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The Habit,  
Bridgnorth

Archaeological Evaluation  
SLR Ref : 406.04694.00001

April 2014

G. C. Rickards Ltd



Version: Rev 1

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The SLR staff involved in the preparation of this project were:

Tim Malim BA MA MifA	Principal	Quality Assurance, Project Management
Marcus Headifen	Archaeologist	Site investigation
Caroline Malim	Illustrator	Report Drawings

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The investigation was designed and directed by Tim Malim (SLR). Fieldwork was undertaken by Thomas Wellicome of Archaeological Landscape Investigations and Marcus Headifen.

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Summary**

In February 2014, a programme of archaeological evaluation was carried out on land associated with 'The Habit', in Bridgnorth, Shropshire.

The programme consisted of a single 'L'-shaped evaluation trench located (centred) at NGR SO 717 930. The evaluation located the remains of a structure visible on the 1835 Leigh and Smith map of Bridgnorth, which appeared to have been altered with the insertion of a cellar, as well as a later, clay-lined, structure, which abutted the earlier cellaring. This feature may be represented on the 1884 OS map, where a square shaped structure is depicted to the west of a building fronting onto Castle Terrace. The remains of the Castle Terrace structure were heavily truncated by later activity, although their location appeared to roughly mirror that of the current patio area.

The northern end of the trench appeared to have been heavily truncated by Victorian dumping activity and ground makeup, which probably related to both the 1835 and 1884 structures.

### **1.2 Development scheme**

A planning application 13/03529/FUL has been made by G. C. Rickards (the client) for for a single dwelling, to be erected in what is currently yardage/ hard standing for the 'Habit'.

### **1.3 Planning background**

Under the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>1</sup> an assessment is required to be submitted by the applicant to inform the planning authority on the potential impacts of the development on any buried archaeological deposits or materials.

A brief for the archaeological programme has been provided by the Planning Archaeologist for Shropshire Council (Andy Wigley) in November 2012 which includes site investigation by means of trial trenching.

### **1.4 Purpose of document**

This document contains a report on the results of an archaeological evaluation which was carried out in accordance to an agreed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI)<sup>2</sup>. It is to be submitted as a supplementary statement in support of a planning application for residential development.

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<sup>1</sup> The NPPF introduced in March 2012 states the relevant government policy in section 12: *Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*, paragraphs 126 – 141.

<sup>2</sup> SLR Consulting January 2014 *The Habit*, 30 – 32 East Castle Street, Bridgnorth, Shropshire Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation





**Plates 1 and 2**  
North and south sides of the application site, looking east



**Plates 2 and 3**  
Looking north-west to the extant garage and No 5 Bank Street; and looking east along pedestrian access to Castle Terrace



**Plates 5 and 6**  
**Access from East Castle Street, looking west, and looking east showing arch and narrow entrance way**

