

# Baginton Mill Weirs, Baginton, Warwickshire

## Archaeological Watching Brief



*understanding heritage matters*

Report No 1209  
February 2012



*Working for  
Warwickshire*

<b>Project:</b>	Baginton Mill Weirs
<b>Commissioned by:</b>	The Environment Agency
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<b>Planning Reference:</b>	N/A
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## Summary

**A watching brief was carried out at one of the weirs at Baginton Mill, on behalf of the Environment Agency. This weir is marked on the Ordnance Survey map of 1887 and is likely to be the site of an earlier water-control feature related to the mill. However the removal of the concrete wingwalls and weir did not reveal any earlier features but did show the make-up of the dam that runs up to both sides of the weir and the remains of the wooden sluice gate on the east side of the channel.**

## 1 Introduction

1.1 The Environment Agency are carrying out a programme of works on the weirs on the sluice channel at Baginton Mill, Warwickshire, where the three weirs currently existing are stopping fish movement and preventing gravel from being exposed to allow spawning. The work will involve removing the weir crest of the Rock Ramp and burying the weir in rubble, removing the 1920s weir and removing and consolidating the eastern sluice area shown on the 1880s Ordnance Survey map. The Old Mill is not a Listed Building but the timber-framed mill building survives and it is likely that an earlier mill exists beneath the current building. The Environment Agency archaeologist recommended the implementation of a programme of archaeological work to be carried out in conjunction with the development in order to record any earlier remains exposed by the works.

1.2 A programme of fieldwork, consisting of archaeological observation of the removal of the concrete wingwalls and weir on the site of the 1880s sluice, in accordance with a generic brief prepared by the Planning Archaeologist on behalf of the Planning Authority (December 2009), was commissioned from Archaeology (Projects) Warwickshire and carried out in February 2012 and this report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under the site code BM12.

## 2 Location

2.1 The development site is located near the western edge of the parish of Baginton, on the River Sowe, at map reference SP 3402 7532. The site of archaeological work was on the eastern weir associated with the Mill, at the junction of the River Sowe and the sluice channel that runs north of the mill.

2.2 The underlying geology of the area is Alluvium and 1st Terrace River Gravels (British Geological Survey 1984).

## 3 Methodology

3.1 The watching brief was designed to observe any groundworks associated with the development and record, as far as possible, the nature of the archaeological resource on the site.

3.2 The work undertaken involved the examination of early map evidence as well as records of archaeological remains in the area and local historical journals and other

publications. Fieldwork involved an archaeologist being present during groundworks.

## 4 Archaeological and historical background

4.1 A mill was recorded at Baginton in the Domesday survey of 1086, when it was valued at 10s. 8d. (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record No. MWA 2685). A mill is recorded in 1545, when Francis Goodere owned a mill called ‘overcorne myll’ and this probably stood on the same site as the 11th-century mill and the present site (Booth 1978, 71). A document of 1656 mentions ‘edge tole mill’ and it has been suggested the mill may have been used for tool sharpening in the 17th century (VCH 1951, 23).

4.2 In 1845 the miller was W. Grimes followed by Thomas Wilson (recorded 1854, see Appendix A) and Francis Robbins in 1860. By 1872, Henry Allen was the miller and his family continued working there until 1908 when Samuel Branston took over the business. Branston is recorded up to 1924. The mill operated until the late 1920s and became a private residence after its closure with James Henry Wilson in residence at Mill House from 1928-40 according to Trade Directories for those years.

4.3 The First Edition Ordnance Survey one inch to one mile map of 1834 has the mill named and the channel looping round to the north of the mill is clearly marked. The tithe map of 1841 has the mill buildings, river and leat clearly marked but not the northern loop, probably because the river itself was the parish boundary and the northern channel is technically within Stivichall in Coventry (Fig 2). Later Ordnance Survey mapping has the mill named as a ‘Corn Mill’ with a number of structures shown on the site (1887, 1905; Figs 3 and 4). The 1887 map shows a single line at the junction of the sluice channel and river, which may represent a sluice gate. By 1905 this is depicted as three lines within the entrance to the channel, with Weir written next to it. The 1925 map shows an additional weir to the west (Fig 5). By 1938 there is another weir, on the mill leat and the property is shown as Mill House (Fig 6).

