

# York House, Abbey Hill, Kenilworth, Warwickshire

## Archaeological Evaluation



*understanding heritage matters*

Report No 1112  
July 2011



*Working for  
Warwickshire*

**Project:** York House, Abbey Hill, Kenilworth, Warwickshire

**Commissioned by:** Mr and Mrs Shanahan

**Project Report No.** 1112

**Site Code:** KY11

**NGR:** SP 2872 7202

**Planning Reference:** W/11/0300

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## Summary

**An archaeological evaluation for Jonathan Holland Architects, on behalf of Mr and Mrs Shanahan, in advance of an application for redevelopment recorded a large drainage feature running through the middle of the site. To the rear of the existing property it was an open ditch which yielded an assemblage of pottery of 18th-century date, whilst in the front of the property this was vaulted in brick. This feature is likely to have been related to the coach house and stabling associated with the mid 18th-century house to the east of the present property.**

## 1 Introduction

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by the Warwick District Council for alterations and extensions to York House, Abbey Hill, Kenilworth, CV8 1LU. The proposed development lies within an area of archaeological potential and a condition of planning permission requires the development to be accompanied by a programme of archaeological work.

1.2 A suitable programme was commissioned from Archaeology Warwickshire in July 2011 in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (dated 7th July). The stated aims of the project are to form an understanding of any archaeological deposits or materials that may be disturbed or destroyed by the development and placing the results in their wider local and regional contexts as appropriate. The objectives were to locate, record and analyse archaeological materials and deposits and to disseminate the results in an appropriate format.

1.3 This report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under the site code KY11.

## 2 Location

2.1 The site is located on the south side of Abbey Hill, Kenilworth and is currently a domestic dwelling (Fig 1).

2.2 The underlying geology of the area is Kenilworth Sandstone Formation (British Geological Survey 1984) with alluvial deposits occurring in relation to Finhams Brook.

## 3 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 No archaeological sites were hitherto recorded within the development area.

3.2 On James Fish's map of 1692 the south side of Abbey Hill is well developed but it is not possible to say with any certainty if any of the buildings depicted stand within the site of the present York House (Fig 2). No more detailed mapping is available until the Ordnance Survey of 1887 (Fig 3). This map suggests that the site was at that time part of a much larger property occupied by the adjacent Dudley House (Ordnance Survey 1887), which probably dates from the mid 18th century. York House looks on this map to have been the coach house

and stables surrounding a courtyard, although there is a narrow building on the street frontage. Little has changed by the time of the Second Edition in 1905 (Fig 4).

3.3 The site lies just south of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Kenilworth Abbey Monastic Precinct (SAM 35115). The Warwickshire Historic Environment Record lists a number of sites in the vicinity which are tabulated below.

HER No	Description
MWA 9581 Medieval Settlement	The possible extent of the settlement based on the OS map of 1886, 26SW. Domesday lists Kenilworth in Stoneleigh Hundred. Ref 1,9 in Kenilworth Richard the Forester holds 3 virgates of land from the King. 10 villagers and 7 smallholders with 3 ploughs. Woodland 1/2 league long and 4 furlongs wide. These two members lie in (the lands of) the King's manor of Stoneleigh. The 1886 map shows three areas of settlement; one at Castle Green, to the north and northeast of the Castle; one mostly to the north of High Street and continuing along New Street, and the third along Castle End:- (a) Castle Green A small area which extends along Castle Hill, with quite dense settlement and some long narrow back gardens. WA7923 is the record of medieval occupation in Clinton Lane. (b) High Street. There is dense occupation along the northern side of the street, with long thin back gardens, and a few smaller plots east of the church to the south. The plots along New Street have shorter gardens. WA3230 is a house that dates back to the medieval period at the eastern end of New Street in manor Road. Wallsgrove thinks that the original site of the Domesday settlement lay in the High Street, Fieldgate Street area. (c ) Castle End shows a clear boundary line on the western edge; these western plots have longer gardens than those on the eastern side, but there are gaps and empty plots. The shorter plots continue along to the south east of Abbey Hill.
MWA 9181 Medieval buildings	In February 1989 stonework was uncovered by contractors machining a new pipeline easement across Abbey Fields. Rescue excavation revealed 3 buildings of 12th - 13th century date, which were largely abandoned during the 14th century. They may have been part of the mill buildings (MWA 3207), however they could also be a gatehouse complex due to their location adjacent to an old trackway and bridge. They may have also served an agricultural function. Geophysical survey in 1997 over the area of excavation appears to show a substantial spread of rubble, but has not clarified the size or even the shape of excavated structures.
MWA 10096	The <b>boundary</b> of the monastic precinct of Kenilworth Abbey is mostly conjectural although some historic map evidence suggests it follows particular historic and modern boundary lines. A 12th/13th century <b>wall</b> was exposed during excavation of the Little Virginia area in the north-western most part of the precinct. The wall ran approximately east to west with a distinct turn of the wall towards the south, forming the north-west corner of the precinct.
MWA 3219 Church of St Nicholas	Chancel, nave, N and S aisles, S chapel, S transept, N porch, vestry, and W tower. Mid 14th century; S arcade added about the end of the 14th century; the S chapel, vestry and S transept are modern. Of red sandstone ashlar. Ground floor of tower forms a W porch and the doorway, which is a later