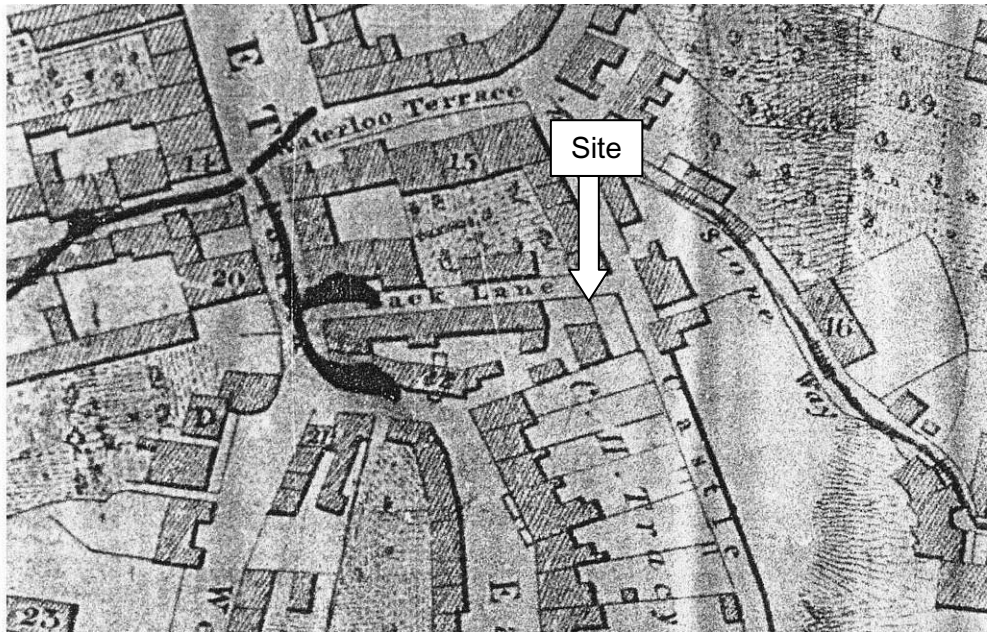
## **2.2 Geology and Topography**

According to the BGS on-line map viewer the site is located on the *Bridgnorth Sandstone Formation - Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 271 to 299 million years ago in the Permian Period. Local environment previously dominated by wind-blown deposits.* No superficial geological deposits are recorded, but the application site is 2.5m above the road level in Bank Street and Castle Terrace. It is assumed that this depth of deposit comprises made ground, probably of archaeological origin, with some demolition debris. There has not been any geotechnical investigations at the site.

## **2.3 Archaeological Background**

There have been no previous archaeological investigations at the site. Time-Team conducted geophysical investigations further south in the back gardens to the rear of numbers 20, 23, 24 and 26 East Castle Street, plus trial trenching in 20 and 23, although the results have never been produced as a report. A foundation wall and cobbling were discovered. Investigations elsewhere in Bridgnorth have shown that the archaeological potential within the historic core is good.

The archaeological and historical record for the area of Bridgnorth in which the application site is located suggests that it occupies an important position at the north-eastern corner of the castle bailey defences.

