

56 Saltisford, Warwick, Warwickshire

Archaeological Evaluation



understanding heritage matters

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1447
June 2014



*Working for
Warwickshire*

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National Grid Reference: SP 2792 6524
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SUMMARY

A trial trench excavated within the footprint of a recently demolished timber-framed building found evidence for several features of archaeological interest. These included a sandstone wall of probable 18th-century date associated with the recently demolished building. A sandstone-lined well, dating from the post-medieval period, was dated by a fragment of tobacco pipe recovered from the fill of its construction pit. A 19th-century brick cellar with a vaulted ceiling was back-filled with rubble. Several pits containing small fragments of brick and tile of 19th-century date were recorded along with the footing of a 20th-century foundation.

A very small quantity of medieval and post-medieval finds were recovered, although an undated gully at the south-eastern end of the trench was potentially medieval and possibly associated with a property division.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by the Warwick District Council for the demolition of the existing building and erection of two replacement two-bedroom dwellings at 56 Saltisford, Warwick. The proposed development lies within an area of significant archaeological potential and it was therefore a condition of the planning permission that, the applicant secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by the Planning Authority.

1.2 Archaeology Warwickshire were commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation based on a Written Scheme of Investigation approved in May 2014.

1.4 This report presents the results of the fieldwork, which was undertaken in June 2014. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under the site code WF14.

2 SITE LOCATION

2.1 The site is located on Saltisford, in Warwick, at National Grid Reference SP 2792 6524. The underlying geology of the area is mapped as Bromsgrove Sandstone Formation (British Geological Survey 1984). The area of the development site is c.95 square metres.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The earliest evidence for human activity in the area is a Roman coin (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record No. MWA 1353, *not shown on Fig. 1*) found during bulldozing work to the south-west of the area of the current proposal area in 1975. The coin is of Faustina II, wife of Marcus Aurelius, dating from around AD 175 and is not necessarily indicative of a settlement site, but does suggest Romano-British activity in the general area.

3.2 The area of the current proposal lies in the medieval suburb of Saltisford. Saltisford was an area of settlement that developed to the north-west of the north gate of the town along the salt way to Droitwich (VCH 1969, 422). The medieval suburb is usually thought to have extended as far as the ford over the Goysel Brook (VCH 1969, 423), which is now culverted. To the rear of the site is the edge of the outer grounds of the medieval St Sepulchre's Priory (MWA 10180).

3.3 The remains of the medieval leper hospital (Scheduled Ancient Monument 17004; MWA 1927) lie to the north-west of the current development. The church of St Michael (MWA 1950) was founded by Roger Earl of Warwick in 1135 (English Heritage 1991), possibly as a parish church (VCH 1969, 422), becoming the chapel of the leper hospital at a later date. The first reference to the leper hospital comes in 1275 (English Heritage 1991). The existing standing buildings include the stone chapel and the timber Master's house, both dating from the 15th century and both Grade II* Listed Buildings. The original precinct of the Leper Hospital is uncertain, but it is unlikely to have extended as far east as the current proposal area. The hospital lies beyond the Goysel Brook and would have been situated outside the original suburb. However, subsequent medieval expansion may have filled the gap.

3.4 In 1545 the hospital came into lay ownership, but still provided an income for distribution to the poor. The earliest map of the area (Speed 1610, Fig 2) shows St Michael's Church and the Master's House in virtual isolation beyond the Goysel Brook. The street frontage of this side of Saltisford was built up at this date to beyond the former Pigwell Lane, roughly where Albert Street is now. This plan probably also represents the situation in the late medieval period after the depopulation associated with the Black Death had diminished both town and suburbs. Almshouses are thought to have been built along the frontage of the Leper Hospital in the mid-17th century and four new cottages were added, probably between 1702 and 1730 (MWA 10084). These formed a terrace along the Birmingham Road frontage west of the chapel and were demolished in 1964 (VCH 1969, 550, WCRO PV WAR Puc.1).

A plan of 1711 also shows a range of buildings along the street frontage to the south-east of the chapel and on both sides of Saltisford up to the Goysel Brook (Fig 3, Fish and Bridgeman, 1711). To the rear of the site's frontage are 'The Town Gardens' and no property boundaries are shown on this side of Saltisford, although they are on the other side of the street on this map.