insertion, is an elaborate one of the late 12th century and probably came from the adjacent St Mary's Abbey (PRN 3201). It is probable that for a century or more after the establishment of the priory (1122) the inhabitants of the neighbourhood used the nave of the monastic church, and that a separate parish church was not built until the middle of the 13th century. During excavation of cable trenches for floodlighting, a sandstone wall was revealed. This may have formed part of the monastic precinct boundary, constructed around the time that the church was built.

MWA 3201  
The remains  
of St Mary's  
Abbey

Priory of Augustin canons, afterwards an Abbey, was founded in 1122 by Godfrey de Clinton about the same time as the Castle. The Abbey was dissolved in April 1538. Excavation has revealed part of the ground plan, including the Church and a Church tower (PRN 5384), a chapter house and cloisters (PRN 5385) and the infirmary (PRN 5386).

Resistivity survey carried out by the University of Warwick in 1996 gave disappointing results over part of the Abbey Church, but suggested the site of a possible building or quarry just outside the gatehouse.

The observation of the removal and replacement of play equipment revealed medieval roof tile and some glazed floor tile. Further observation of the removal of play equipment and excavation of trenches for new equipment revealed evidence of red sandstone walls, possibly from a complex associated with the Abbey. The walls were overlaid by a layer of sandstone rubble brick and tile, from which a single sherd of 14th/15th century green glazed jug was recovered.

MWA 6008  
Abbey  
Guesthouse

The Guest House is a building of two stories, which formerly had an outside stair and a porch over the S door. The upper storey has two-light ogee-headed windows. A domestic building of 14th century date of sandstone originally with an upper floor 2.4m from the ground. One of the gable ends is of timber filled with brickwork. Constructional and architectural details of the timbers of the roof suggest that present roof is not original but a later replacement of reused beams. There is a suggestion that the roof was lost in the civil war. Tree ring dating suggests that the roof is made from up of timber reused from two different sources. Dates: fist site chronology 1427 to 1573, second site chronology 1409 to 1560. Felling dates 1578-1603 and 1569-1594 respectively. A report on a metal detecting survey at the Barn states that its south face, in particular, is peppered by weapon fire.

MWA 6007  
Abbey  
Gatehouse

A 14th century gatehouse is of local red sandstone and consists of two vaulted compartments - the inner now in ruins - opening to the N by a four-centred arch. Between the two compartments is the gateway, with a large segmental arch, flanked on the W by a small doorway, with pointed arch, for foot passengers. In the E wall of each compartment is an arched recess with a stone seat and in the W wall of the inner is a doorway into the porter's lodge. This lodge is divided into two halves. There are traces of a wall running S from the W side of the lodge and another running E.