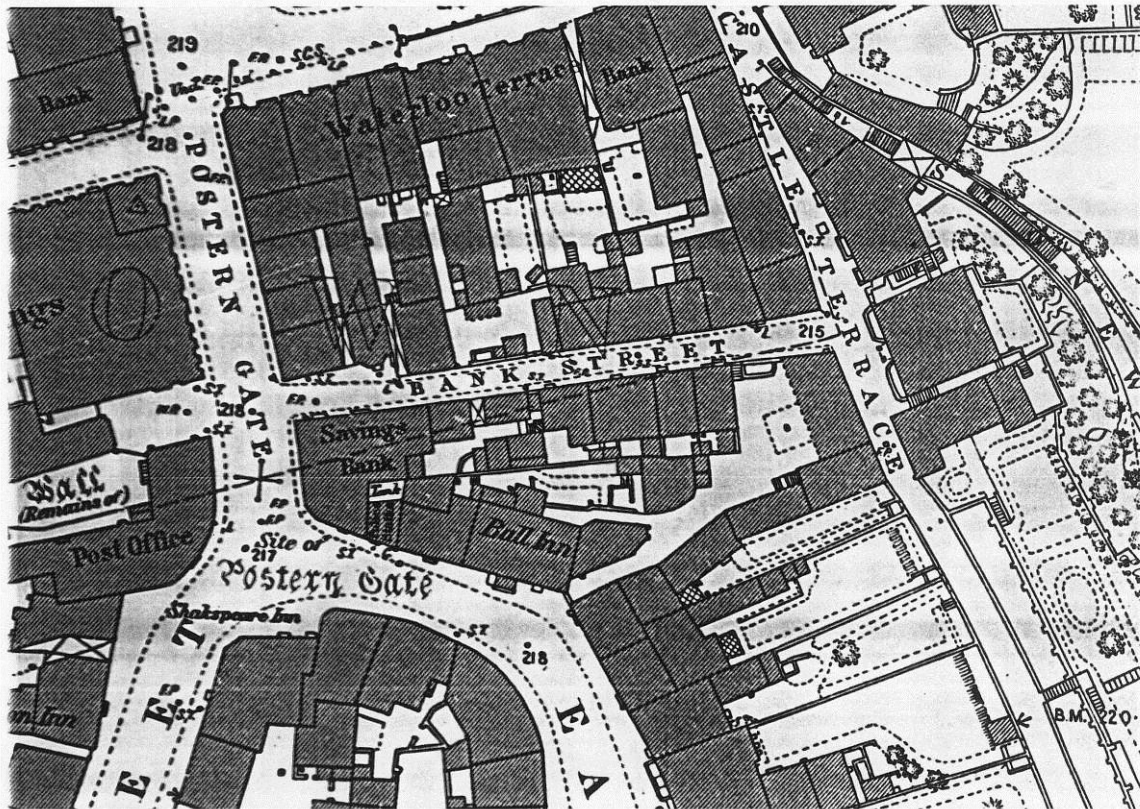


**Figure 2 Leith and Smith map of 1835  
showing site division and building**

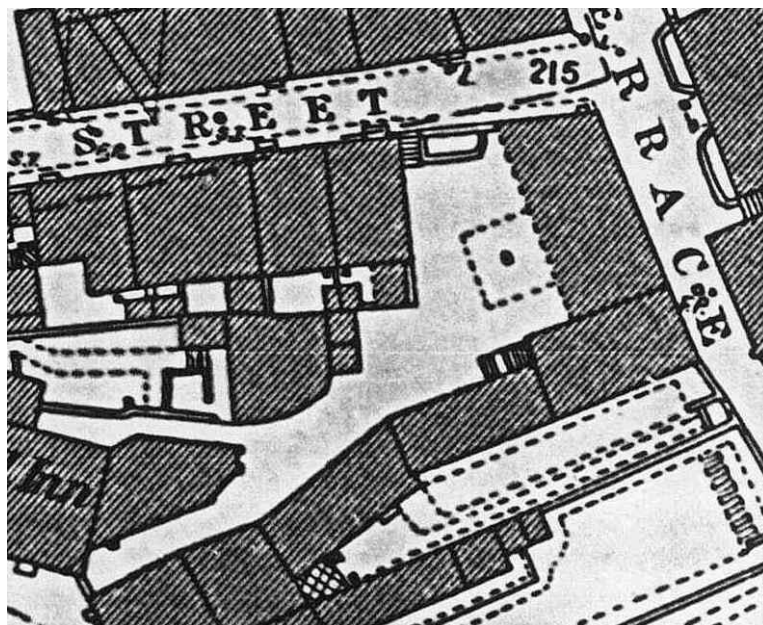
Historic mapping for the area include maps from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century onwards which show that the site lay within an area that became developed at an early stage in the post-medieval period. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century it comprised a back plot for The Ball Hotel, now known as The Habit. The application site has clearly undergone a number of changes with buildings, courtyard areas and a possible industrial feature or water tank, shown on an 1854 map and early OS maps (Figures 2 and 3), and a set of steps that provide access from Bank Street. This was called Back Lane on the earlier map, and the structure shown within the application site has a northern wall that is oriented parallel to Back Lane, whilst the southern wall lies along the alignment of the plots perpendicular to East Castle Street and Castle Terrace. These two alignments demonstrate how the courtyard area and the Habit occupy a peripheral area to the main street layout.

The Ordnance Survey map of 1926 shows that the building range had been demolished by this date, thus opening up the courtyard area further. The plot appears to have remained open until the early 1960s when a range of four individual cells, probably garages, were constructed along the Castle Terrace wall section, since demolished apart from the most north-eastern one.





**Figure 3: Ordnance Survey Town Plan of Bridgnorth 1884 showing buildings occupying the eastern side of the application area and detail below showing steps on north-western side going down to Bank Street**



### **3.0 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Aim**

The aim of the archaeological evaluation was to provide information that will enable an informed and reasonable planning decision to be taken regarding the archaeological provision for the areas affected by the proposed development.

#### **3.2 Objectives**

The main objectives included the need for an initial assessment of the factors which influenced the survival, quality, condition and relative significance of any archaeological features, deposits and structures within the study area, and to produce an enhanced understanding of the historical context of the development site.

