demonstrates the level of disturbance, which was up to 0.9m deep. As the site has been so heavily disturbed in the 20th and 21st centuries it is difficult to conclude what was occurring on the site before the 19th century. The lack of deep stratigraphic features in the areas observed might suggest the site was part of the rural landscape opposed to being within the small village that was Oldbury before industrialisation

7 References

Abbreviations used

BCSMR: Black County Council Sites and Monuments Record

7.1 Cartographic source

Tithe map of 1845

Ordnance Survey plan of 1890, 25" to 1 mile

Ordnance Survey plan of 1904, 25" to 1 mile

Ordnance Survey plan of 1919, 25" to 1 mile

Ordnance Survey plan of 1938, 25" to 1 mile

7.2 Primary records consulted

The Black Country Sites and Monuments Record

Smethwick Public Library

7.3 Publications consulted

Anon, 2002, *Ground investigation and test report for a proposed health centre at Albert Street, Oldbury, in the West Midlands*, Ground Investigation and Piling Limited

Anon, 2003, *Outline Dig Programme and Sub-structural Solution Proposals*, unpublished report by Corgi

Hackwood, F. W., 1915, *Oldbury and Round About*, Whitehead Bros. Ltd. and Cornish Bros. Ltd.: Wolverhampton/ Birmingham.

Hodder, M. A., 1992, *Excavations in Oldbury Town Centre, 1967, 1987 and 1988: The medieval and early post-medieval settlement*, Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society 173-180.

8 The archive

Marches Archaeology currently holds the archive that awaits transfer to an approved repository. It is intended to deposit the archive with Wednesbury Museum

The site archive consists of:

- 6 trench record sheets
- 6 context sheets
- 1 levels sheets
- 1 sheets of site drawings
- 4 photographic index sheets
- 2 film black and white photographic negatives
- 2 film colour photographic slides

1 computer disk [IBM - database files Lotus Approach 97, matrix Bonn v.4.0]

This report

The Marches Archaeology site code was ASHC04a. The Borough Archaeological Advisors site code was ODOHC03

Appendix I: Record numbers listed by the Black Country SMR

(Shown on Figure 1)

SMR Number	Site Name	Type and Date
1425	Oldbury Public Library (Court House); Church Street; Oldbury	COURT HOUSE: Post Medieval - 1800 AD to 1899 AD
1426	Vernon & Shakespeare, 15 Church Street, Oldbury	BUILDING: Post Medieval - 1540 AD to 1900 AD HOUSE: Post Medieval - 1540 AD to 1900 AD
1427	Lloyds Bank; 30 Birmingham Street, Oldbury	SITE: Post Medieval - 1540 AD to 1900 AD BANK: Post Medieval - 1800 AD to 1899 AD (FINANCIAL)
1447	23-25 Birmingham St; Oldbury	HOUSE: Post Medieval - 1800 AD to 1899 AD
1448	The Junction Public House, 32 Birmingham Street, Oldbury	PUBLIC HOUSE: Post Medieval - 1800 AD to 1899 AD
1449	38 Birmingham Street, Oldbury	SHOP: Post Medieval - 1800 AD to 1899 AD
1451	1 Church Square, Oldbury	HOUSE: Post Medieval - 1800 AD to 1899 AD
1452	2 & 3 Church Square, Oldbury	HOUSE: Post Medieval - 1800 AD to 1899 AD
1453	16 Church Square, Oldbury	HOUSE: Post Medieval - 1800 AD to 1899 AD
1454	Barclays Bank, 17 Church Square, Oldbury	BANK: Post Medieval to Modern - 1800 AD to 2050 AD (FINANCIAL)
1455	Waggon & Horses, 17A Church Street, Oldbury	PUBLIC HOUSE: Post Medieval - 1800 AD to 1899 AD
1488	12 Unity Place, Oldbury	HOUSE: Post Medieval - 1800 AD to 1899 AD
4019	Birmingham St Excavation; Oldbury	SETTLEMENT: Post Medieval - 1600 AD to 1699 AD
6416	Bakehouse (SITE); Birmingham St; Oldbury	BAKERY: SITE: Post Medieval - 1800 AD to 1899 AD
13157	Birmingham canal (old line), Oldbury loop	CANAL: Post Medieval - 1540 AD to 1900 AD