3.5 Late 18th-century plans show more detail with the shape of buildings better defined and by this date property boundaries are shown on both sides of the street (Figs 4 and 5; Baker 1788, WCRO Z122(u)).

3.6 In the late 18th century more almshouses were built on the outskirts of the Saltisford suburb just to the west of the current proposal area (MWA 10090). These were known as St Mary's Poor Houses or St Mary's Upper Almshouses and at one stage had their own pump (MWA 2165, Fig 1). St Mary's Upper Almshouses became part of a joint almshouses charity known as St Mary's Almshouse Charity, in 1956 (VCH 1969, 552). None of these 18th-century buildings survive today, being demolished c.1970.

3.7 In 1725 the Birmingham road was 'turnpiked' as part of the London to Holyhead road (MWA 4774; Slater 1981, 83) and by 1793 the Warwick-Birmingham canal had been opened (MWA 4314; VCH 1969, 508) with a wharf (MWA 4325) at Saltisford (Fig 1). The racecourse (MWA 1974) is one of the oldest in the country with races documented here from at least 1775, possibly as early as 1709.

3.8 The canal wharf stimulated industrial development and new industrial sites started to develop, including a cotton mill or 'Worsted Manufactory' dating to c.1795 and shown on a map of Warwick originally drawn up in 1786 but amended after the canal (1793) and factory had been constructed; it is also shown on James's map of 1806 (MWA 9163; Fig 6). By 1851 the area near to the wharf was occupied by timber yards, coal yards and goods yards as well as a number of pubs and a new Gas Works to the north-west of the site (MWA 1936, Board of Health 1851, Fig 7). The Gas Works, which was built in 1822, consisted in 1851 of two octagonal gasometers at either end of a range of buildings along the Birmingham Road frontage.

3.9 By 1851 (Board of Health 1851, Fig 7) much of the Saltisford street frontage area had been built over. The area where No 56 existed was occupied by two buildings, with a wash house, dustbin and privy in the yard to the rear.

3.10 Further industrial and housing development continued in Saltisford over the next hundred years (Ordnance Survey 1887, 1905, 1938, 1952). In 1887 the site is shown as occupied (Fig 8) and little appears to have changed by 1905 (Ordnance Survey 1905; Fig 9).

3.11 In 2002 an archaeological evaluation was carried out on the site of the former Hutfields Garage to the west of the current proposal area. This recovered evidence for a yard surface of 16th/17th century date (MWA 9224) and industrial activity that may have been associated with the Leper Hospital/Almshouses (MWA 10082). A ditch that may have formed a boundary around the chapel was also recorded (Warwickshire Museum 2002, 11; EWA 7139). Subsequent observation of the associated development (Warwickshire Museum 2003, 10; EWA 7279) recorded evidence for possible 17th/18th-century industrial activity in the area (MWA 9679). An evaluation at 37 Saltisford in 2005 uncovered a medieval boundary ditch (MWA 10282) and brick features dating from the post-medieval to modern periods (EWA 7686). A programme of building recording was carried out at the Gasworks site in 2003 (EWA 7432). Limited observation of construction work adjacent to Northgate Garage in 1995 revealed no significant archaeological features or finds (EWA 9450). An evaluation north of Ansell Road in 2004 did not record any medieval finds but did record extensive evidence for early 20th-century rubbish disposal (EWA 7410).

3.12 A programme of archaeological trial trenching and recording of a stripped area was undertaken at Saltisford Evangelical Church. In the evaluation trench, the front of the site was found to be truncated by 19th-century cellaring and at the rear of the site, the natural sand and clay was very close to the surface and was cut by a number of features dated by pottery to the 13th/14th century. During subsequent ground reduction a stone-built culvert with a brick arch was recorded, along with further medieval and post-medieval archaeological features.

3.13 This part of Warwick was well served with taverns and public houses from at least the early 19th century, some of which are still in existence (MWA 13306, MWA13308, MWA13309, MWA13310, MWA13311, MWA13312, MWA13312, MWA13314, MWA13315). Of these, The King's Head is a Grade II Listed Building, and there are a number of other Listed Buildings on Saltisford, some of which date back to the late 16th or early 17th century (marked in black on Fig 1).