Following initial desk study of historic mapping<sup>3</sup> one of the secondary objectives of the evaluation was to assess the extent and survival of structural remains relating to buildings depicted on the 1835 Leigh and Smith and 1884 OS maps. In addition the evaluation was designed to help establish the potential for survival for earlier remains, most notably those relating to the Castle Bailey defences.

The investigation was guided by the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation* 2008.

#### **3.3 Methodology**

A single 'L' shaped trench was excavated by mechanical excavator to an initial total length of 7m (north south) and 6m (east west) (Figure 4). The width of the trench was 1.8m. The trench was extended under instruction from Mick Krupa (Shropshire Council) to the west, by a further 1m. The trench was excavated to the first archaeological horizon by machine and then all features were manually excavated and cleaned by hand. The average depth of the trench was 1.20m in the north-south section of the trench, and 0.20m in the east west section.

The drawn record included plans of the site at a scale of 1:5000 to tie in trench locations to the OS base map, 1:50 for trench plans, 1:20 for sections and 1:10 for profiles.

The altitude was established through a survey loop from a benchmark marked on the development plan lying in the centre of the junction between East Castle Street and West Castle Street with a value of 66.10m AOD. From this a Temporary Bench Mark (TBM) was established on the site with a value of 66.40 AOD.

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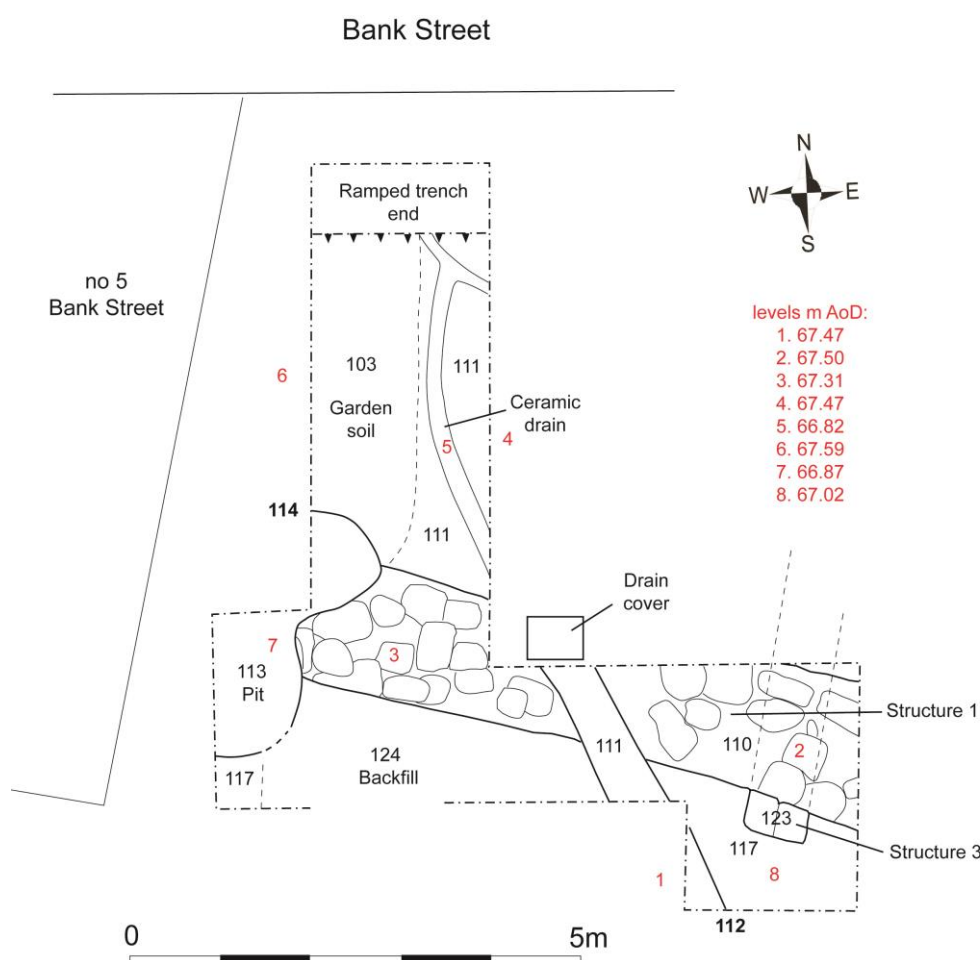
<sup>3</sup> SLR Consulting December 2013 *Land to the Rear of The Habit, 30 – 32 East Castle Street, Bridgnorth, Shropshire Heritage Statement: survey of wall sections, analysis and historic mapping along Castle Terrace and Bank Street*