Appendix II: List of contexts

Context	Trench	Description	Interpretation
101	1	A layer of mid-brown sandy loam with bricks, mortar, broken drainage ceramic drain and old electric cables.	Demolition layer
102	1	Orange brown sand and gravel	Natural
201	2	Layer of black silt and ash	Industrial waste
202	2	Brick structure. Runs north to south. Consisted of especially made bricks to form channel and cap. The structure was 0.34m wide x 0.37m.	Brick formed drain
203	2	Cut for above brick structure	Cut for brick formed drain
204	2	Orange sand with a high inclusion of sub0-rounded pebbles c. 40%	Natural
205	2	Orange marl with only occasional inclusions of sub-rounded pebbles	Natural
301	3	Layer of black silt and ash	Industrial waste
302	3	Structural remains	brick cellars
303	3	Layer of yellow orange clay with a few stone inclusions	Natural
304	3	Yellow pale mortar with an inclusion of brick fragments	Demolition layer
305	3	Layer of grey brown friable loam with a fleck of charcoal, contained modern pottery sherds	Previous ground surface?
306	3	Grey brown friable loam with more pebbles than 305	Fill of modern cut
307	3	Concaved shaped cut- only observed in section	Modern cut?
401	4	Mixed brown loam with lots of brick etc.	Fill of canal
402	4	Dark brown almost black organic layer	Canal deposits
403	4	Possibly the north side of the canal	Canal edge
404	4		Natural
501	5	Mid brown sandy loam with bricks etc.	Demolition layer
502	5	Structure	Canal wall
601	6	Black silt ash	Industrial waste
602	6	Same as 305	
603	6		Natural

Appendix III: The brief

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Proposed Primary Healthcare Centre

Albert Street

Oldbury

October 2003



Site: Primary Healthcare Centre, Albert Street, Oldbury

Agent: Aedas Architects (01743 283000)

Borough Archaeologist: Graham Eyre-Morgan (0121 569 4025)

Planning Officer: John Baker (0121 569 4049)

Museum: Wednesbury (0121 556 0683)

This archaeological brief is only valid for six months. After this period the Borough Archaeologist should be contacted. Any written scheme of investigation resulting from this brief shall only be considered for the same period. The contractor is strongly advised to visit the site before completing their written scheme of investigation as there may be implications for accurately costing the project.

1. Introduction

This brief has been prepared by the Borough Archaeologist of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. The brief sets out the requirements for an archaeological watching brief during the construction the Proposed Primary Healthcare Centre, Albert Street, Oldbury.

2. Site Location and Description

Lying within the centre of the town and within the Christ Church Conservation Area., on the site currently stands the existing Health Centre which is to demolished to allow the development of the new Primary Healthcare Facility.

3. Planning Background

A building application (DC/03/40800) for the proposed Healthcare Centre at Albert Street was submitted to Sandwell MBC by Aedas Architects Ltd in May 2003. Given the archaeological potential of the site the Borough Archaeologist advised the Council to attach a condition for an archaeological watching on the potential development. Based on the advice given in *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning* (DoE 1990), the wording is as follows:

'No development involving any ground disturbance shall take place until an archaeological investigation of the site has been carried out in accordance with a specification to be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing'.

This brief together with the resulting contractor's written scheme of investigation will ensure that the requirements of the planning condition can be adequately discharged.

4. Archaeological Background

Lying within the historic core of the town the site is of archaeological potential. The earliest cartographic evidence for the town attests to 1675, however earlier occupation has been established from artefacts dated to the 13th and 14th centuries. The name Oldbury may also suggest an earlier origin possibly relating to an Iron Age hillfort in the vicinity. A considerable amount of Roman coins have also been discovered in the Oldbury area along with several artefacts dated to the prehistoric periods.

5. Requirement for Work

The site-specific aims are:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the development area
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered
- To provide further information on the origins and development of Oldbury

6. General Methodology

6.1 All stages of the investigation shall be supported by a written scheme of investigation.

6.2 The contractor is expected to follow the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

6.3 Details including the name, qualifications and experience, of the site director and all other project personnel (including specialist staff) shall be supplied to the Borough Archaeologist as part of the written scheme of investigation.

6.4 Notification of the supervisor/project manager's name and the members of the team shall be provided in writing to Borough Archaeologist at least one week in advance of commencement of work.