4.4 There are a large number of archaeological sites in the vicinity dating from as far back as the Palaeolithic; many of the sites and finds are associated with ‘The Lunt’ Roman Fort and Baginton Castle (Fig 1). Archaeological sites and finds in the vicinity include the following:

MWA 2670	Find spot of Palaeolithic stone and flint axes
MWA 2671	RB finds
MWA 2672	Neolithic settlement
MWA 2673	Lunt Fort, period 1
MWA 2675	Parish church of St John the Baptist
MWA 2676	Baginton Castle
MWA 2677	Site of 17th-century Baginton Hall
MWA 2683	Roman settlement
MWA 2684	Neolithic stone axehead
MWA 2690	Neolithic settlement
MWA 2694	Medieval shrunken village
MWA 2953	A pit containing 1st century AD Roman pottery
MWA 2954	Possible site of a medieval chapel
MWA 2955	Iron Age earthwork

MWA 2961	Site of possible medieval building
MWA 4588	Find spot of Mesolithic flints
MWA 5295	Site of post-medieval barn
MWA 5296	Site of medieval tower building
MWA 5297	Lunt fort excavations
MWA 5298	Lunt Fort, excavation, period 3
MWA 5299	Lunt Fort, excavation, period 4
MWA 5300	Site of medieval ironworks at the Lunt fort
MWA 5301	Medieval shrunken village
MWA 5354	Site of 18th-century Baginton Hall
MWA 5628	Find spot of Roman figurine
MWA 6079	Ring ditch
MWA 8798	Find spot of Roman pottery
MWA 9185	Two Roman ditches
MWA 9462	Medieval settlement of Baginton
MWA 9776	Find spot of Roman pottery
MWA 9778	Find spot of medieval pottery
MWA 12422	Medieval ditch at The Lunt fort
MWA 12726	Baginton Hall park and gardens

#### Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments

LBL 4972	Baginton Castle
LBL 4977	Baginton Bridge
SAM 21540	Baginton Castle
SAM 30057	The Lunt Roman fort

## 5 Watching brief

5.1 The watching brief took place during the dismantling of the concrete wingwalls of the weir and removal of the concrete weir itself. At the start of works the water level had been very high, after a weekend of snow and subsequent melting. However the water level fell enough to allow works to take place. The wingwalls were 4.8m long, 0.50m wide and over 1.9m high, separated by a gap of 3.5m. The structure of the weir was removed using a 360° tracked excavator.

5.2 Initial work involved stripping the vegetation from behind the top of the eastern wingwall (1), which exposed the concrete walling (Fig 9). This had a curved southern edge, then 2m of straight section before it splayed back and down to the north-east for a further 2.50m. The concrete walling itself was 0.50m thick and a maximum of 1.90m high. Immediately behind the concrete walling was brick and sandstone rubble (6) which may be the fill of a construction cut (8) for the wingwall structure. When the wingwall was removed a section through the dam which lay behind it was exposed (Fig 10). The make up of this was more clearly revealed when the channel leading up to the sluice was drained. This showed the dam to be made up of over 0.4m of brown clay (bottom of layer was not exposed). On top of this was a 1m thick layer of red clay (5), which was clearly the core of a constructed dam as clay is not the geological natural of the area. This was overlain by 0.8m of topsoil (4).

5.3 Following excavation of the soil etc behind the eastern wingwall, the walling itself

was broken up by machine and allowed to drop onto the weir, where it assisted in impeding the water flowing up the sluice channel. The western wingwall (2) was similarly broken up but due to its inaccessibility it was not surveyed (its precise form and position on Fig 8 is conjectural, based partly on Ordnance Survey mapping). The walls were made of concrete with occasional, steel reinforcing bars (but not a full mesh/cage skeleton) and sat on a concrete base (3). Following the removal of the wingwalls, the base slab itself (approximately 0.25m thick) was removed by machine and during this process the remains of the wooden sluice-gate were noted (7). More soil was removed from the area beneath the slab once the channel was mostly drained of the water. Except for revealing the section of the dam, mentioned above, no earlier remains or additional layers were exposed.

5.4 After the weir had been dammed, causing the water level to fall, a brief examination was carried out along the northern channel. No archaeological features were visible but the geological natural gravel in the base of the channel was very clear and the channel did not appear to have ever been lined.

## 6 Conclusions

6.1 The earliest feature exposed during the work was almost certainly the dam associated with the weir structure. This was probably constructed when the northern sluice channel was originally built, probably in the late 18th or early 19th century. No remains of an earlier weir structure appeared to survive on the site and it was the opinion of the contractors that the type of re-enforcing visible within the concrete wingwalls of the weir during demolition were typical of 1950s or early 1960s construction. This would imply that these were replacement wingwalls for the weir that has been in this location since the beginning of the 20th-century at least.

## Acknowledgements

Archaeology (Projects) Warwickshire would like to thank The Environment Agency for commissioning the work and the County Planning Archaeologist for preparing the brief. Thanks must also go to the contractor, Birch Brothers and Environment Agency staff, who were very helpful on site.

## Bibliography

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Ordnance Survey 1887 *First Edition 1:2500 map*, Warwickshire Sheet 44.9.

Ordnance Survey 1905 *Second Edition 1:2500 map*, Warwickshire Sheet 44.9.

Ordnance Survey 1925 *Revised Edition 1:2500 map*, Warwickshire Sheet 44.9

Ordnance Survey 1938 *Revised Edition 1:2500 map*, Warwickshire Sheet 44.9.