## 4.0 RESULTS

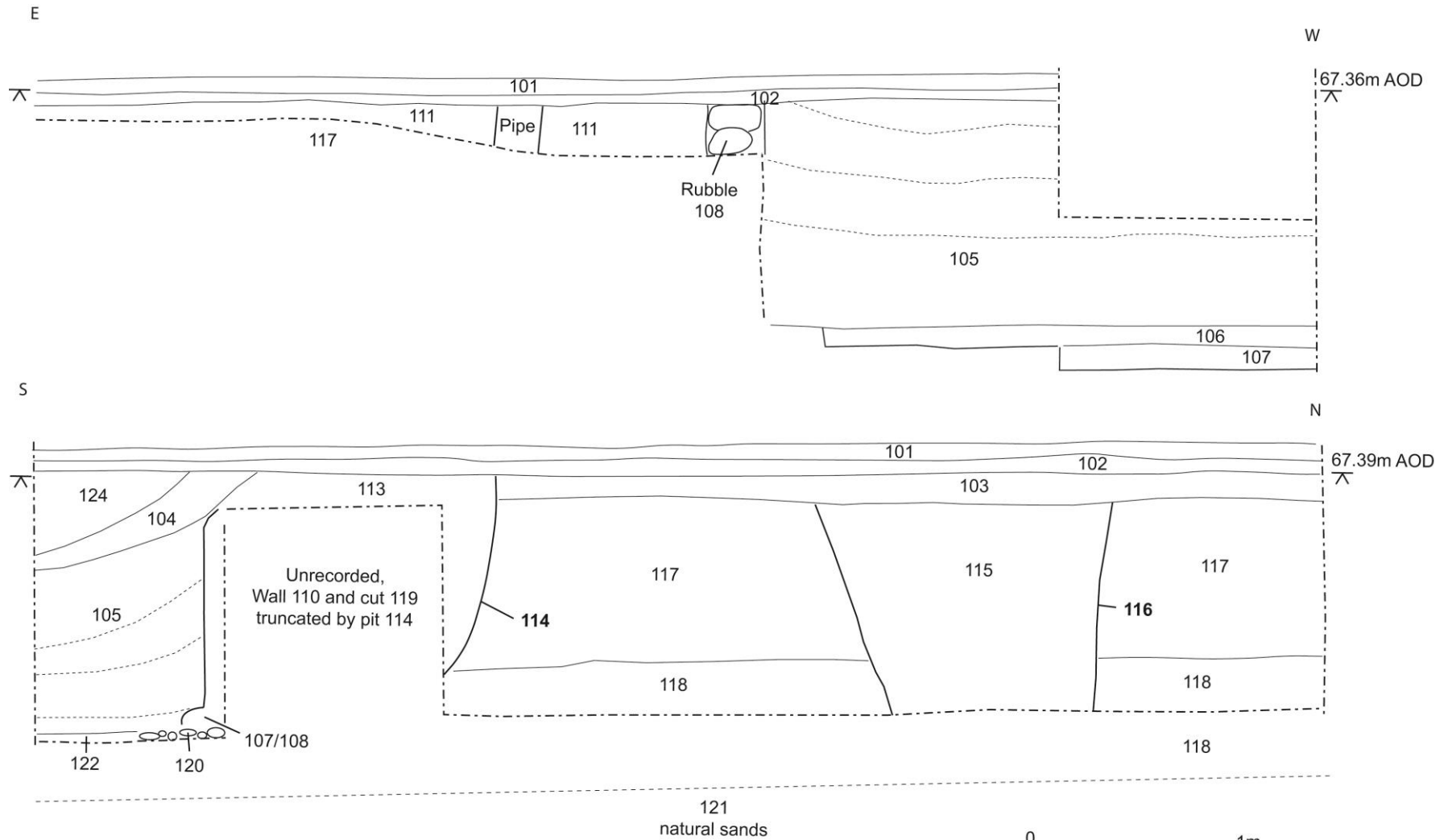
### 4.1 20<sup>th</sup> century and late Victorian period: drain-pipe, pits, cellar and wall footing