MWA 3220  
Abbey Pool

An area of low-lying marshy ground with no surveyable limits. It lies between the Finham Brook and high ground to the N, and is bounded on the E by the slopes of the dam for the Priory Mill. No escarpment on the N side could be attributed definitely to the Pool. The bank to the S side beside the

stream appears to be too low in its present state to have retained any appreciable quantity of water. It is 0.5m high on average.

## 4 Trial Trenches

4.1 Two trial trenches were excavated by a mini excavator using a ditching bucket (Fig 5). Trench 1 was L-shaped, a total of 9m in length and 1.4m wide. The trench revealed a single significant feature, a large ditch 102 (Fig 6), which yielded a large assemblage of post-medieval pottery, mostly dating to the 18th century. It was aligned north-west to south-east, parallel to the present property boundary.

4.2 Trench 2 was 11m long and was only excavated to a maximum depth of 300mm. The only significant feature was the top of a vaulted brick chamber (206; Figs 8 and 9). The purpose of this structure was not readily identifiable because of the depth restriction but it is possible that it covered a sump given that two ceramic pipes (207 and 208) protruded from beneath the brickwork. This feature may have been related to the demolition rubble used as hardcore on the site (204).

4.3 Two curious sandstone features were recorded in the garden during the course of the work. These were niches of similar proportions, each carved from a single stone block, one of which was incorporated into a garden wall (Figs 10 and 11). The interiors were coated with limewash. Both had flat bases and curved tops; one has slightly tapering sides. Their heights were 0.69m and 0.73m respectively. The internal depth were 170mm and 200mm. It seems likely that these 'niches' were originally from the Abbey site and may have housed effigies or something similar.

Trench	Context	Description	Depth (m)	Finds
1	100	Concrete slabs	-	
	101	Brown sandy clay loam layer	0.34	
	102	Ditch cut with steep sloping sides 1.75m wide and flat base	0.74	
	103	Dark brown sandy clay loam fill of 102	0.74	18th century see Appendix
	104	Yellowish brown sandy clay loam layer of horticultural soil	0.25	
	105	Red clay natural	-	
2	200	Modern tarmac surface	0.04	
	201	Modern sub base	0.12	
	202	Modern brick pavers	-	
	203	Modern sand sub base	0.12	20th century see Appendix
	204	Demolition rubble (18/19th century)	-	
	205	Brown clay loam layer	-	
	206	Brick vault	-	
	207	Ceramic drain	-	
	208	Ceramic drain	-	
	209	Electricity cable	-	

## 5 Conclusions

5.1 The large assemblage of 18th-century pottery in ditch 102 seems likely to have derived from the adjacent property. The curious alignment with the brick vaulting in Trench 2 may suggest that it was a drain, open to the rear and covered within the probable courtyard area near the frontage.

5.2 There is no evidence that the site lies within the developed medieval town and it is unlikely that the proposed development will disturb any significant deposits. The stone features recorded are, like many other fragments of masonry in the garden, likely to be derived from the Abbey site to the north.

## Acknowledgements

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank Jonathan Holland Architects for commissioning the work on behalf of Mr and Mrs Shanahan.

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Ordnance Survey 1887 *First Edition 1:2500 map*, Warwickshire Sheet 53.4

Ordnance Survey 1905 *Second Edition 1:2500 map*, Warwickshire Sheet 53.4

## Appendix: List of Finds

CONTEXT	DESCRIPTION	COMMENTS	No
103	Glass	18th-century vessel	8
	Glass	18th-century window	2
	Pottery	Creamware dated 1740-1790	38
	Pottery	Black-glazed coarseware dated 17th/18th century	14
	Pottery	Manganese mottledware dated 1680-1740	2
	Pottery	Flowerpot dated 18th/19th	1
	Pottery	White salt-glazed stoneware 1720-1780	1
	Pottery	Blue transfer-printed Pearlware 1775-1840	41
	Pottery	Blue shell-edge Pearlware 1780-1840	5
	Pottery	Slipware 1680-1770	1
203	Pottery	Creamware 1740-1790	1
	Pottery	Modern glazed ware 19th/20th	1
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>103</b>