VCH 1951 *The Victoria History of the County of Warwickshire, Vol. VI, Knightlow Hundred*, London.

WRO CR 3514/14 Photographs of Baginton, 20th century, Warwickshire County Record Office.

WRO CR 569/15/1 *Baginton Tithe map, 1841*, Warwickshire County Record Office.

WRO Z 279 (sm) *Gregory Estate map 1795*, Warwickshire County Record Office.



## Appendix A: Trade Directory data

1845	W. Grimes, Miller
1854	Thomas Wilson, Miller
1860	Francis Robbins, Miller and corn merchants
1863	Francis Robbins & Co, Miller and corn merchants
1868	Robbins and Powers, Miller and corn merchants
1872-84	Henry Allen, Miller
1888	Henry Allen (Mrs), Miller
1896-1904	Eliza Allen (Mrs), Miller
1908-24	Samuel Barnston, Miller
1928-40	James Henry Wilson, Mill House

## Appendix B: List of Contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1	Eastern concrete wingwall	
2	Western concrete wingwall	
3	Concrete weir base	
4	Topsoil	
5	Red clay	
6	Rubble fill	
7	Wooden sluice gate	
8	Construction cut	
9	Brown clay	

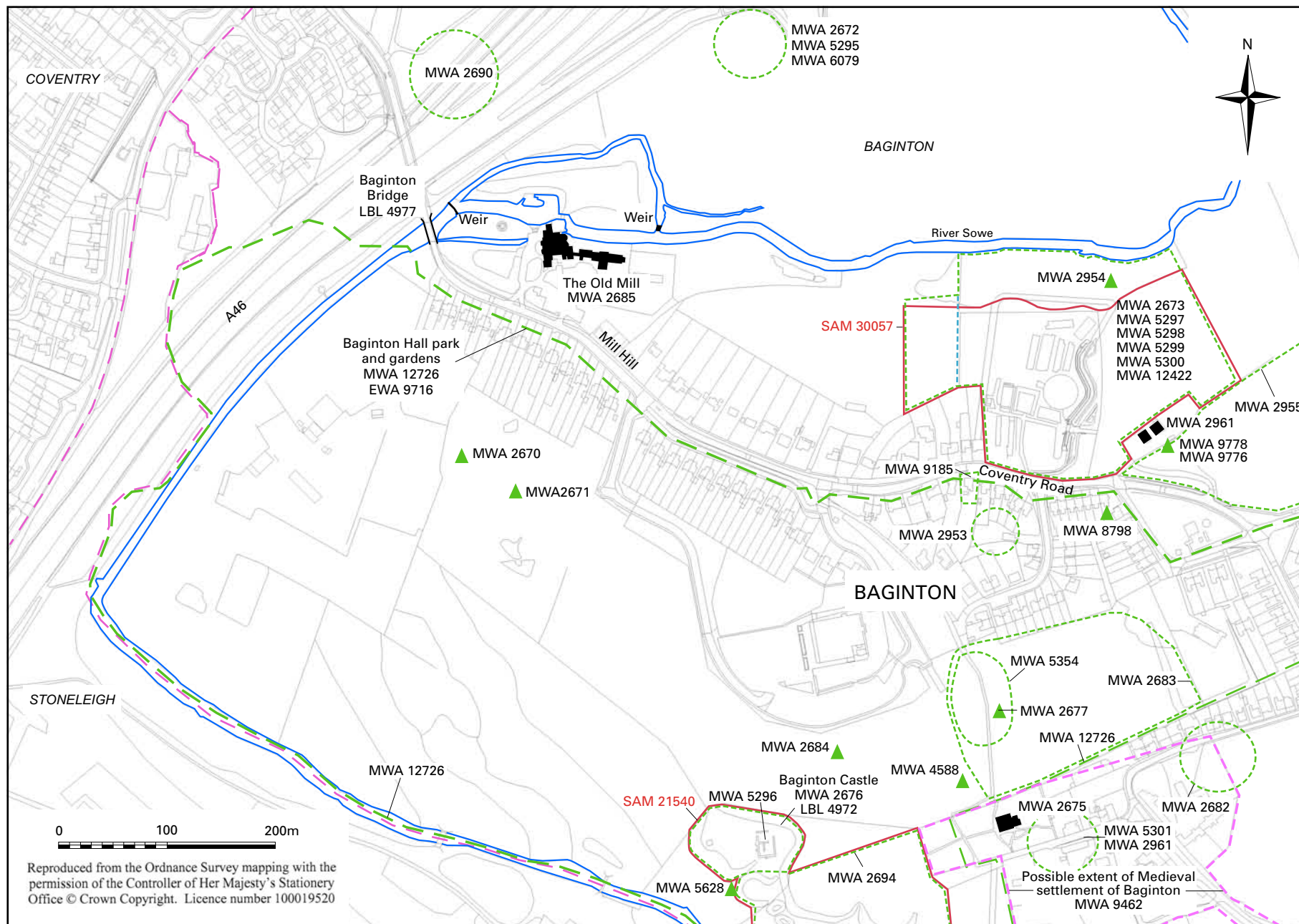


Fig 1: Site location

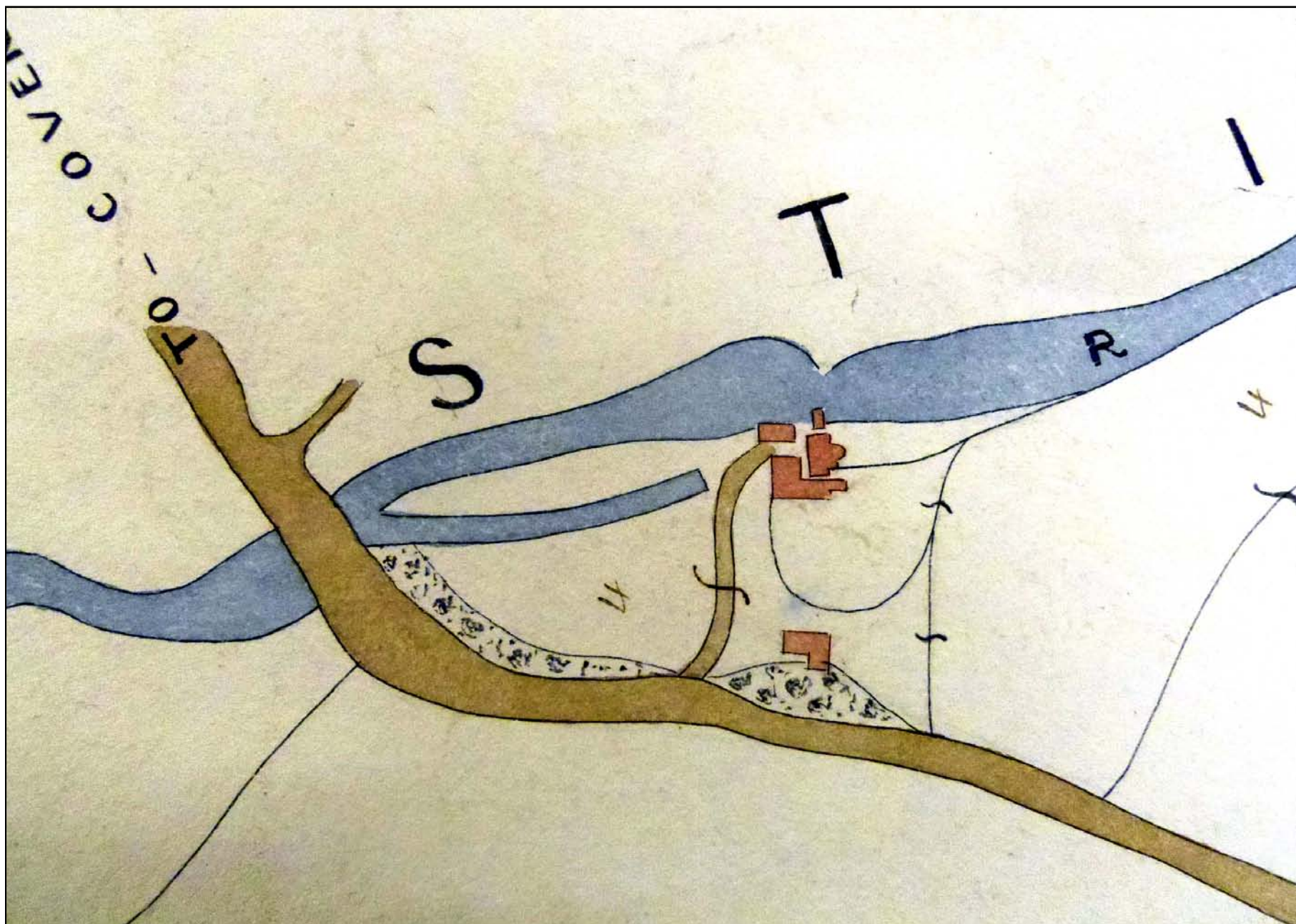


Fig 2: Detail from the Baginton Tithe map of 1841 (WRO CR 569/15/1)



