

# St John's House Museum, Warwick

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



*understanding heritage matters*

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*Working for  
Warwickshire*

<b>Project:</b>	St John's House service trenches
<b>Commissioned by:</b>	Anna Hurton on behalf of WCC
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## SUMMARY

*Archaeological observations made during the excavation of service trenches in preparation for a new modular building revealed walls associated with the medieval hospital and a boundary wall which was still extant in the early 20th century. No medieval artefacts were recovered and no human bones were recovered, although the area is known to be close to the hospital's cemetery.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning permission was granted by Warwickshire County Council for the removal of the existing modular building and its replacement with a smaller modular building at St John's House Museum (Planning ref. WDC/12CC016). St John's House Museum is considered a significant archaeological resource and the proposed development together with associated service trenches, access routes and landscaping would very likely disturb or destroy sub-surface archaeological remains.

1.2 Archaeology Warwickshire was commissioned to undertake a watching brief during the instillation of services at the site in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the planning authority as required by a condition attached to the planning permission. The removal of the modular building and the excavation of new services were observed by Archaeology Warwickshire in October and November 2013 and this report presents the results of that work. The planned new building is not going ahead at this time. A WSI is in place securing evaluative fieldwork should the building works progress in the future. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under temporary accession number T/1386.

## 2 SITE LOCATION

2.1 The site is located to the rear of St John's House at National Grid Reference SP 287 650. The underlying geology is Second River Terrace Deposits (British Geological Survey 1984).

## 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The site of St John's House lies within the medieval eastern suburb of Warwick in the parish of St Nicholas. St Nicholas Church is mentioned in 1123 (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record No. MWA 1944; VCH 1969, 530) and it is likely that the suburb was well developed by this time (Warwickshire Museum 1993). The medieval hospital of St John's

(MWA 1928) was founded by Henry, Earl of Warwick in the time of Henry II (1154-89). It was one of two medieval hospitals in Warwick, the other being St Michael's Leper Hospital. The function of these medieval hospitals was primarily religious rather than medical. The hospital was founded to give lodgings and refreshments to poor wayfarers (hence its location on the eastern edge of the town) and for the more permanent help of the local poor and infirm.

3.2 The hospital is recorded in 1269 and the Earls of Warwick remained the patrons until 1449 when the line died out and patronage passed to the crown (Wallsgrave 2000, 129). Details of it are recorded in a survey of 1546, when the chapel was still standing, which stated that the hospital had been founded to maintain a master or warden, two chaplains and two poor folk as well as to keep hospitality. By this time, following the dissolution of the monasteries (1537-8), the possessions of the hospital had been granted by Henry VIII to Anthony Stoughton, one of Queen Katherine Howard's servants (VCH 1908, 115-6). Elements of the medieval buildings, including possibly the Master's house, kitchens/service buildings and gatehouse were still standing in 1610 (Speed 1610). A description of the buildings in the early 17th century suggests that the former hospital estate was run as a small farm by this date (Wallsgrave 2000, 133).

3.3 A medieval cemetery (MWA 5065) was associated with the Hospital. Human remains have been found in the area on a number of occasions to the east of St John's House on land that is outside the present site. In the 1830s Thomas Ward noted that 'the Kitchen Garden belonging to this House was the Burial Place of the Old Hospital vast quantities of bones having been frequently dug up'. During the Second World War remains were disturbed during the construction of prefab houses to the north-east of St John's House. When the present flats were constructed on the site in the late 1960s, the remains of thirteen individuals were found. One of these appeared to have undergone trepanation. In 1987 police informed the museum that skulls had been found by workmen digging a trench to repair a 19th-century culvert; further digging resulted in the recovery of more bones both in individual burials and in grave pits. In March 2000 the remains of at least two individuals were recorded during Severn Trent Water mains renewals near St John's (Warwickshire Museum 2001).

3.4 The main part of the house, which became known as St John's House, was rebuilt in the early 17th century (MWA 1929). It was rebuilt again in 1666-70 when it achieved much of its current appearance although some of the earlier structure was retained in the east wing. The Stoughton family remained in occupation until 1791 when the house became a

private school, continuing in this use until 1924. After this date it became the HQ of the Warwickshire Yeomanry and later in the 20th century changed to its present use as a museum. It currently forms part of the Warwickshire Museum Service.

3.5 The only illustration showing buildings possibly belonging to the medieval hospital is Speed's map of Warwick of 1610. The structures shown include a large crenelated gatehouse fronting on to the main road opposite the end of Coventry Road, and three other buildings behind. The building on the right (east) may be the medieval hall (the chapel was demolished around 1574, see below), while the other buildings may represent the Master's Lodging and the kitchens or other associated buildings. A similar arrangement is shown by Hollar in 1654 but it seems that this is merely an amended version of Speed's 1610 view as the house had been rebuilt by this date (Hollar 1654). However, the new arrangement cannot have been too different. Hollar depicts the gatehouse as having an arched entrance running into its west side, parallel to, rather than at right angles to, the road. This may be a case of manipulation of the true arrangement in order for details to be visible on the plan.