6.5 A site code shall be obtained from the Borough Archaeologist

6.6 All the latest Health and Safety guidelines shall be followed on site.

6.7 Should the client wish to curtail the investigation for any reason at any point in advance of its completion the contractor will still be expected to produce a full report including specialist finds assessments within the timetable set out below.

6.8 *The IFA's Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs should be used for additional guidance in the production of the written scheme of investigation, the content of the report, and the general execution of the project.*

7. Watching Brief Methodology

7.1 Prior to the commencement of on-site works the contractor must consult the Black Country Sites and Monuments Record (Mike Shaw 01902 555493) and undertake a rapid map regression exercise based on the sources held at the Local Studies Section of Smethwick Library. This information will assist in on-site interpretation and any future excavation strategy.

7.2 The contractor shall ensure detailed study of all mains service locations and avoid damage to these.

7.3 The top soil excavation of the site should (if practicable) be by a machine using a toothless ditching bucket under the supervision and to the satisfaction of a professional archaeologist

7.4 All archaeological horizons and features shall be hand cleaned and any archaeological deposits planned.

7.5 Details of how all archaeological contexts and artefacts will be excavated, surveyed, recovered and recorded shall be provided.

7.6 Details of the site planning policy shall be given in the written scheme of investigation. The normal preferred policy for the scale of archaeological site plans is 1:20 and sections at 1:10, unless circumstances indicate that other scales would be more appropriate.

7.7 Should archaeological features be discovered, then at least 50% of all contained features shall be excavated. A stated percentage of linear features to be excavated shall be provided in the written scheme of investigation. In the absence of dateable finds the area of the feature to be excavated must be increased.

7.8 The photographic record shall consist of black and white prints, negatives and colour slides. This shall include both general and feature specific photographs, a photographic scale (including north arrow) shall be included in the case of detailed photographs. The photographic record shall be accompanied by a photographic register detailing as a minimum feature number, location, and direction of shot.

8. Finds

8.1 All finds will be retained from each archaeological context excavated.

8.2 All finds, where appropriate, shall be washed.

8.3 All pottery, and other finds where appropriate, shall be marked with the site code and context number.

8.4 The written scheme of investigation shall include an agreed list of specialist consultants who might be required to conserve and/or report on finds, and advise or report on other aspects of the project.

8.5 The requirements for conservation and storage shall be agreed with Wednesbury Museum prior to the start of work, and confirmed in writing with the Borough Archaeologist.

8.6 Finds work should be to accepted professional standards and adhere to the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Guidelines for Finds Work*.

9. Results

9.1 The full report including all specialist assessments of artefact assemblages shall be submitted within four weeks of completing the fieldwork, with six hard copies and one digital copy supplied to the Borough Archaeologist for general distribution.

9.2 This report must contain:

- A concise non-technical summary of the project results.
- The aims and methods adopted in the course of the investigation
- A discussion of archaeological activity on this site in terms of the site specific aims and results of the map regression analysis
- All specialist reports or assessments
- A summary of the archive contents and date of deposition
- A context register with brief descriptions shall be included as an appendix
- A copy of the brief will be included as an appendix
- The summary sheet appended to the brief shall be completed and included within the report
- Location plans of all fieldwork in relation to the proposed development. All corners of the new car parking area will be given eight figure grid references
- Drawings of those artefacts identified by finds specialists which would be used as illustrations in any future publication

9.3 A full archive is to be prepared for all work undertaken.

10. Archive Deposition

10.1 The requirements for archive storage shall be agreed with Wednesbury Museum.

10.2 If the finds are to remain with the landowner a full copy of the paper archive shall be housed with the appropriate museum.

10.3 The archive including a copy of the written report shall be deposited with the appropriate museum within one months of the completion of the full report and confirmed with the Borough Archaeologist.

10.4 A summary of the contents of the archive shall be supplied to the Borough Archaeologist at the time of deposition to the museum.

11. Monitoring

11.1 The Borough Archaeologist will be responsible for monitoring progress and standards throughout the project and should be kept regularly informed during field work, interpretation and publication stages.

11.2 Any variations to the written scheme of investigation shall be agreed with the Borough Archaeologist preferably in writing prior to them being carried out.

12. Contractors Written Scheme of Investigation

12.1 It is advisable that the contractors forward a copy of the written scheme of investigation to the Borough Archaeologist for validation **before** submitting costed proposals to the agency commissioning the watching brief.