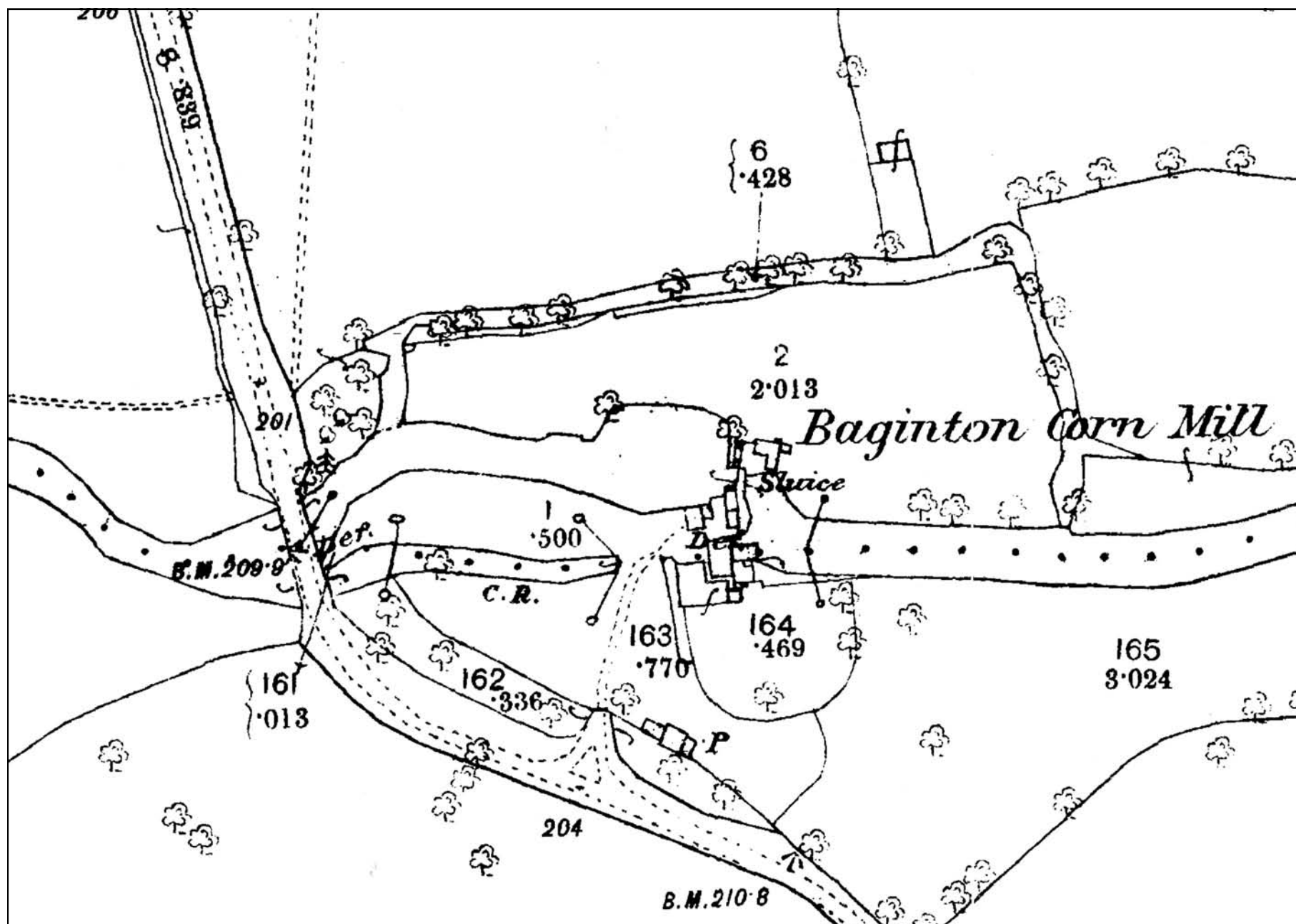


Fig 3: Detail from 1st Edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of 1887