3.6 The existing ranges of St John's House were largely built in the later 1660s (White 1994, 18). However, they are first shown on the Fish and Bridgeman map of 1711 which depicts a schematic U-shaped building, with formal gardens to the front and west and associated buildings to the east. Another garden is depicted to the north-east. A later 18th-century map (Baker 1788) shows the outline of the building more clearly, with the porch and bay windows indicated on the front of the house and the asymmetrical wings to the rear. No gardens are indicated on this map and it appears that the more easterly outbuilding has been demolished and a small, square outbuilding erected to the east of the northern part of the house. The position of this corresponds to the structure indicated as coach house and privies on the later Board of Health map of 1851.

3.7 The earliest map upon which reliable detail is printed is one of 1806 (James 1806). This map shows the house to be associated with three plots of land marked 111 (house, garden and close) with Lord Warwick as proprietor and Mrs Fowler as occupier. The area of the present bowling green (plot 110, garden and close) was owned by Lord Warwick but occupied by the Reverend Laugharne, who lived in the house to the west (plot 109). A map dating to 1847 shows the house marked as a school for the first time but the detail on this map is less accurate than on the 1806 map. The map shows a new boundary south of St John's suggesting that the garden south of St John's had been extended over the northern part of what is now allotments.

3.8 On the Board of Health map of 1851 the house is marked as St John's School. Access to the front of the house would have been through the front gates while access to the rear would have been further to the west along a path, gated at the street frontage, just west of the present road between the house and St John's Court. The bowling green is indicated as such for the first time, with a pavilion against its west wall to the west of the house with areas of hedging and other planting in the vicinity. Access to the bowling green was through a small gate on the street frontage, at its north-east corner, as well as from the house. Areas of garden are indicated to the east and north-east of the house with pathways running through them. The southernmost element of the west wing appears to be marked as a coach house (CO.H) although it is difficult to see how this could have held a coach as the doorway and windows on the east side appear original. A glasshouse (shown by cross-hatching) had been erected to its south with a privy ( ) indicated to the west of the part marked as coach house. The small building to the east of the north-east corner of the house is marked as a coach house with privies now indicated to its east. A rectangular summer house (S.H.) is shown on the street frontage to the north-east of the house. The range of outbuildings to the east of the house is marked as a series of three stables (ST.) with a brewhouse (BR.H) on the west end, two piggeries (PY.) on the east end and a further stable block attached to its south-east end, the latter apparently accessed from the south-east and therefore probably belonging to another property. To the rear of the bowling green St John's Brook is lined with trees and a rectangular stable is shown on its west side at the end of a garden crossed by paths, belonging to the property to the west. On the east side of the brook a circular summer house is indicated in an area of garden south of the house at the end of two converging paths coming from the rear of the west wing and from the rear of the bowling green.

3.9 By the time of the 1st edition 1:500 and 1:2500 Ordnance Survey maps (1887, 1889) the house was fronted by a garden area with a circular driveway. As in 1851, the bowling green is surrounded by planting, with access from the gate to the north-east and the gardens to the east and north-east of the house are depicted with trees. To the rear of the house the summer house and the path leading to it from the west wing are no longer depicted and the glasshouse has been demolished to be replaced by a smaller structure. The summer house on the frontage is still shown but there is no indication whether this was still its function. The stable on the west side of the brook is still shown, now in a small enclosure, and the adjacent garden had been extended southwards.

3.10 The 2nd edition 1:2500 Ordnance Survey (1905) does not show the same detail of planting or building shapes as the 1st edition. However, there is generally a similar



arrangement to that shown on the 1st edition maps. The simplification of detail on the second edition and later maps may account for an apparent slight change in the front drive or may reflect an actual change. The mapping is similar on Ordnance Survey plans of 1925, although additional parts had been added to the west and east sides of the west wing and the garden to the rear of the house had been extended. The 1953 map show that major changes were made in the area in the mid-20th century. The land to the north-east and south-east had been built on with prefab houses erected during the war. By the late 1960s these had been demolished and replaced by the flats of St John's Court. The east wing of the house had been extended to the south. A greenhouse in the rear courtyard appears to have been erected by this date, along with the garage to the east of the southern part of the east wing (an architect's plan of 1960 shows it was in place by that date, see below). A footbridge is shown over St John's Brook, now reduced in width. A scout hut has been built in the area of land to the rear of the Bowling Green for the 2nd Warwick Sea Scout Group which was established in 1959.

3.11 In more recent years a number of structures have been erected behind St John's. In the 1970s temporary buildings were erected to the rear of the house on an area that had formerly been used by the resident caretaker as his vegetable plot (Peter Clarke pers. comm.). The main temporary building was erected in the early 1970s and the rear one (a recycled building from the library at Gun Hill, Arley) sometime later, for the school loan collection store and workshop. A wooden toilet block was built in 1996. Early in 2006 the greenhouse in the rear courtyard was demolished and replaced by a smaller one.

3.12 St John's House has been a subject for artists for a considerable period of time, although many of these illustrations are not closely dated. The majority of these depict the frontage of the house with its formal gardens; the rear was rarely considered worthy of study, but is depicted on a view from the south dating to c.1827. The advent of photography in the 19th century has meant that images survive of the house from the late 19th century. A few photos survive from the middle of the 20th century of the sides and rear of the building.