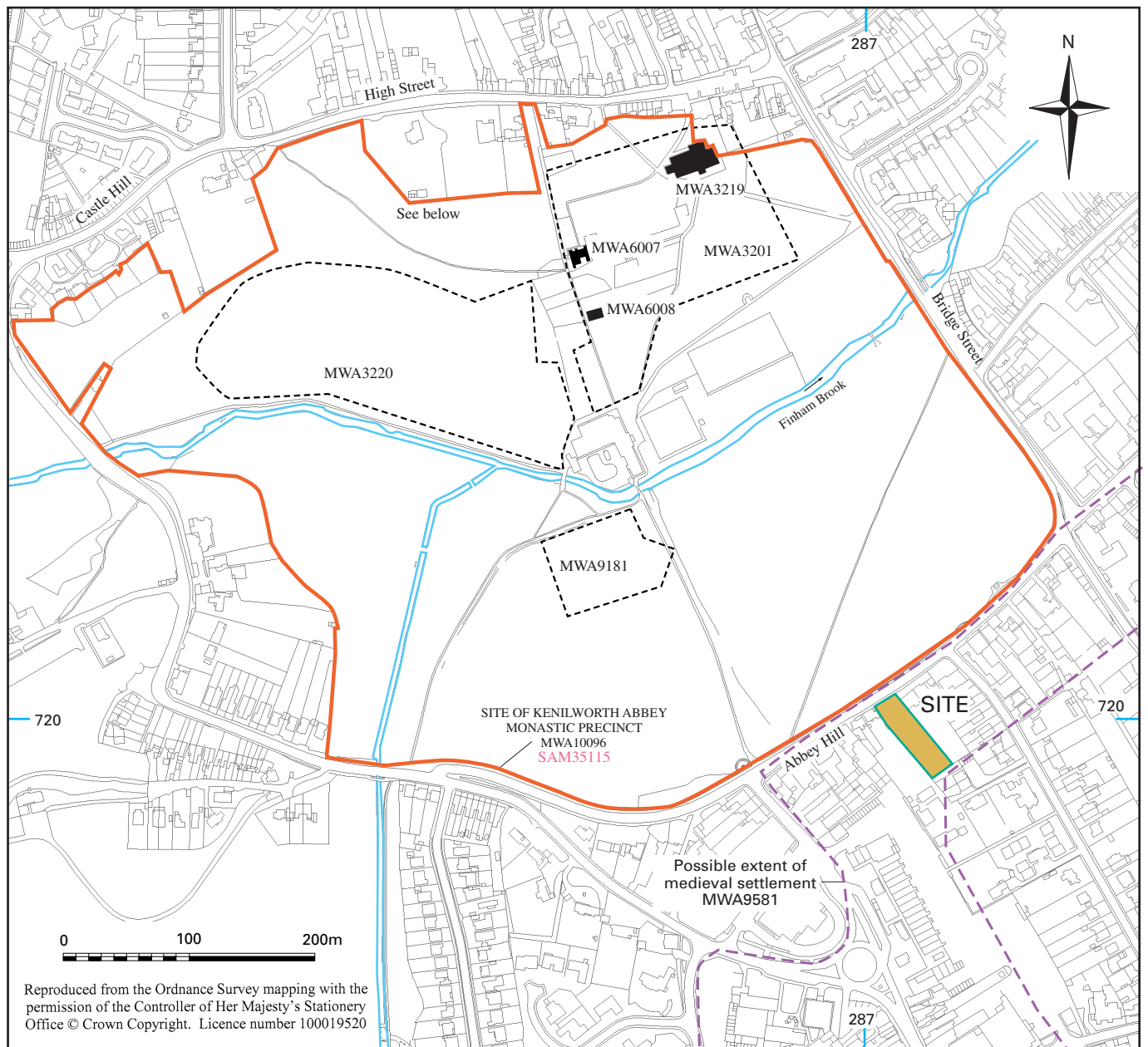


Fig 1: Site location

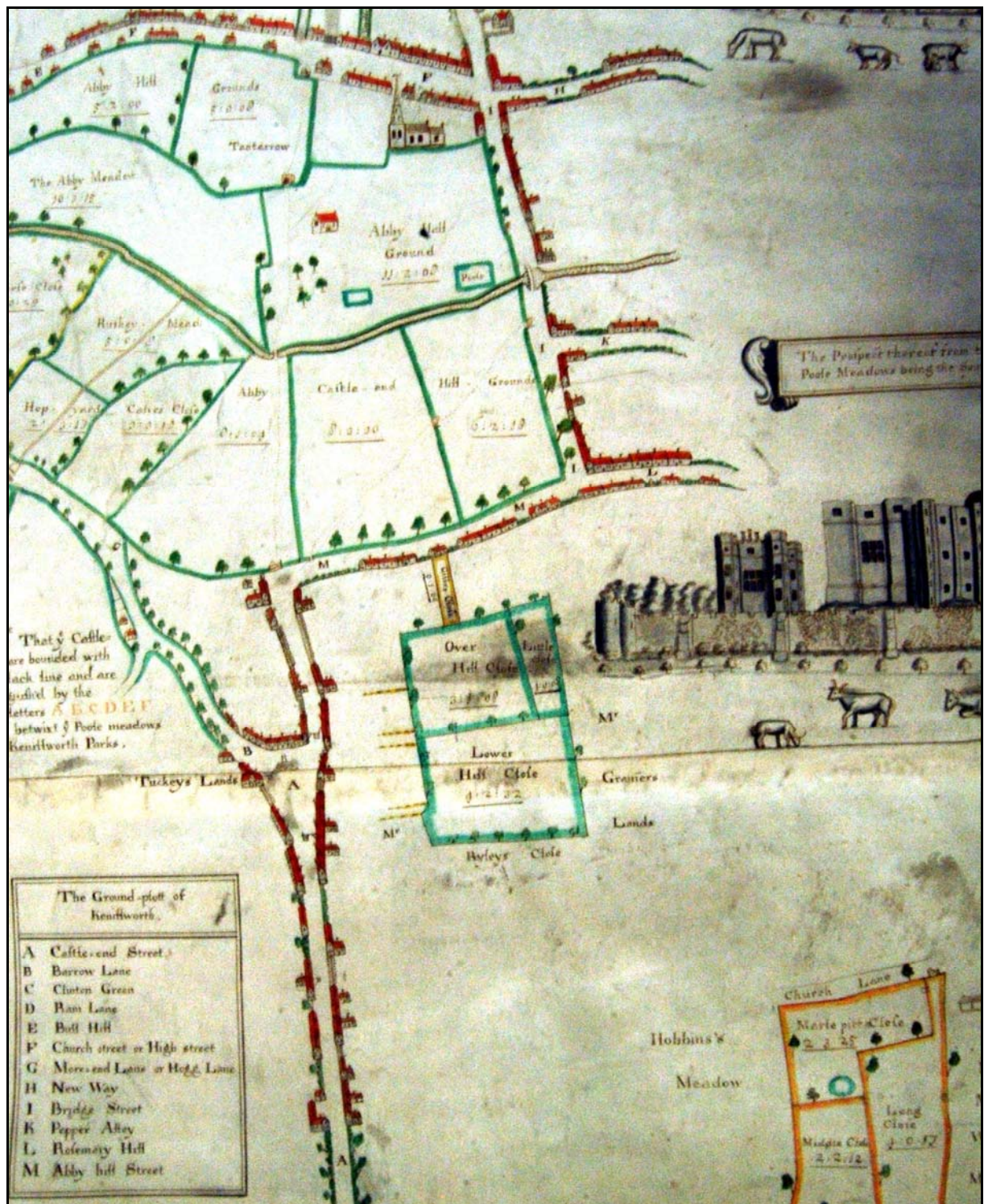


Fig 2: Kenilworth 'Manor of Rudfen...' by J Fish 1692 (WRO CR143A)