Underlying the current tarmacadam yard surface (101) was a thin layer of hard core sub-base (102). This overlaid the cut [112] and fill (111) of a ceramic salt glazed drain, the backfill of a cellar (124), (104) and (105), and also a pit [114] and fill (113). The former curved from the north part of the trench to the southeast and the latter had been cut through a stone wall (110) in the south-western part of the trench (Figures 5, 6, 9 and 10). Both features had been cut through a post-medieval garden soil (103), and the fill of pit [114] consisted of a mid brown sandy silt (113), containing occasional post-medieval blue transfer ware pottery, and occasional small angular stones.

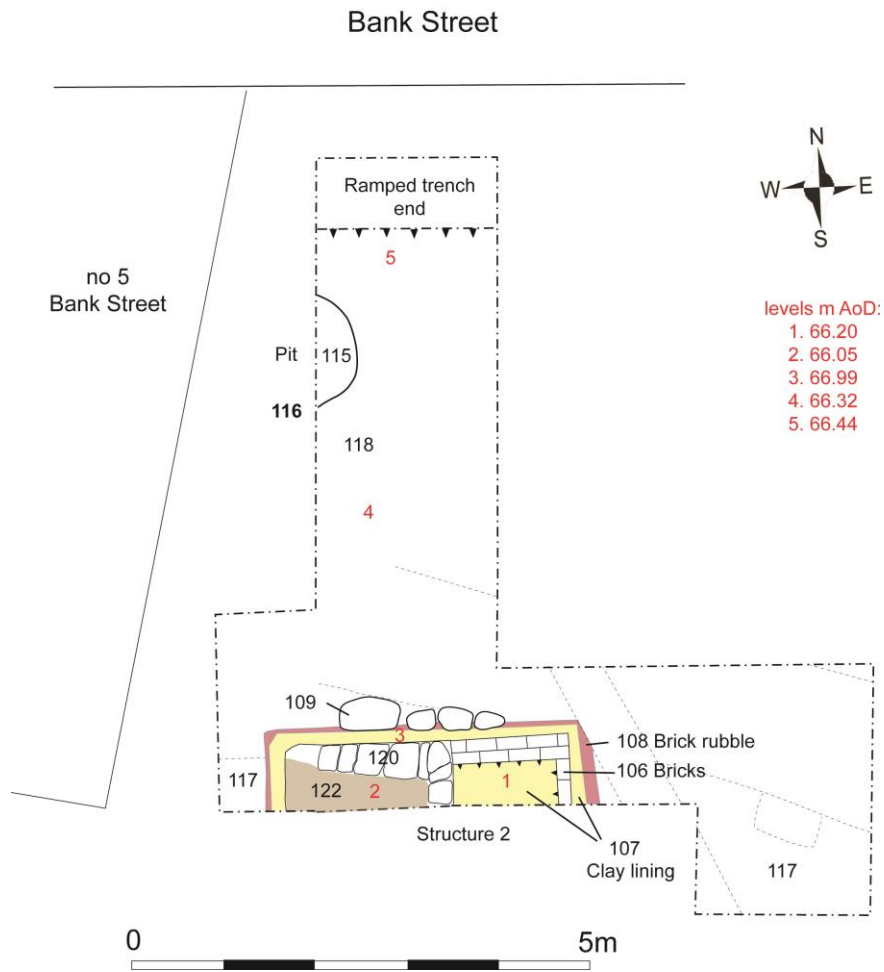


**Figure 5**  
**Trench plan of archaeological deposits at higher level**

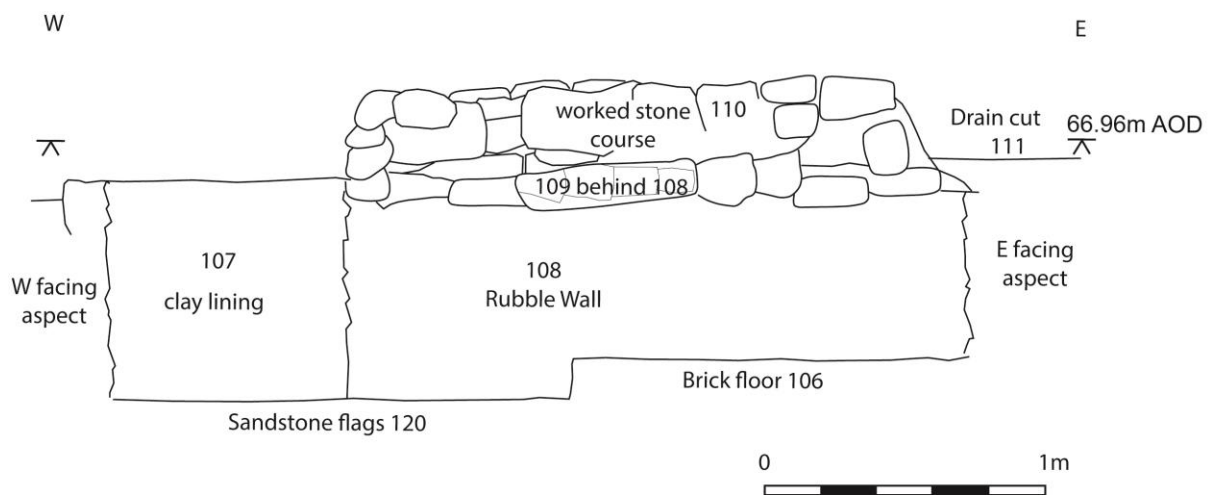
To the south of this wall (110) a rectangular structure was found, with dimensions 3m west – east, c.1m north - south and 0.10m in thickness for the clay lining. The structure comprised a stone revetment, with a rubble-facing of ceramic building material, clay lining and a floor surface of brick and clay. Within the feature a sequence of back-fill deposits had been tipped into it, consisting of 18<sup>th</sup> / 19<sup>th</sup> century artefactual material within a dark grey sandy silt (105), a mortar horizon high up in the sequence (104), capped by more sandy silt and rubbish (124). These backfill (demolition) deposits, as well as the construction of the cellar, post-dated the infill event for pit [114] (Figure 6).



**Figure 6**  
**Sections along trench sides**



**Figure 7**  
**Trench plan of archaeological deposits at lower level**



**Figure 8**  
**Structure 2 elevation with cut away of wall lining**

The earliest phase of this clay lined structure (Figures 7 and 8), was a stone-coursed rubble revetting wall (109) (Figures 7 and 11), which partially abutted, but also partially undercut, wall footing (110). The rectangular structure was orientated on a slightly different alignment west - east, (Figures 9 and 12), from the earlier wall footing oriented ENE – WSW. The revetment wall (109) comprised small sandstone blocks, in an irregular bond, with a noticeably different construction method to (110). The bonding of the footing was considerably tighter and more uniform, with limited use of a pale sandy mortar. At the east end of this structure the foundation made a right angled turn to the south, continuing beyond the southern section of the trench.

Butting onto this wall was an irregular, 'patchy' layer of broken CBM fragments and brick (108), which had evidently been laid as a backing material for a clay lining (107). This brick 'backing layer' continued around the visible extent of the feature, unlike footing (109) which only existed along the northern side, as a revetment for the undercut wall footing (110).