3.13 In August 1995 and early March 1996 two watching briefs were carried out at St John's House (EWA 6944, EWA 6945). The first of these was during the excavation of a service trench on the eastern side of the building within the current car park and the second was during the installation of new toilets at the rear of the kitchens and bowling green. The car park trench uncovered the remains of a sandstone wall, 1m wide, running at a right-angle to the north-east side of St John's House. There was no scarring on the standing wall to



suggest that the buried wall projected from the house itself. The only map to give any indication of a structure in this vicinity is the Board of Health map of 1851, but the wall revealed in the trench reached at least 4m away from the building, further than the possible structure shown on the 1851 map. It is possible that the wall was part of the foundation of a garden wall, although again, no such wall is shown on any of the maps consulted. There is also the possibility that this wall belonged to the medieval phase of St John's, but the lack of associated dating evidence make this impossible to establish.

3.14 The second watching brief, in March 1996, did not reveal any archaeological features during the excavation of the footings, although undated pits were revealed cut into the subsoil in the section facing the wall that backs on to the bowling green. The foundation trench adjacent to the kitchens revealed seven courses of brick walling below the stone foundation of the house itself. The bricks were set in English bond with alternate courses of headers and stretchers, with each brick measuring 230mm x 110mm x 60mm. An archway of stone voussoir was also revealed at the bottom of the wall, probably associated with the cellars of the house. Pottery dating to the 17th/18th and 19th century was recovered from the topsoil here.

3.15 Observation of a cable trench to the east and south of the house in 2008 revealed disarticulated human remains and a number of sandstone foundations mostly identifiable as belonging to 18th- and 19th-century boundary walls (Jones 2008).

3.16 An archaeological watching brief was carried out on the trenches for the installation of a new water pipe in 2010. A possible medieval wall was found in association with a patch of stone uncovered in the base of the trench (Jones 2010).

3.17 A small-scale community excavation led by Archaeology Warwickshire was undertaken on the front lawn in 2012 revealed at least one medieval wall and patches of demolition rubble.

## 4 AIMS AND METHODS

4.1 The main aim of the work was to record any archaeological remains disturbed by the development, to collate the records in an archaeological archive and present the significant aspects of the archive in a report for dissemination. The secondary aim was to form an understanding of the remains recorded in terms of their character and date, and to place the evidence in its local and regional context.

4.2 The objective of the work was a programme of controlled excavation to development formation levels, or the geological natural, whichever the higher.

4.3 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.

4.4 An experienced archaeologist was made available for each day of ground disturbance when notified by the client in accordance with the WSI.

## 5 RESULTS

### **Exploratory trench**

5.1 An exploratory trench was excavated to the north of the modular building to locate the existing services. The excavations revealed the top of a layer of dark yellowish brown sandy loam (5) in places. Plastic ducts (2, 3) and an electricity cable (4) were found covered in 0.4m of dark greyish brown sandy loam topsoil (1).

### **Test pits**

5.2 A series of small test pits were excavated to the south of the south-west wing of St John's House in order to locate a modern water pipe, the route of which was uncertain. The test pits were hand-excavated into topsoil only and no finds or features were recorded.

### **Removal of modular buildings**

5.3 Due to the presence of asbestos within the buildings the demolition was not observed and no archaeological recording took place until the building had been cleared and removed and no asbestos remained on site.

### **New Service trenches**

5.4 The new service trenches were excavated from the east of the Wattlewood room to the south of the south-western wing of St John's House.

5.5 At the base of the trenches at a depth of c.0.7m from the top of the car park surface was a layer of sand and gravel that was likely to have been the geological natural (29). At 0.58m below the tarmac one course of a 0.9m wide sandstone wall (38) was observed. It was aligned NE/SW, parallel to the back of St John's House. No dating evidence or construction cut was found. Also within this service trench foundation trench 39 cut the

natural. It was filled with dark brown sandy loam (40) and may have been the construction cut for wall 30.

5.6 Wall 30 was also aligned NE/SW parallel to the back of St John's House. Two or three courses of the up to 1.2m wide wall were visible in the service trenches. No bonding material was noted and may have washed out. No dating evidence was found within the wall or the possible construction trench. A sherd of 18th-century coarseware was recovered from a 0.1m deep layer of light grey sand (41) butting wall 30. The wall also appears on the Board of Health map of 1851.

5.7 A small part of a sandstone wall (32) was recorded to the north of wall 30 and south of wall 38. Aligned NW/SW, c.0.4m height of this wall was visible in the trench. Between walls 30 and 32 was a deposit of grey sandy loam with demolition rubble (31). One of the brick fragments appeared to be of 17th-century date.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The observations during the instillation of service trenches have provided valuable new insight on the medieval hospital complex. Any future development will be usefully informed by these findings. The absence of any human bone in the trenches need not preclude their being any inhumations in the area.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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WRO MB War 1847 Sheet 4 *Map of Warwick by James Smy, 1847*, copy in Warwickshire County Record Office.