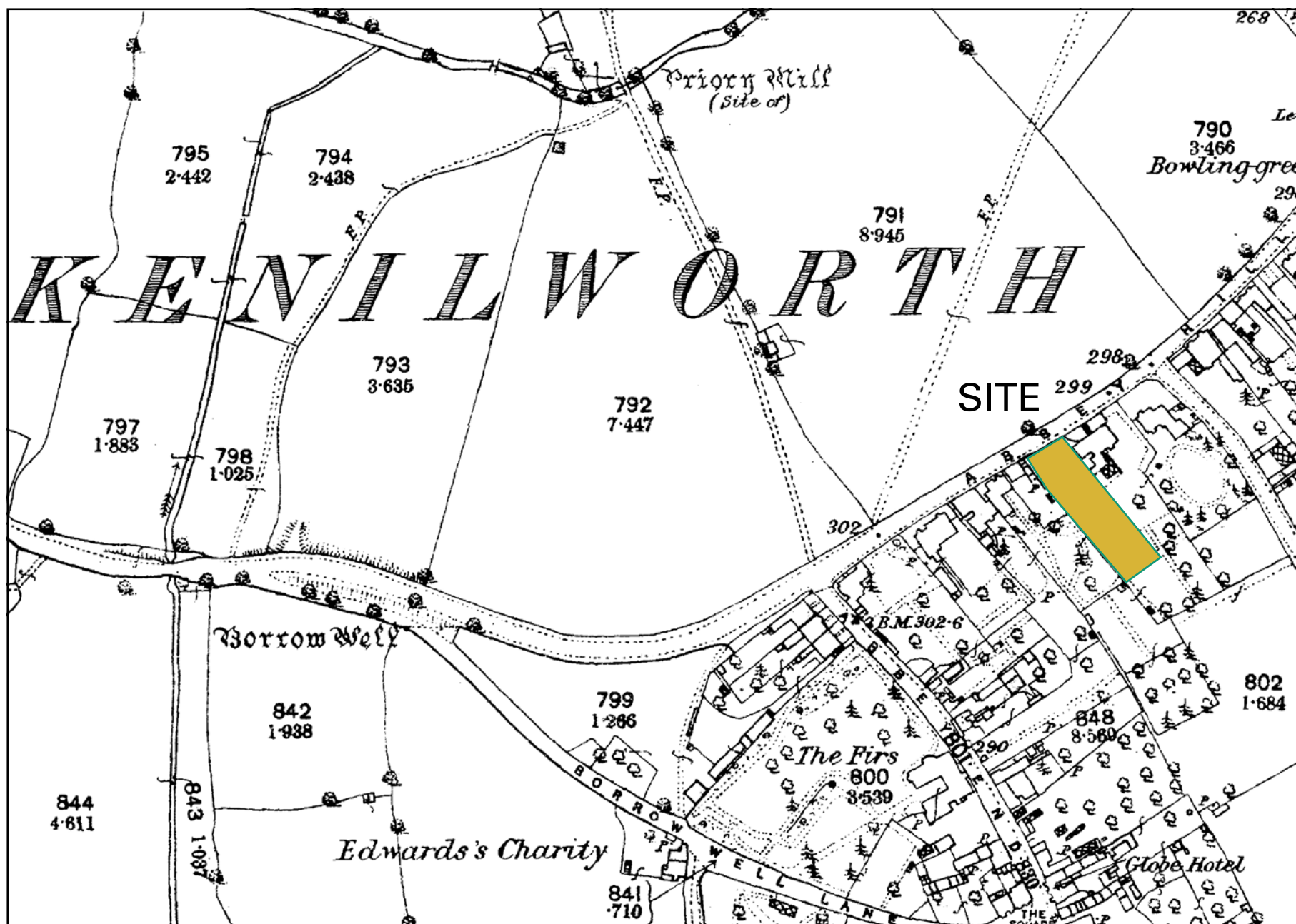


Fig 3: Detail from 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887