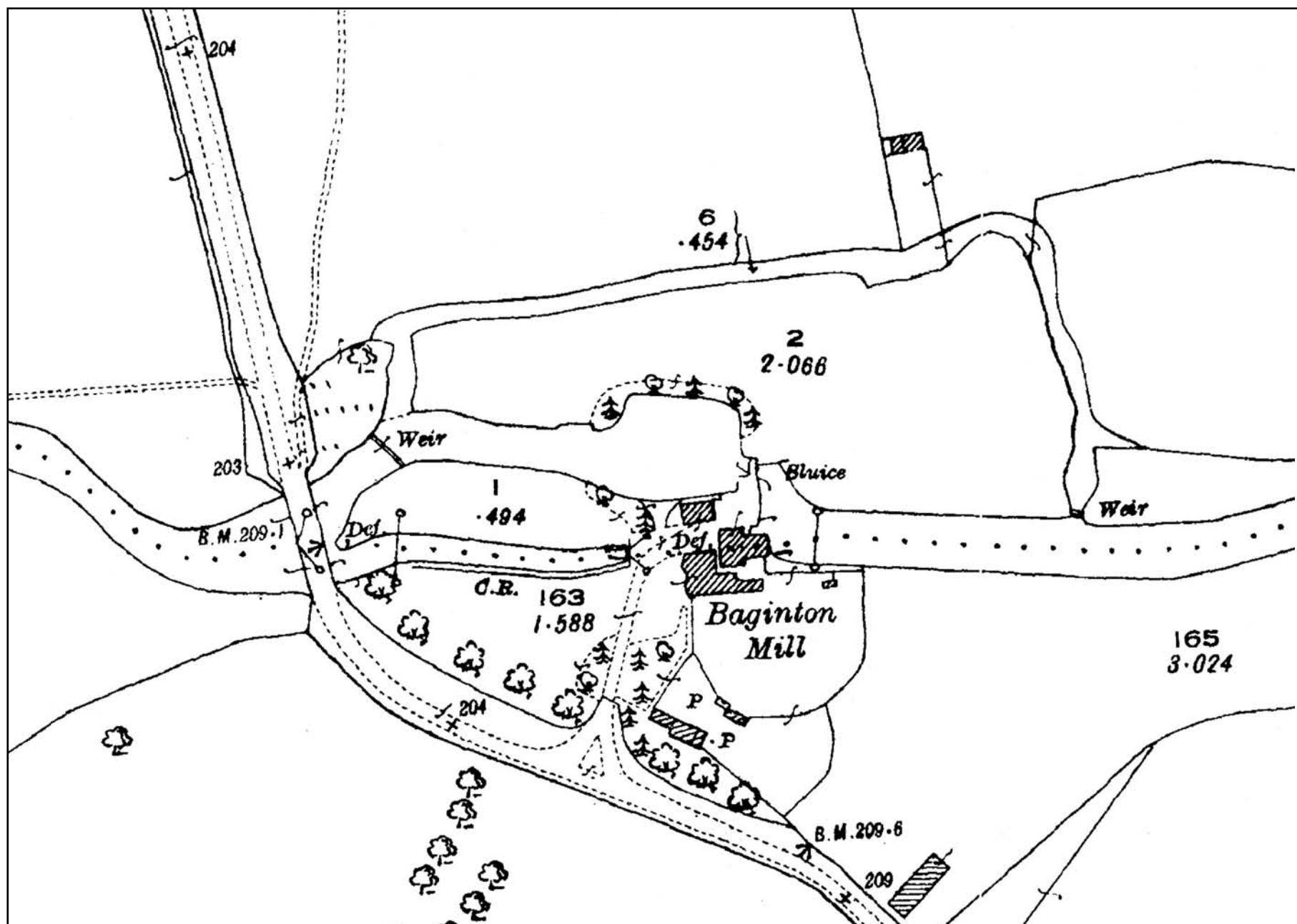


Fig 5: Detail from Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of 1925

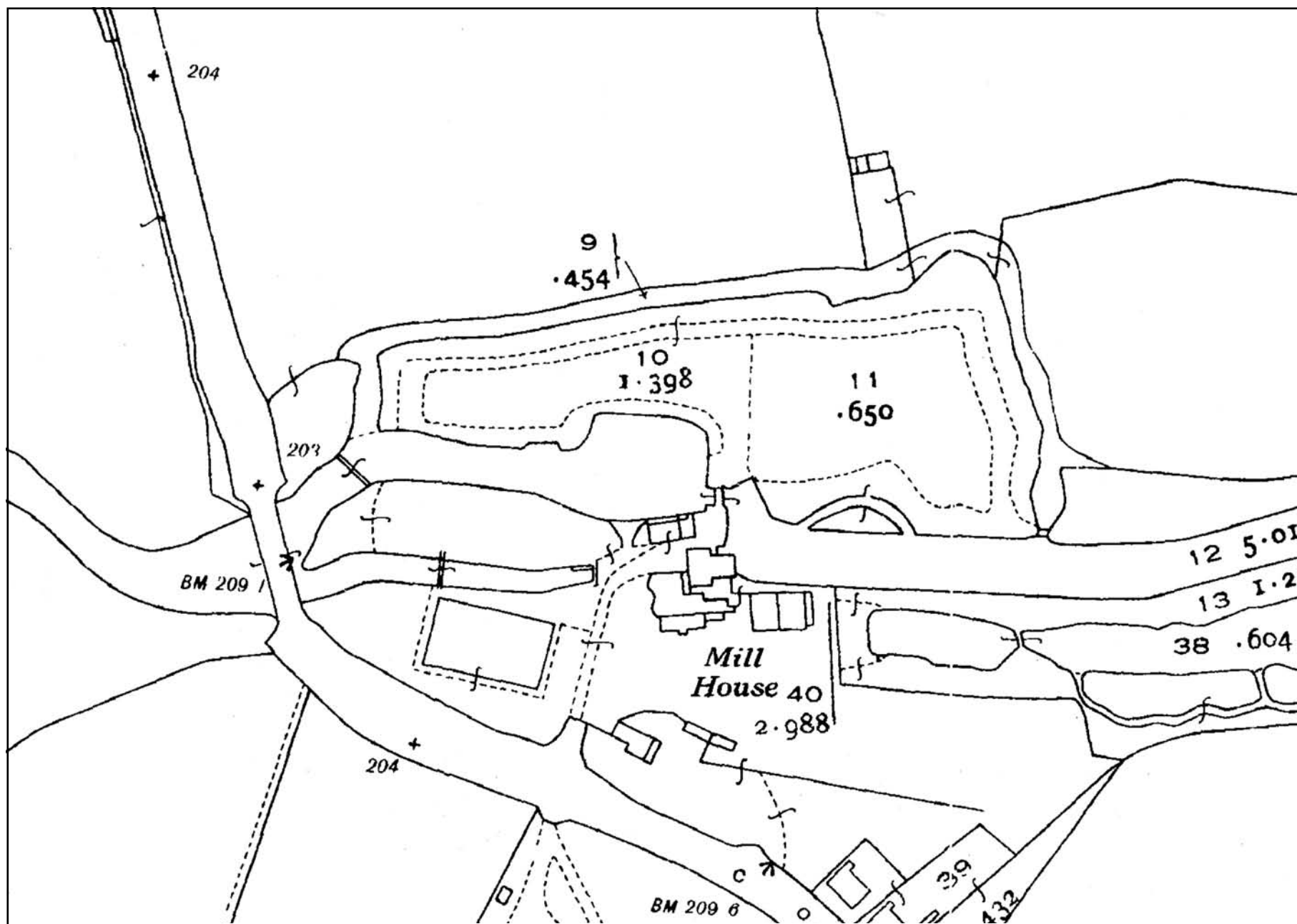