Photograph 1: Exploratory excavations



Photograph 2: Wall 38



Photograph 3: Wall 30 being cleaned



Photograph 4: Walls 30 and 38





Photograph 5: Walls 30 and 32

## APPENDICES

### A List of contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	Topsoil	Dark greyish brown sandy loam
2	Service	Duct
3	Service	Duct
4	Pipe	Electricity cable
5	layer	Dark yellowish brown sandy loam
6	Hardcore	Grey scalplings
7	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown humic loam
8	Subsoil	Brown pebbly sand
9	Tarmac	Car Park Surfacing
10	Wall	Brick, N-S running
11	Bricks	Former surface
12	Layer	grey-brown sandy loam
13	Drain pipe	Modern service
14	Drain pipe	Salt-glazed pipe, former service
15	Hardcore	Grey scalplings
16	Surface	Concrete slabs and stone
17	Pipe	Electric
18	Pipe	Modern
19	Pipe	Modern
20	Pipe	Modern
21	Duct	Brick
22	Duct	Green CCTV cable
23	Fill of pipe trench	Pebble (modern)
24	Cable	Old electricity cable
25	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown humic loam
26	Subsoil	Brown sandy loam
27	Topsoil	Loose, dark grey humic sandy loam
28	Subsoil	Brown sandy loam
29	Natural	Sand and gravel
30	Wall	Sandstone wall footing
31	Layer	Demolition material poss. 17th century

32	Wall	Sandstone wall
33	Pit	Possible large pit
34	Fill of 34	Brown sandy loam
35	Layer	Brown sandy loam
36	Rubble	Wall?
37	Layer	Grey brown sandy loam
38	Wall	Sandstone wall
39	Foundation trench	Trench for wall 38
40	Fill of 39	Dark brown sandy loam
41	Layer	Light grey sand (18th-century finds)
42	Hardcore	Grey scalpings

## **B List of Finds (U/S to go to St John's handling collection)**

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
34	Pottery	1	MY01, Midlands Yellow, 16th/17th-century
41	Pottery	2	CW01, 18th-century coarseware
U/S	Pottery	5	18th/19th-century wares
U/S	Pottery	1	Medieval
U/S	Ceramic	1	Jar lid, 19th/20th-century
U/S	Glass bottle	3	Bases, 18th/19th-century
U/S	Glass bottle	1	Neck, 18th/19th century
U/S	Cement	1	Roughcast render
U/S	Animal bone	1	
U/S	Clay pipe	2	Stems
U/S	CBM	1	Floor tile, 19th/20th century
U/S	Glass	1	Vessel stem, 19th/20th century
U/S	CBM	1	Roof tile
U/S	Tin	1	Rozalex ointment tin, 20th century
U/S	Metal object	1	Toy car grille, 1960s