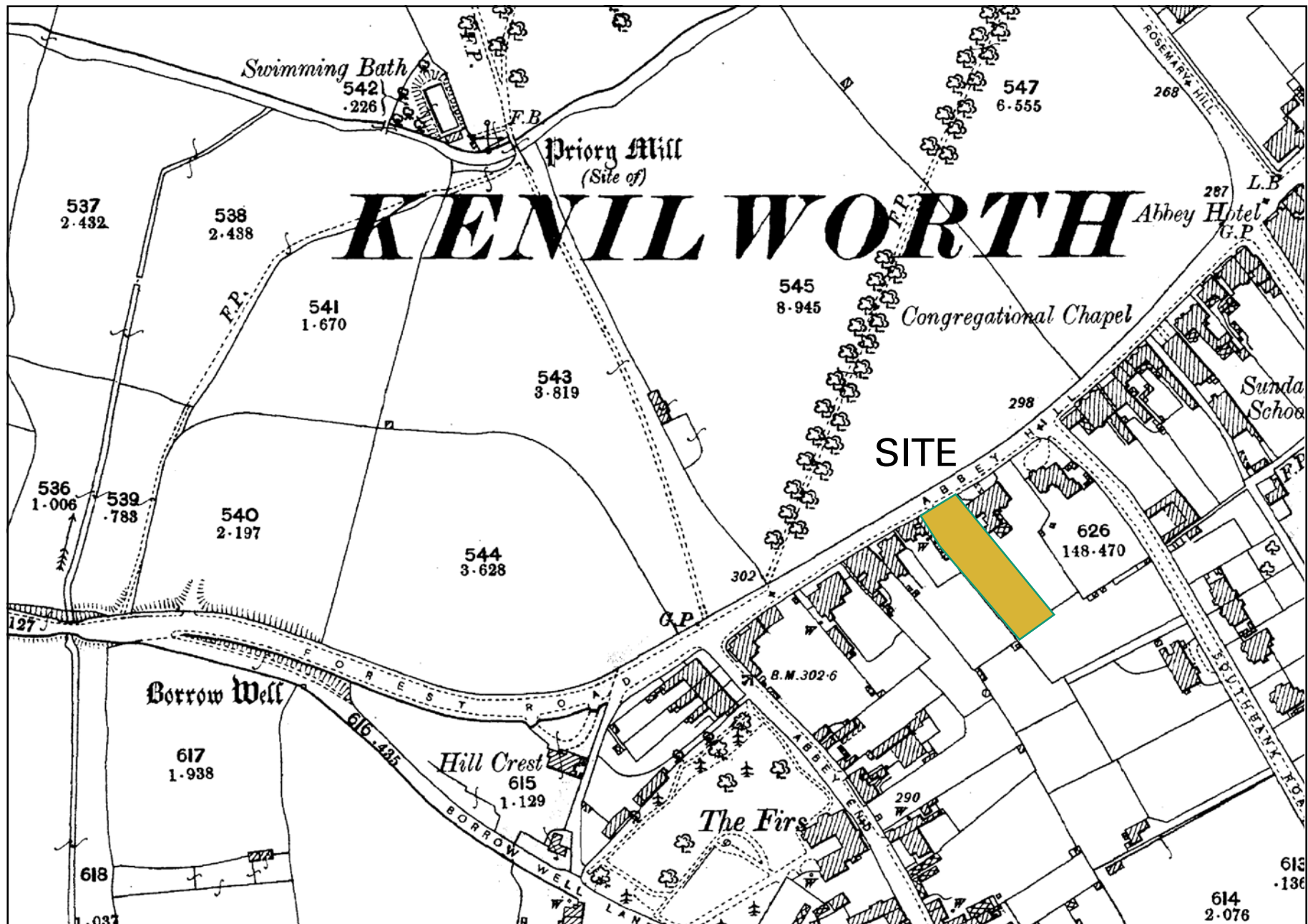


Fig 4: Detail from 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map of 1905