3.14 The recently demolished building at 56 Saltisford is made up of three units, with the rear one being a 20th-century flat-roofed extension. The frontage unit had a fairly steeply pitched roof, suggesting it may have originally been thatched, and was one and a half

storeys high. The dormer window on the front elevation was similar to those on the nearby Black Horse Inn, which is dated 1700. The middle unit appeared to be secondary, as it partly overlapped the roofline of the frontage unit and was of two storeys in height, but it is likely that both of these units are those shown on the 1851 Board of Health map, if not earlier. The windows on the Victoria street frontage post-date the opening up of Victoria Street, which had occurred by 1905.

4 AIMS AND METHODS

4.1 The main aim of the evaluation was to determine if there were any significant archaeological remains in the area of development, to form an understanding of their value and their potential to shed light on the subsequent development of this part of Warwick.

4.2 Secondary aims included placing the results in their wider local and regional contexts as appropriate.

4.3 The objective was to locate, record and analyse archaeological materials and deposits and to disseminate the results in an appropriate format.

4.4 A single trench was opened up by a mini-excavator. Topsoil and debris from the demolished building were removed under supervision of an experienced archaeologist until either the top of archaeological remains or geological natural was reached.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Modern surfaces and deposits were removed using a tracked 3-tonne mini excavator with a toothless ditching bucket. The resultant trench was, by necessity, irregularly shaped in order to accommodate a variety of constraints which included a water pipe, modern concrete footings and a partially-backfilled, partially-roofed cellar.

Geological natural

5.2 Geological natural across the trench was brownish yellow sand with patches of red clay at the south end (103).

Possibly medieval

5.3 At the south-west end of the trench gully 121 was aligned NE/SW and although undated, was stratigraphically earlier than any surrounding features. It contained dark greyish brown silty loam (122) which contained a single degraded fragment of animal bone but no other finds.

Post-medieval

5.4 At the north-eastern end of the trench a layer of greyish brown sandy loam (102) contained a residual sherd of medieval floor tile.

17th-18th century

5.5 Just north-east of the centre of the site was a circular well. A clay pipe stem was recovered from the construction cut (104) fill (105), along with a residual sherd of medieval pottery. The shaft was lined in sandstone (106) although some brick re-lining was apparent on the south side associated with 107. The uppermost backfill (111) was loose soil and brick with fragments of 20th-century concrete, presumably from the recently-demolished building. A sandstone wall along the Victoria Street side edge of the trench (118) may have been the boundary wall of the adjacent property, which was a longer building than the two-units of 56 Saltisford (demolished when Victoria Street was created).

19th century

5.6 A brick-built cellar (107) was encountered in the middle of the trench; this appeared to have been entirely below the middle unit on the site, suggesting that this unit may have dated to the first half of the 19th century, possibly replacing an earlier 17th/18th-century building. Part of its roof vaulting (127) survived although the cavity was mostly backfilled with rubble (128). Above the brick walling was a course of sandstone (108), which also partly extended over the well. A short length of brick wall (117) was also found extending toward and possibly abutting the well, whilst a brick hearth or ashpit (109) still contained ash and a sixpence dated 1852 in its fill (110). This feature was central to the north-west side of the middle unit on the site, while the chimney was located in the western corner of the central unit, suggesting they may have been of different dates.

5.7 Several pits (112, 114, and 123) at the north-eastern end of the trench, and one at the south-west end of the trench (125) were not excavated but could be seen to contain brick and tile. They were filled with dark greyish brown sandy loam (respectively 113, 115, 124 and 126). Layer 101 appeared to be a surface associated with these features.

20th century

5.8 At the north-east end of the trench the L-shaped remains of part of a modern brick extension, with concrete foundation was observed (116/129). At the south-west end of the trench was a layer of concrete (120) whilst a layer of mixed sandy loam and reddish brown clay (119) may equally as likely be attributed to the previous phase.

21st century

5.9 The surface at the time of survey was demolition rubble from the building demolished earlier in 2014 (100).

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Geological natural was reached across the site between 200mm and 500m below the existing surface. A single feature of possibly medieval origin was recognised. This was aligned with the street pattern and could conceivably represent a boundary or drainage feature at the edge of a burgage plot. This would suggest that the site has been occupied since the medieval period although the low density of medieval finds across the site suggests that most deposits of this age have already been removed. Two fragments of medieval floor tile found on site suggests the presence of a medieval tile kiln in the vicinity as no high status buildings are known in the immediate vicinity.