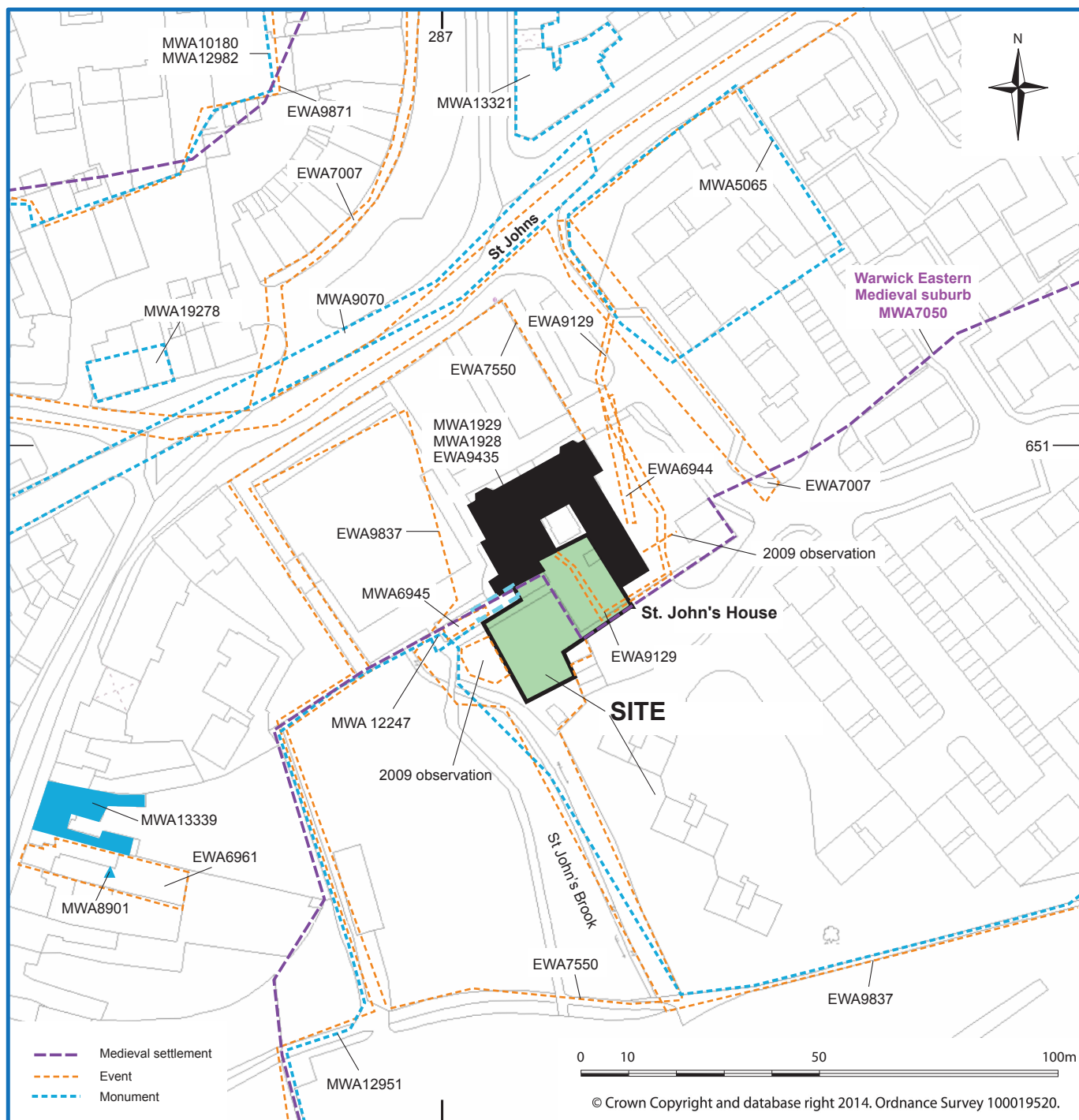


Fig 1: Site location and Historic Environment Information



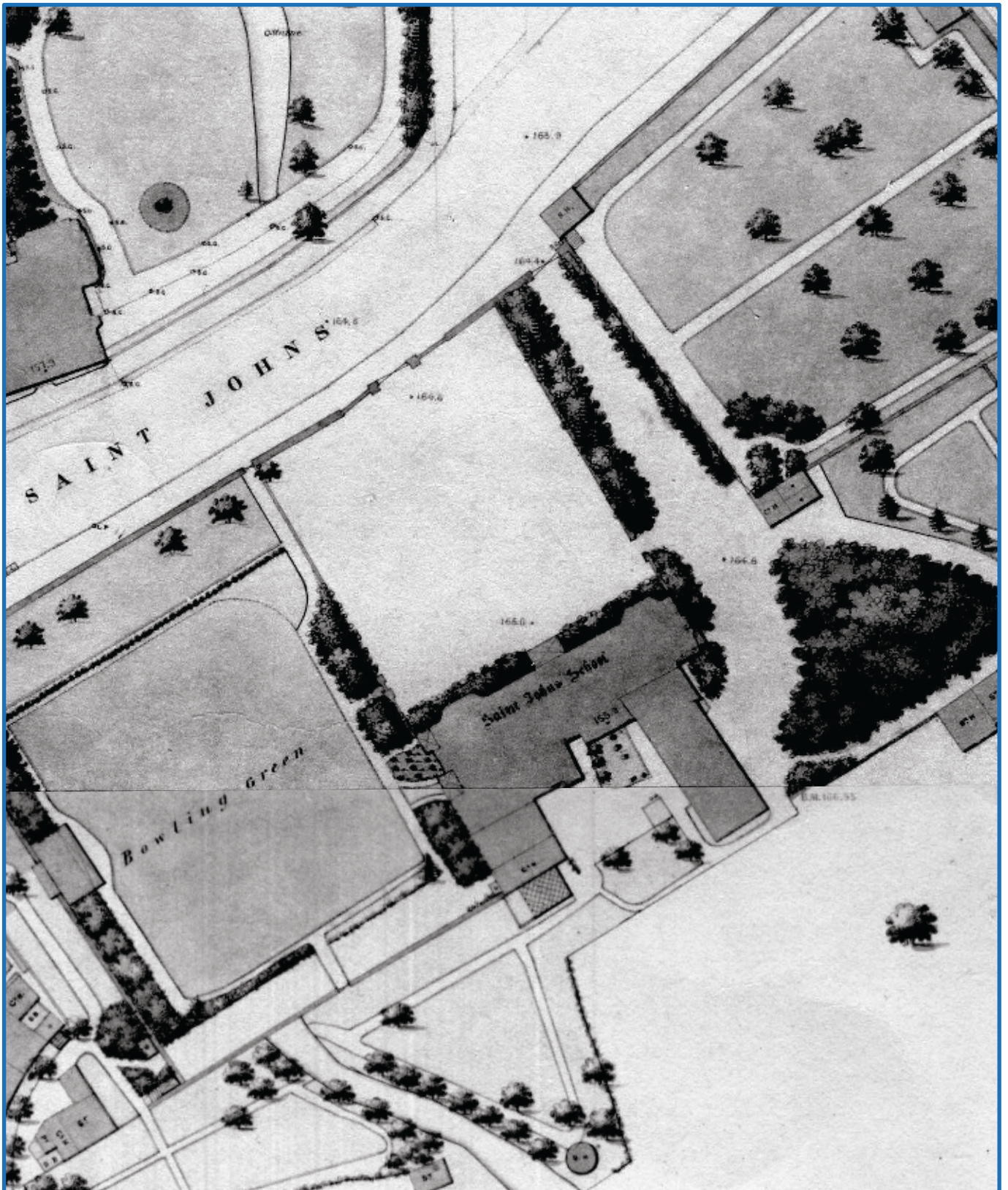


Fig 2: Detail from Board of Health map of 1851 (1:500)