12.2 The contractors' written scheme of investigation will need to be approved by the Borough Archaeologist, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority **before** the commencement of any survey work.

12.3 The involvement of the Borough Archaeologist shall be acknowledged in any report or publication generated by this project.

For further information regarding the content of this brief and as part of our desire to provide a quality service, we would welcome any comments you may have on the content and presentation for this archaeological brief. Please address them to the author at the address below.

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Appendix IV: Summary Sheet

Site name/Address: Primary Healthcare Centre, Albert Street, Oldbury, West Midlands	
Borough: Sandwell	NGR: SP 9913 8954
Type of Work: Archaeological Watching Brief	Site Code: ODOHC03
Contractor: Marches Archaeology	Date of Work: Fieldwork 15 th March to 8 th April 2004
Location of Finds/Curating Museum:	
Title of Report: Primary Healthcare Centre, Albert Street, Oldbury, West Midlands: A Report on a archaeological watching brief	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:	
<p>The earliest known activity on the site occurred on the east side in the 18th century when the canal was built. In the mid 19th century development had not fully encroached upon the site though industrial activity was occurring in the north plot and properties were along southern edge. The centre of the site was still a field.</p> <p>At the end of that century the open areas on the site and in the surrounding area had given over to industry and housing. The most radical changes occurred in around 1971 when the buildings were cleared and the canal was backfilled. A new health centre was erected on the site, which was recently demolished.</p> <p>A watching brief during the construction of a new Health Centre revealed that the site had been disturbed during the demolition phases prior to the construction of the first centre and during its demolition. The only significant archaeology encountered was the west side of the back filled canal.</p>	
Author of Summary: Adrian Nash	Date of Summary: 23 rd May 04