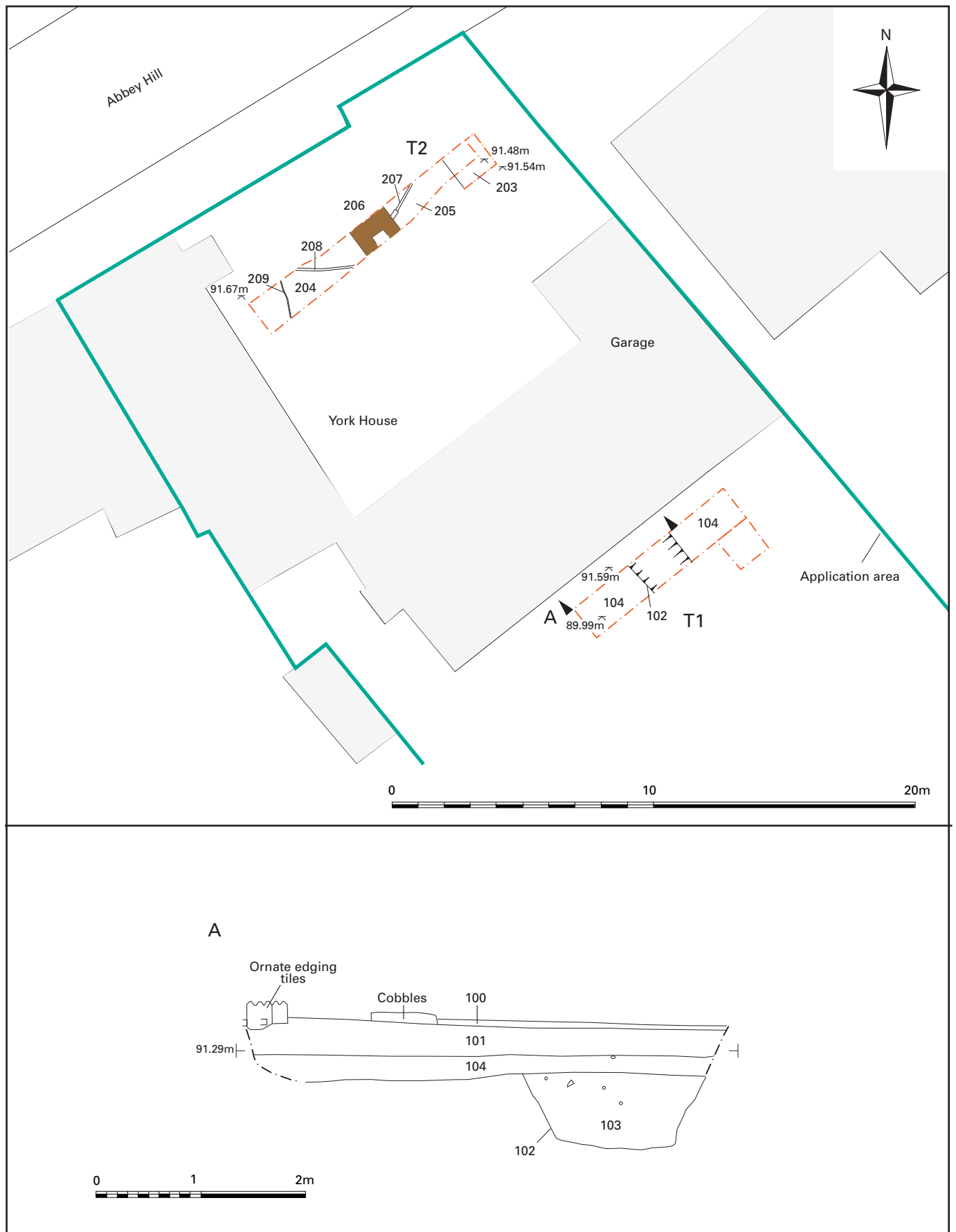


Fig 5: Trenches 1 and 2 and section A



Fig 6: Post-medieval ditch 102 from the south



Fig 7: Trench 1 spur from the north-west



Fig 8: Trench 2 from the east



Fig 9: Brick vault 206 from the north-east



Fig 10: Medieval stone niche



Fig 11: Medieval stone niche



Fig 12: Moving the machine