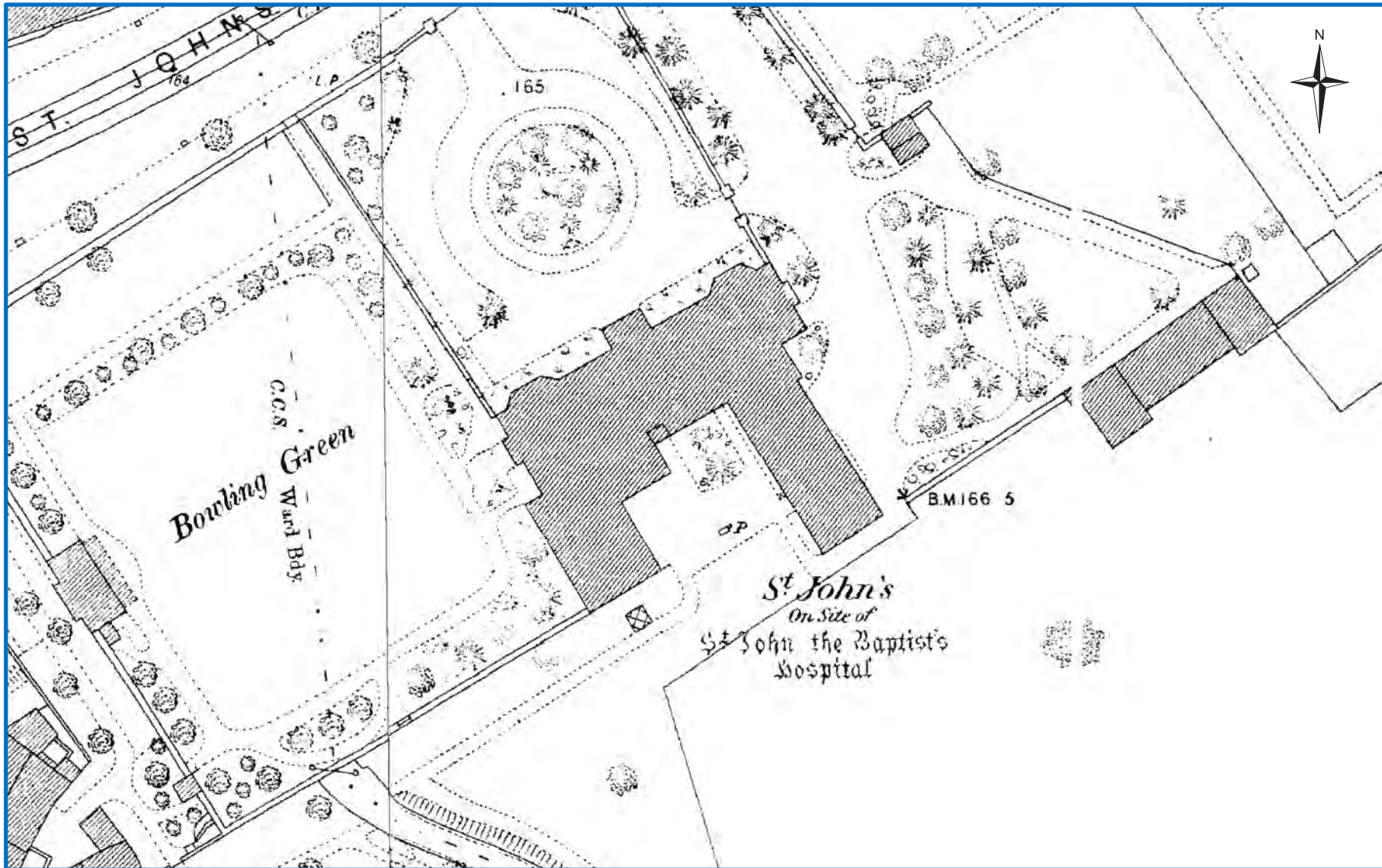


Fig 3: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887 (1:500)