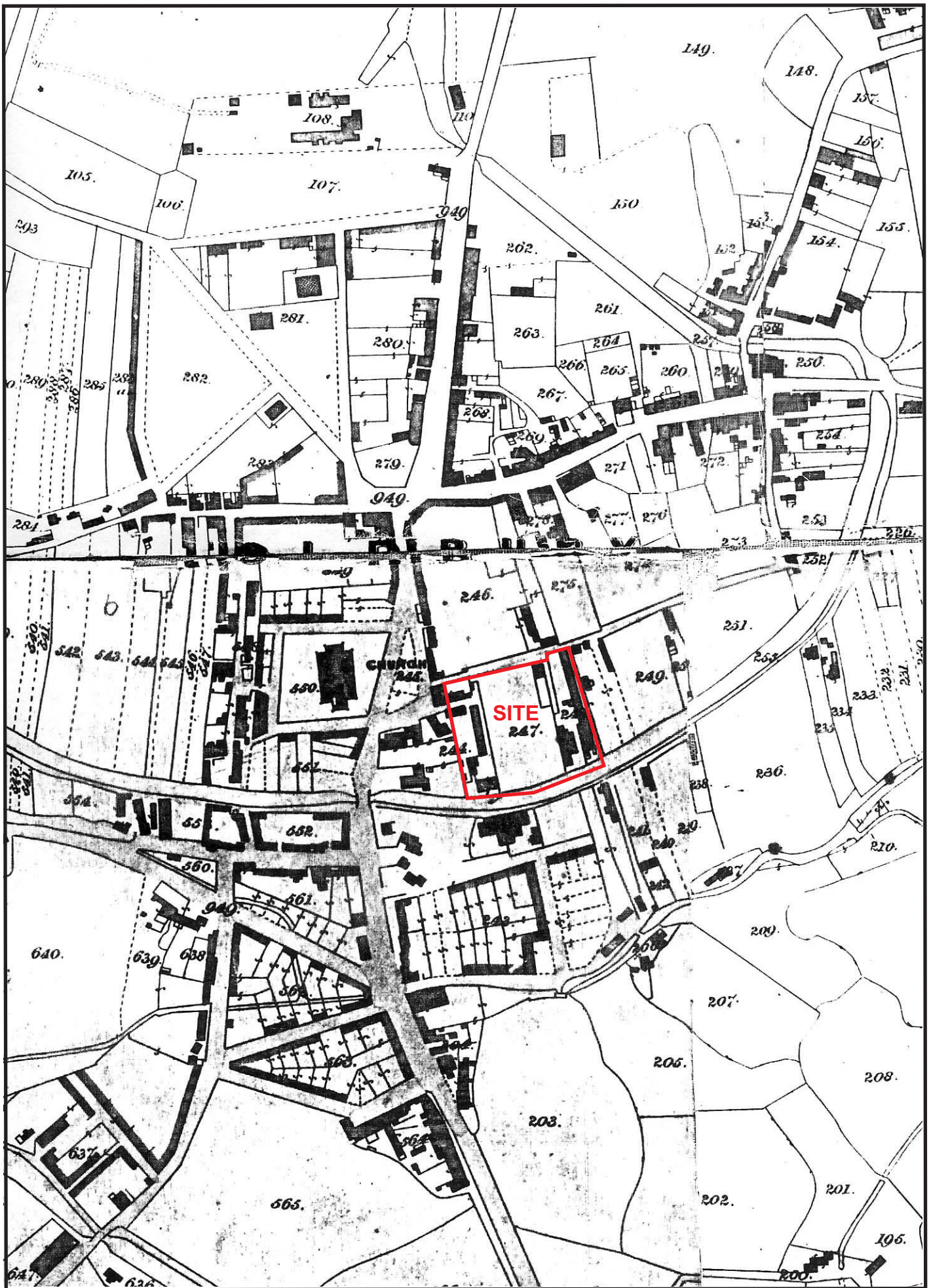


Fig. 2 The Tithe Map of 1845

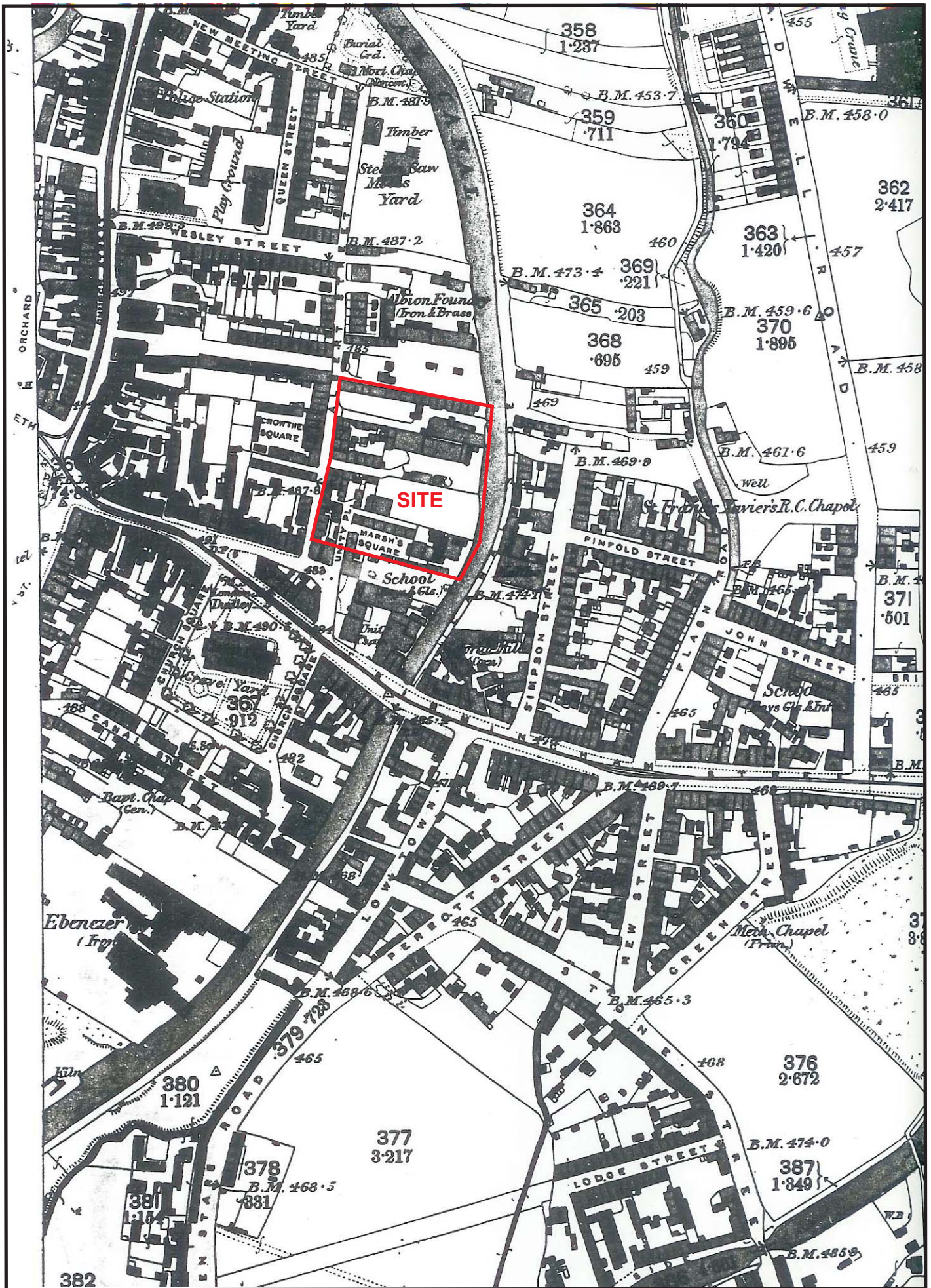