Fig 6: Detail from Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of 1938

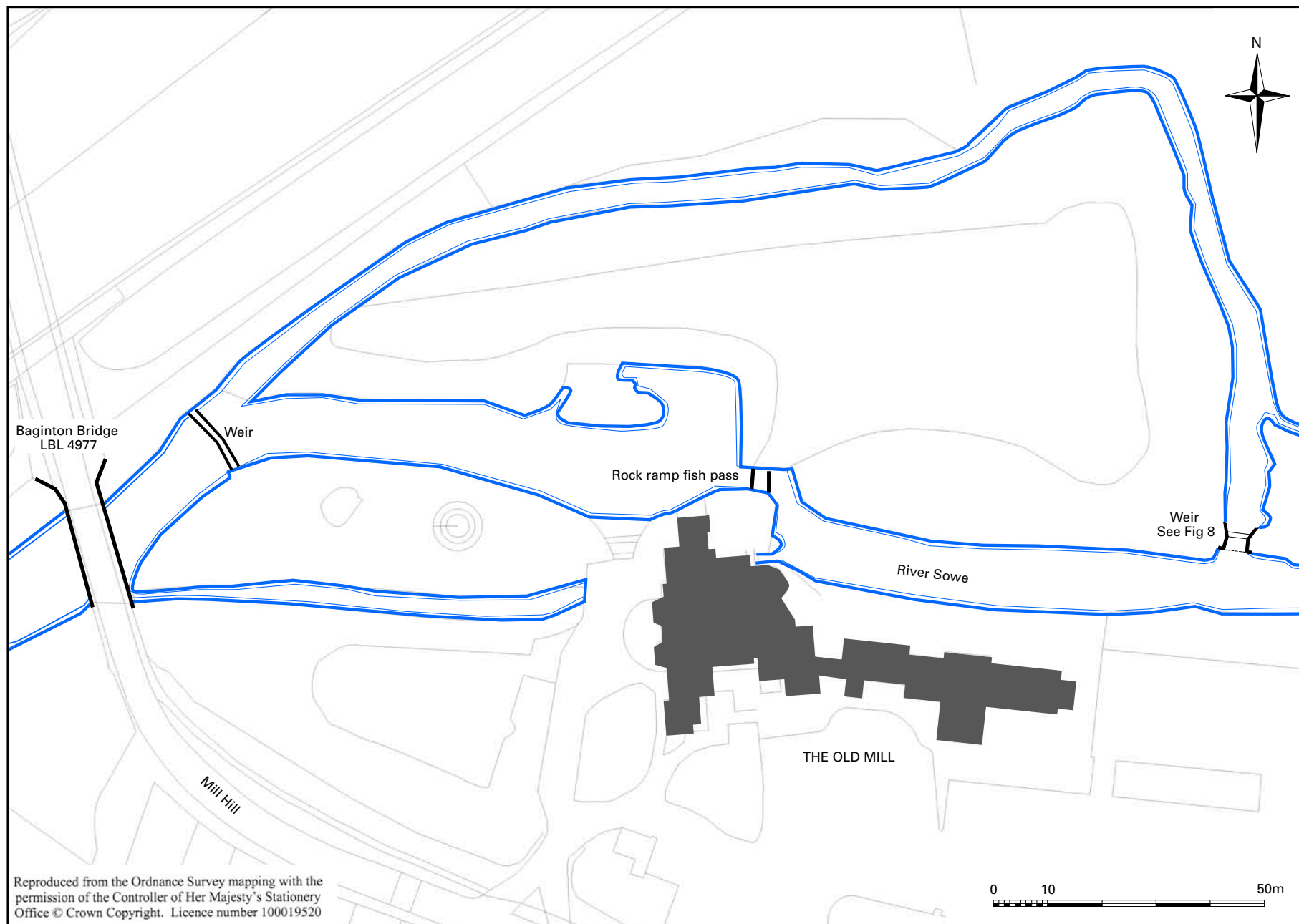


Fig 7: Detail of area observed



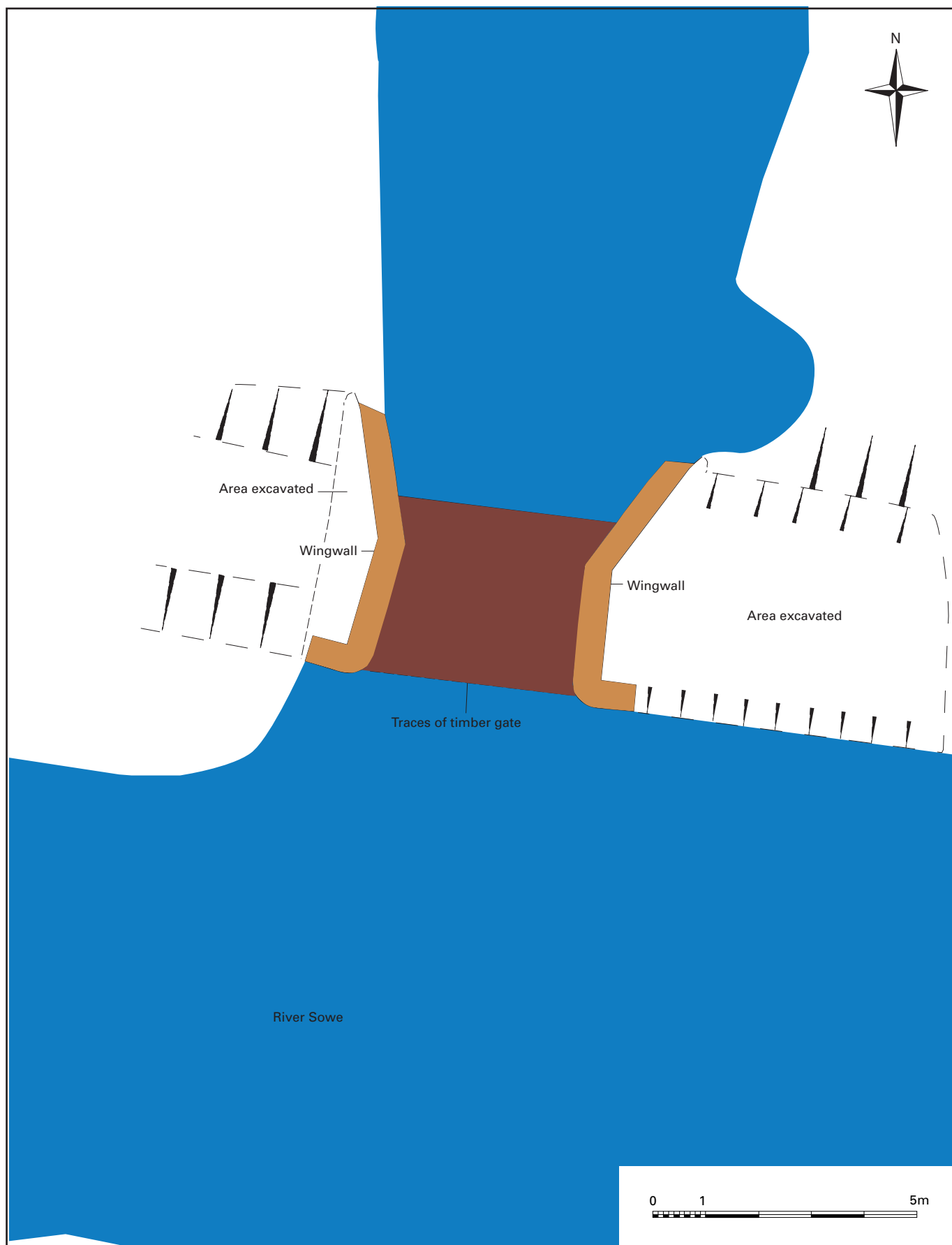


Fig 8: Plan of weir structure



Fig 9: Photograph showing weir before demolition



Fig 10: Photograph showing section through sluice dam with channel partly drained, looking north