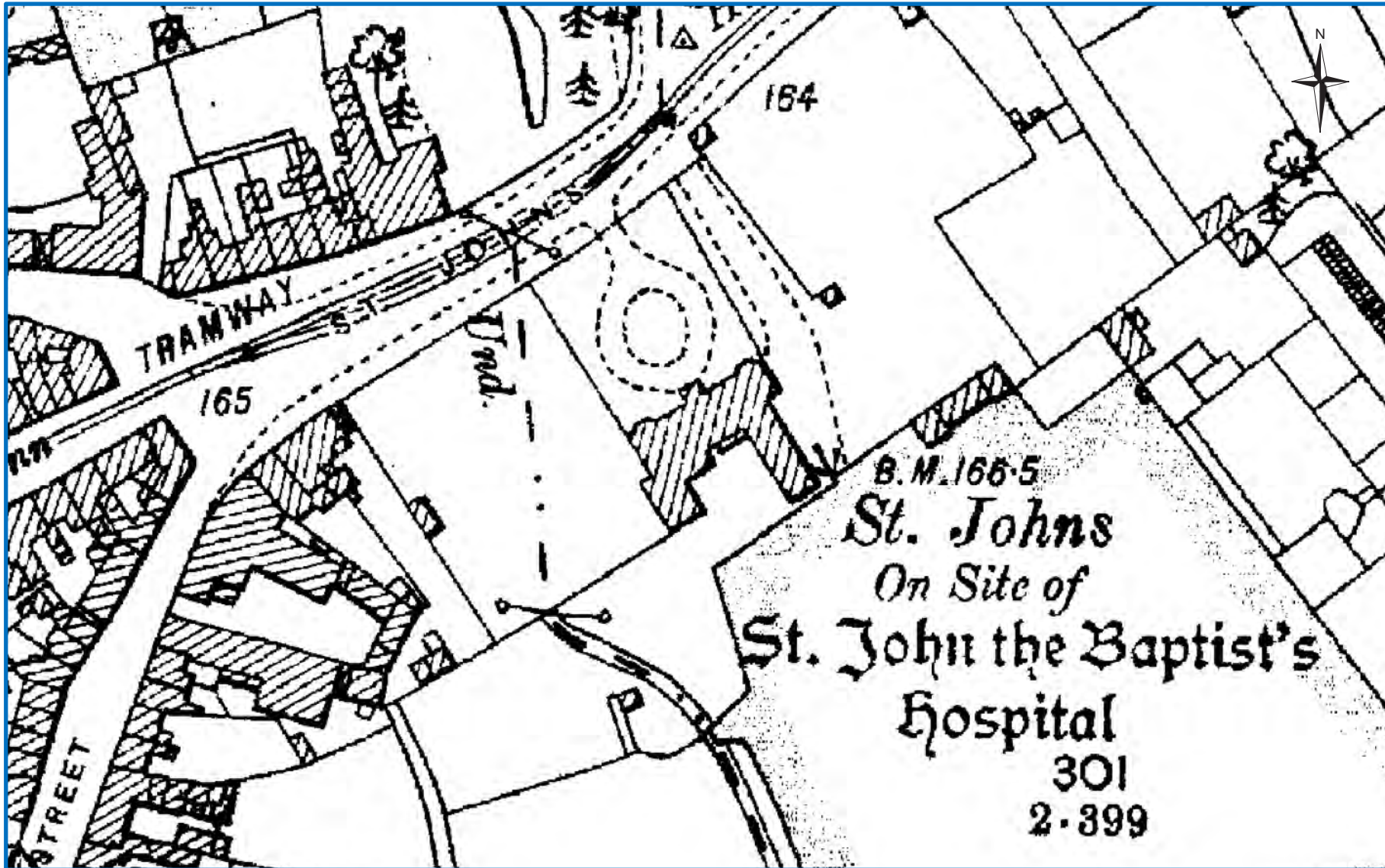


Fig 4: Detail from Second Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1905 (1:2500)