Fig. 3 Ordnance Survey plan of 1890, 25" to 1 mile

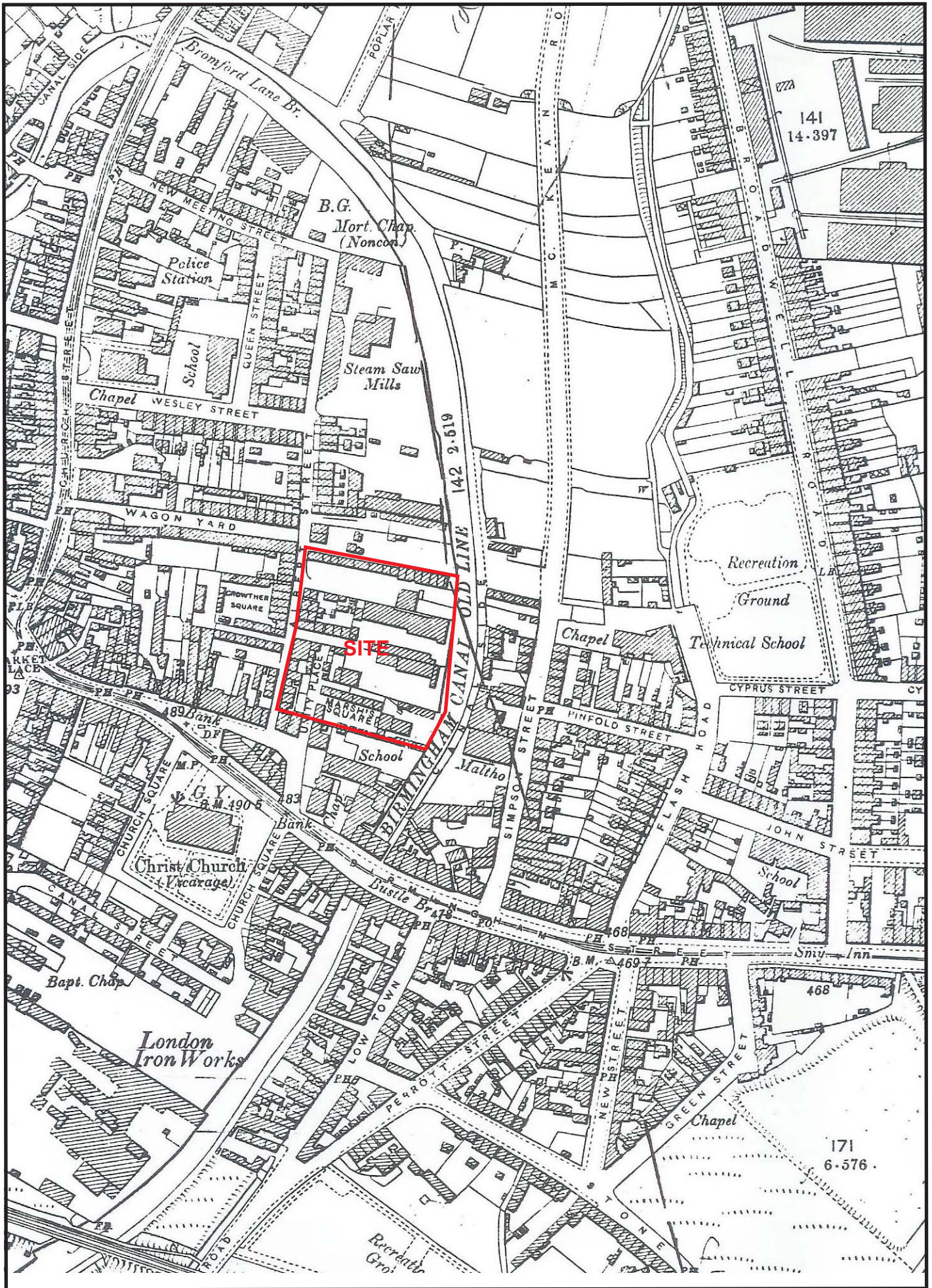


Fig. 4 Ordnance Survey plan