6.2 Overlying the Board of Health map of 1851 with the plan of excavated features shows that the well was in the yard to the rear of the small property that occupied the street frontage. Wall 117 appears to coincide with the rear wall of this property and the trench lies immediately south-west of the wash-house shown on that map. By 1887 the well, if still in use, would have been within a small outbuilding to the rear of the main property, possibly a later wash-house, as the one shown on the Board of Health map is no longer evident. The very few post-medieval finds recovered from the site seems to suggest either a hiatus in occupation or a thorough cleansing in the 18th/19th centuries where the site seems to have been heavily developed.

6.3 The features and deposits of 19th-century date appear to dominate the site although the fact that areas of natural appear between the features could suggest that some medieval and early post-medieval survival is still possible.

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APPENDICES

A List of contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comment</i>
100	Layer	Modern demolition layer
101	Layer	Post-medieval layer, 19th century.
102	Layer	Brown sandy loam earlier post-med?
103	Geological natural	
104	Well cut	17th/18th century
105	Fill of well cut	17th/18th century
106	Well lining	Sandstone and occasional later brick
107	Wall	Brick and sandstone
108	Wall	Sandstone, associated with 107
109	Brick hearth/ashpit	19th century
110	Hearth fill	Black ash
111	Well fill	19th or 20th century
112	Pit	19th century
113	Pit fill	of 112
114	Pit	19th century
115	Pit fill	of 114
116	Brick wall	Later 20th century
117	Brick wall	19th century
118	Wall	Sandstone
119	Layer	19th century=101
120	Layer	Concrete
121	Gully	Probably medieval
122	Gully fill	Of 121
123	Pit	19 century
124	Pit fill	of 123
125	Posthole	19th century
126	Posthole fill	of 125
127	Cellar vaulted roof	
128	Cellar backfill	
129	Brick wall	part of modern extension with 116