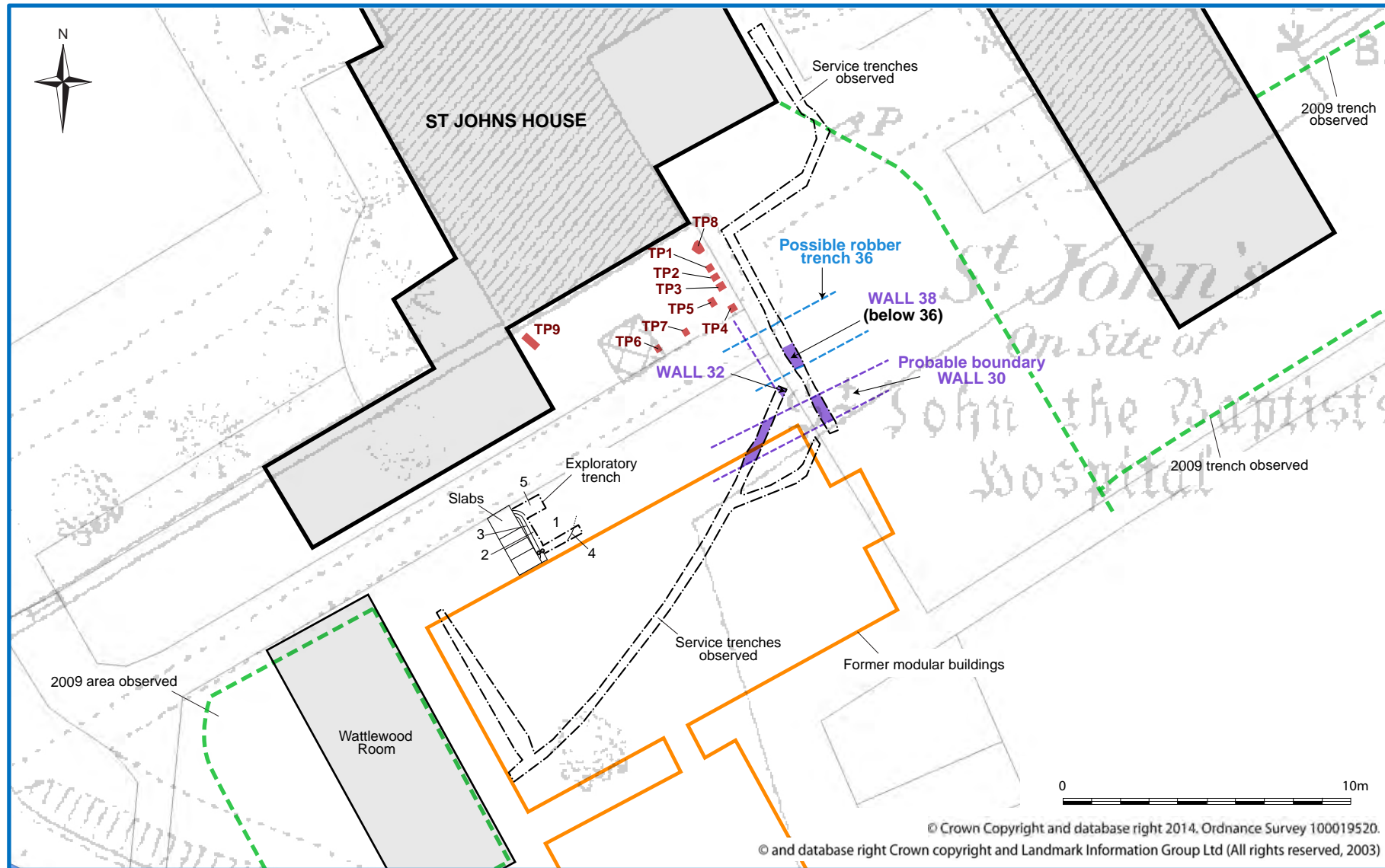


Fig 5: Trenches observed and detail from Board of Health map of 1851

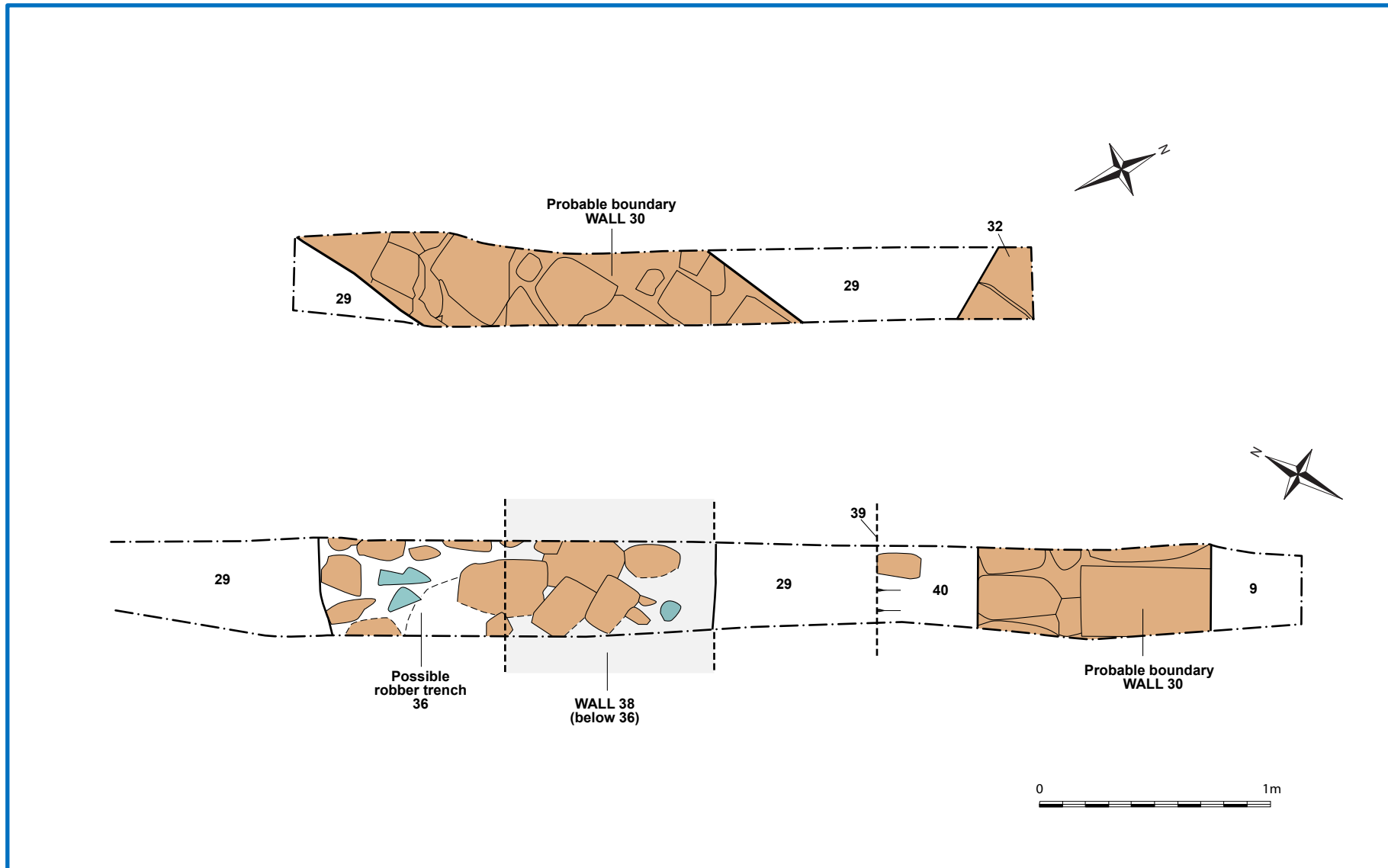


Fig 6: Detail of service trenches