of 1904, 25" to 1 mile

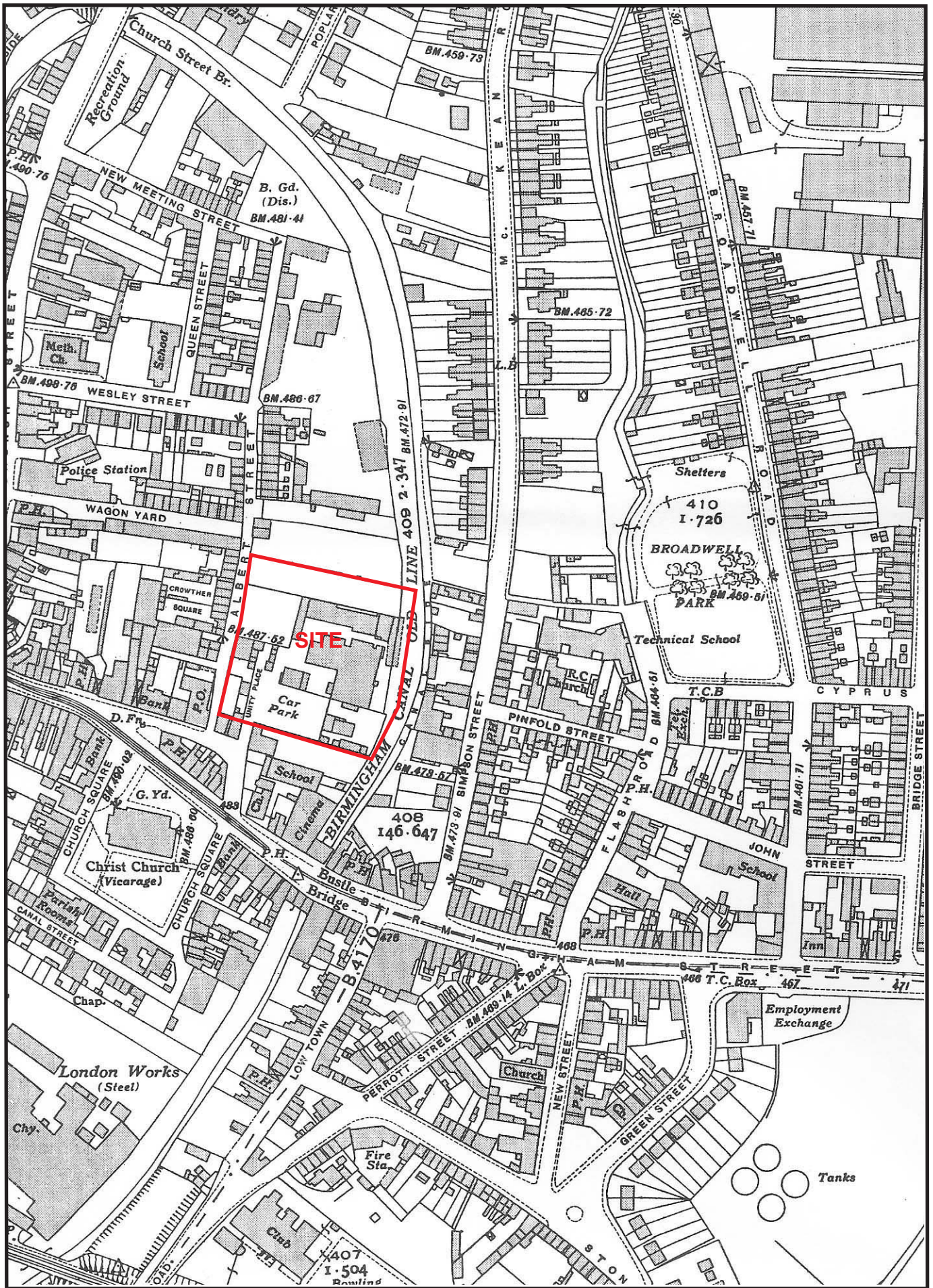


Fig. 6 Ordnance Survey plan of 1938, 25" to 1 mile