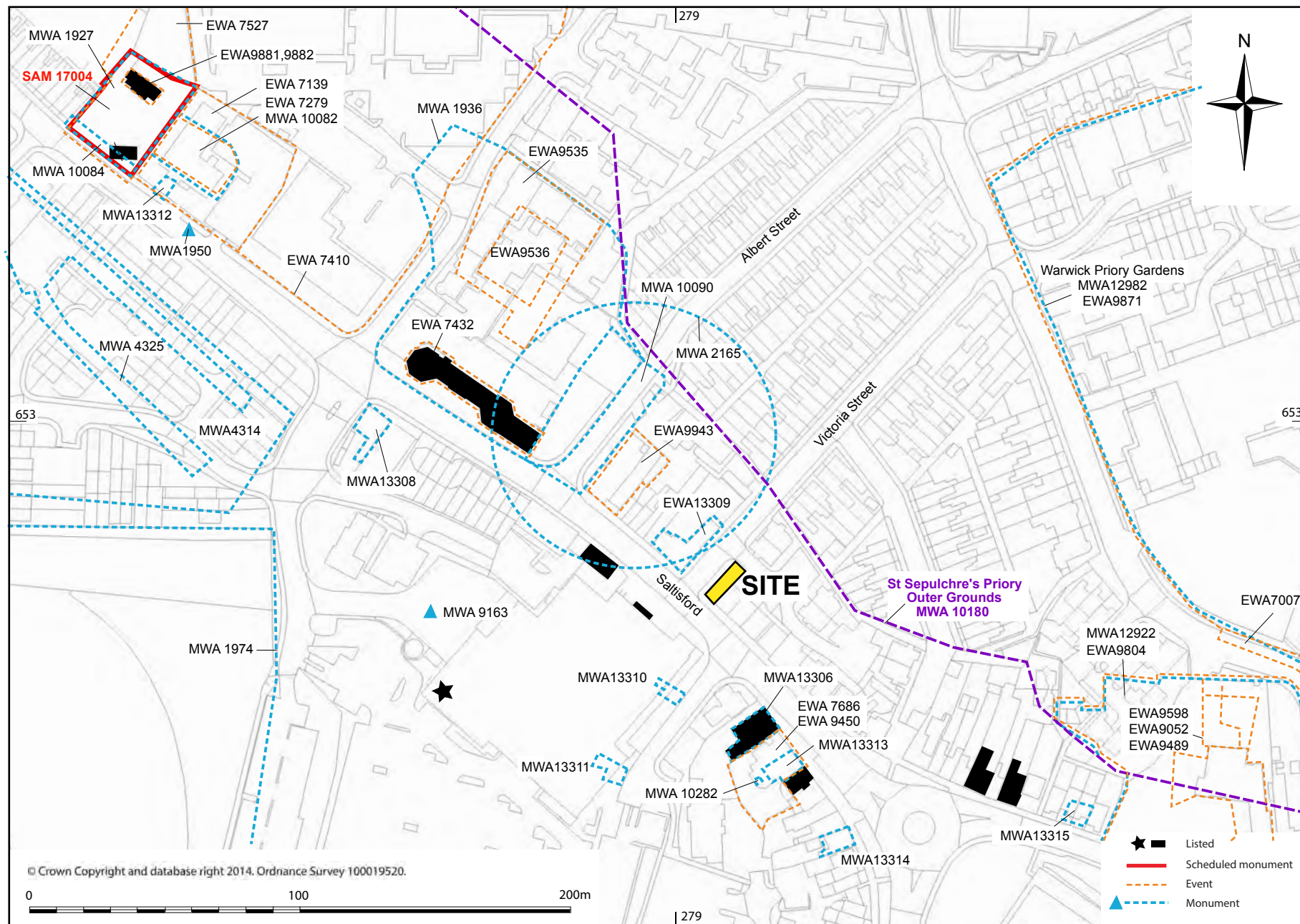


Fig 1: Site location

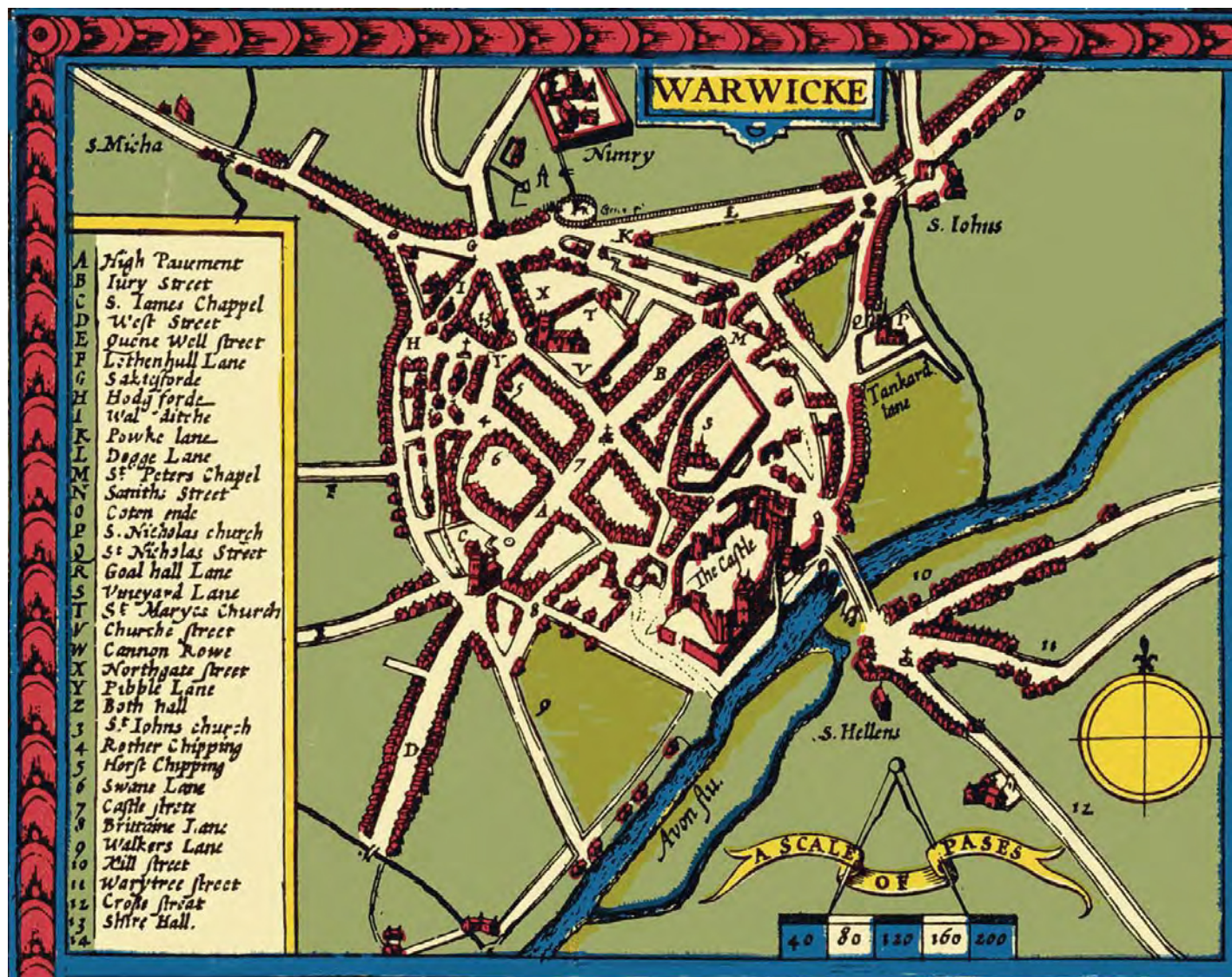


Fig 2: Detail from Speeds map of Warwick of 1610



Fig 3: Detail from Fish and Bridgman's map of Warwick of 1711



Fig 4: Detail from map of 1788

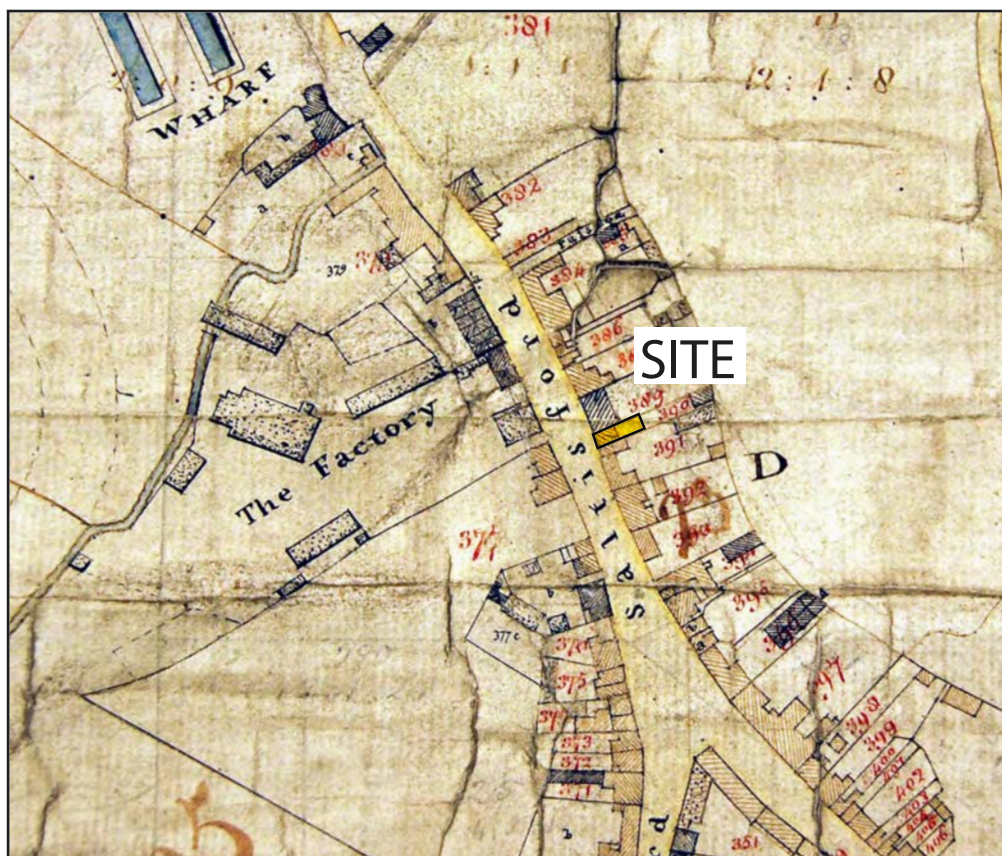


Fig 5: Detail from map of 1786 (amended after 1795)



Fig 6: Detail from James's map of 1806



Fig 7: Detail from Board of Health map of 1851



Fig 8: Detail from 1st Edition 1:500 Ordnance Survey map of 1887



Fig 9: Detail from 2nd Edition 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map of 1905

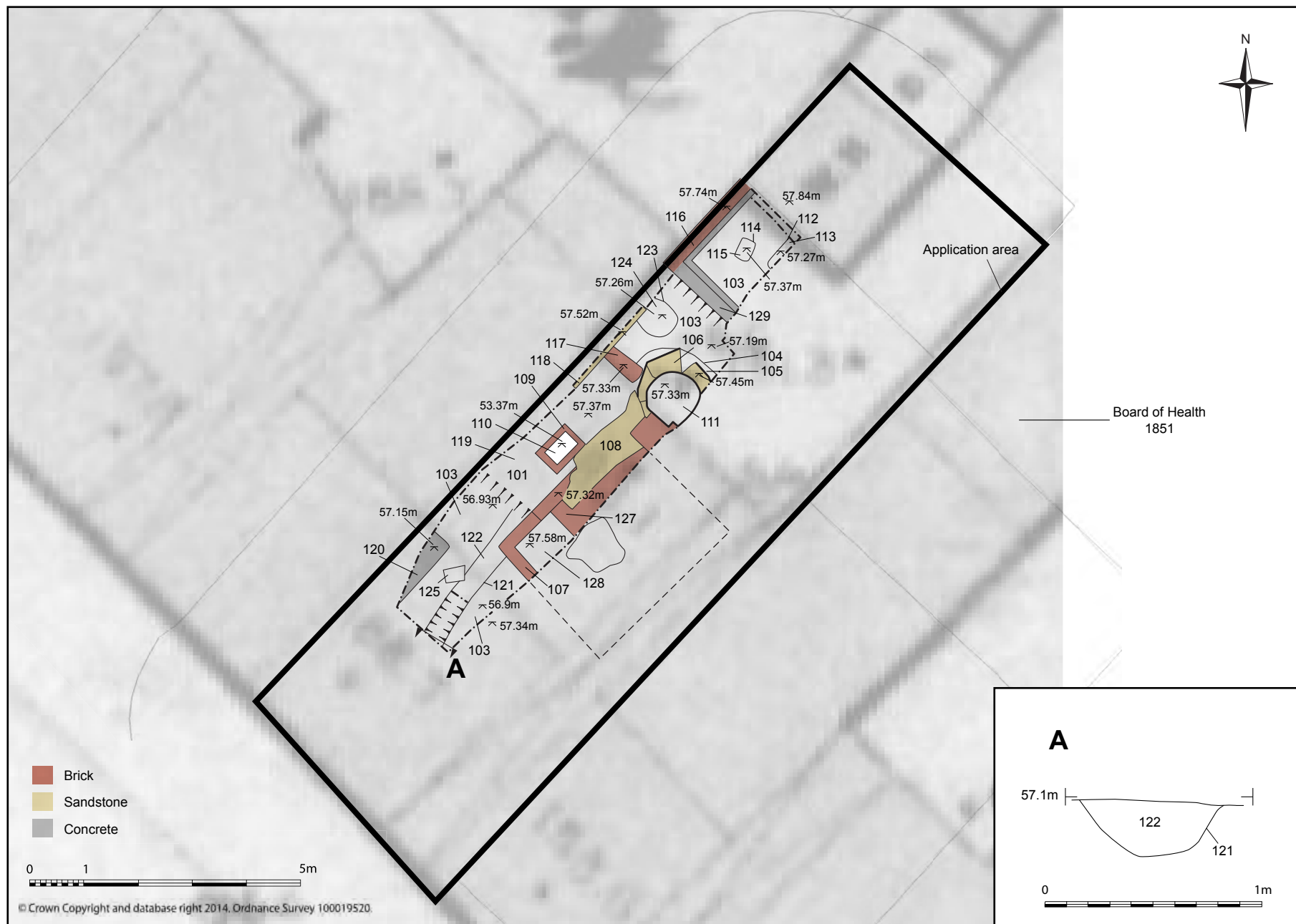


Fig 10: Excavation plan and section



Fig 11: The trench looking north-east



Fig 12: The trench looking south-west towards the street frontage



Fig 13: The sandstone lined well with its construction cut clearly showing to its left



Fig 14: Detail of centre of trench Fig 15: Detail of NE end of trench



Fig 16: General view of the trench showing the adjacent partially roofed, partially backfilled 19th century cellar