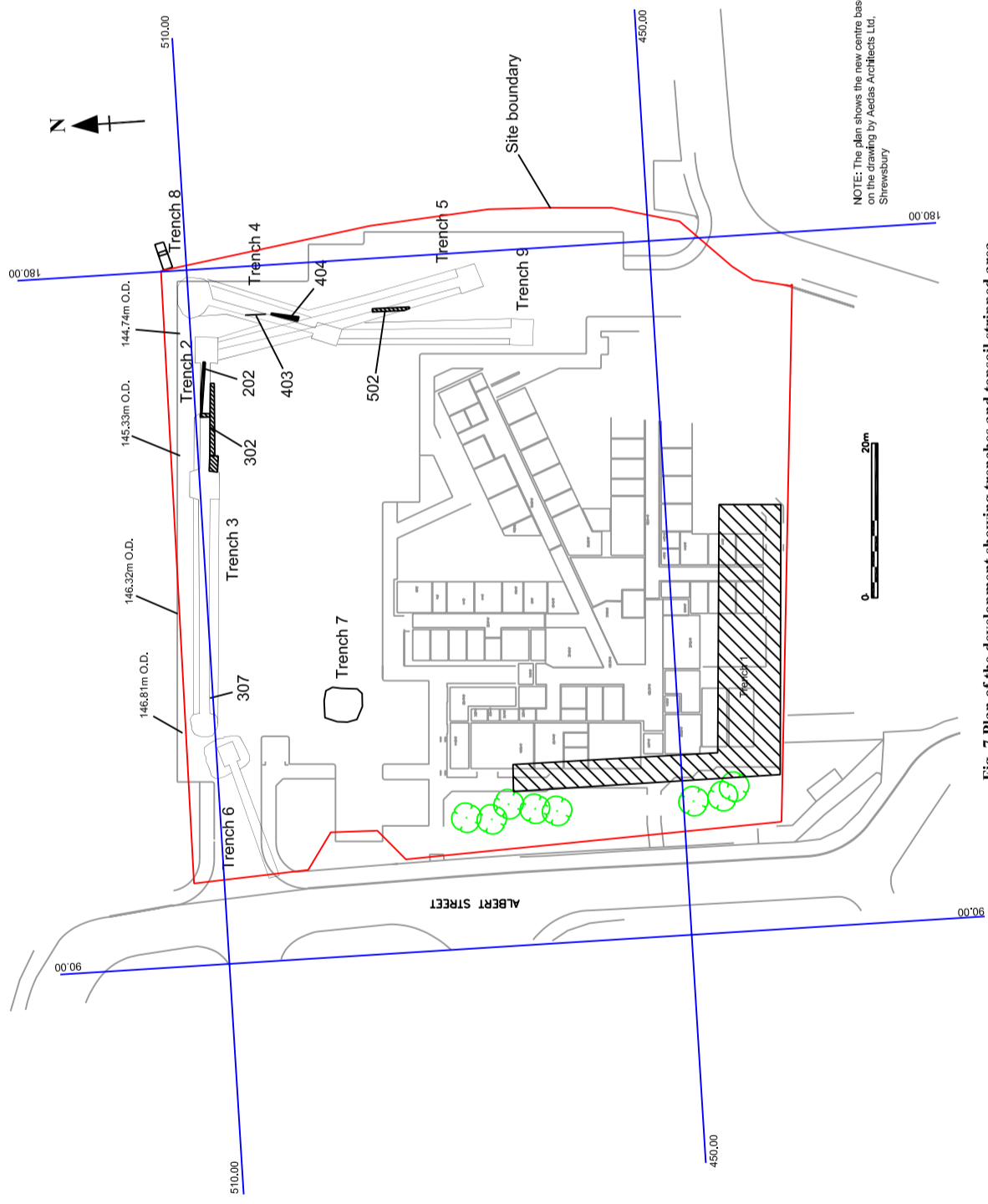


Fig. 7 Plan of the development showing trenches and topsoil stripped area