Clay lining (107) covered the rectangular plan of the structure along all walls, 0.10m in thickness. The surface of the clay appeared smooth, and it is likely to have been 'plastered' on. The clay lining extended to a height of c.1.4m and was c.3.0m in length. The lining also extended across the base of the feature (at floor level) at the eastern end, a length of c.1.30m, but was not present at the west end.



**Figure 9**  
**Overview of East – West orientated section of trench, with the foundation of the 1835 structure clearly visible. View – East.**

Overlying and abutting the clay lining in the eastern end of the base of this feature, was a rectangular area or partition (106) (Figure 12), consisting of a single course of unfrogged bricks which formed an L shape, west - east orientated on the same alignment as (107), with a right-angled turn to the south at the eastern end. The brick alignment terminated on their western side with a series of stone blocks which had been stepped down one course, arranged on a north – south alignment, which may potentially indicate the presence of a step or stairs. The stones were worked into rectangular / cuboid blocks, and arranged end to end.

At the eastern end of the trench, running parallel with the extant patio area were the remains of what appeared to be a shallow stone wall footing (123) (Figures 5 and 13). The footing was heavily truncated by drain cut [112], and extended for only c. 0.40m.





**Figure 10**  
**Deposit sequence at the northern end of trench.**  
**Top – view to southwest; Below - east face with context numbers**





**Figure 11**  
**Footing or support wall (109) after the removal of clay lining (107). View - Northeast**



**Figure 12**  
**Bricks and stone blocks (106), forming rectangular 'partition' in southern part of trench. View - Northwest**

#### **4.2 Post-medieval: garden soil, pit, wall footing, stone floor, levelling deposits**

Underlying the garden soil (103) on the north arm of the trench was an 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century rubbish pit [116], which was heavily truncated by drain cut [112] on its eastern side (Figures 6, 7, and 10). Pit [116], contained a mid brown sandy silt (115).

Cut by pit [114] at its western end, was a rubble sandstone and mortar footing (110), orientated east to west, 6m long within the trench, 1.5m wide and 0.35m deep. The sandstones were irregular in size and shape (but larger than the rubble sandstone wall (109)) and exhibited no evidence for working or shaping. They were arranged in an irregular bond by a cream sandy mortar. Footing (110) extended along the east - west part of the trench, and beyond the eastern end.

Underlying the clay lining at the western end of the inserted cellar, was a line of east – west orientated flat stones (120) (Figures 7 and 12), which appeared to align on the same orientation as the wall footing (110). Underlying these stones was a moderately compacted mid-brown silty sand (122), which appeared to be part of a levelling episode to form a foundation for the stone slabs. This evidence must indicate the existence of a cellar contemporary with wall footing (110), which was remodelled in the later Victorian period by the clay-lined structure (107), (108), and (109).

Both [110] and [116] were cut into a mid brown silty sand with occasional charcoal flecks and clay pipe fragments (117), which overlaid a separate earlier but similar deposit, which comprised a loosely compacted, light orangey brown silty clay sand (118), containing occasional fragments of clay pipe stem and one clay pipe bowl.

Hand-augered core samples from (122) and (118) suggest that these deposits continue in depth below the limit of excavation in the the trench, for another 0.31m before reaching a yellow compacted sand (121), which appeared to form the natural deposit.



**Figure 13**  
**Possible wall footing (123). View - North**

#### **4.3 Clarification of western end of cellar**

Following consultation with Mick Krupa (Shropshire CC), the west - east orientated part of the trench was extended to the west, to locate the return of the clay lining and/or associated walling. The trench was therefore extended westerly by c.1.0m (Figure 14).

The extension revealed both the return of the clay lining, 0.60m further to the west, and also the end of the stone backing, suggesting that this had been inserted to 'prop up' footing (110). It had initially been unclear whether pit [114] was inserted to rob out stone from footing (110), however the extension proved the positioning of the pit to be coincidental. The removal of the clay lining (107) from this section of the wall suggested the possibility of a return in this section, which had apparently been truncated [119] by the insertion of the clay lined feature.



**Figure 14**  
**Extension of western end of trench portraying return of clay lining (107). View - North**

## 5.0 INTERPRETATION

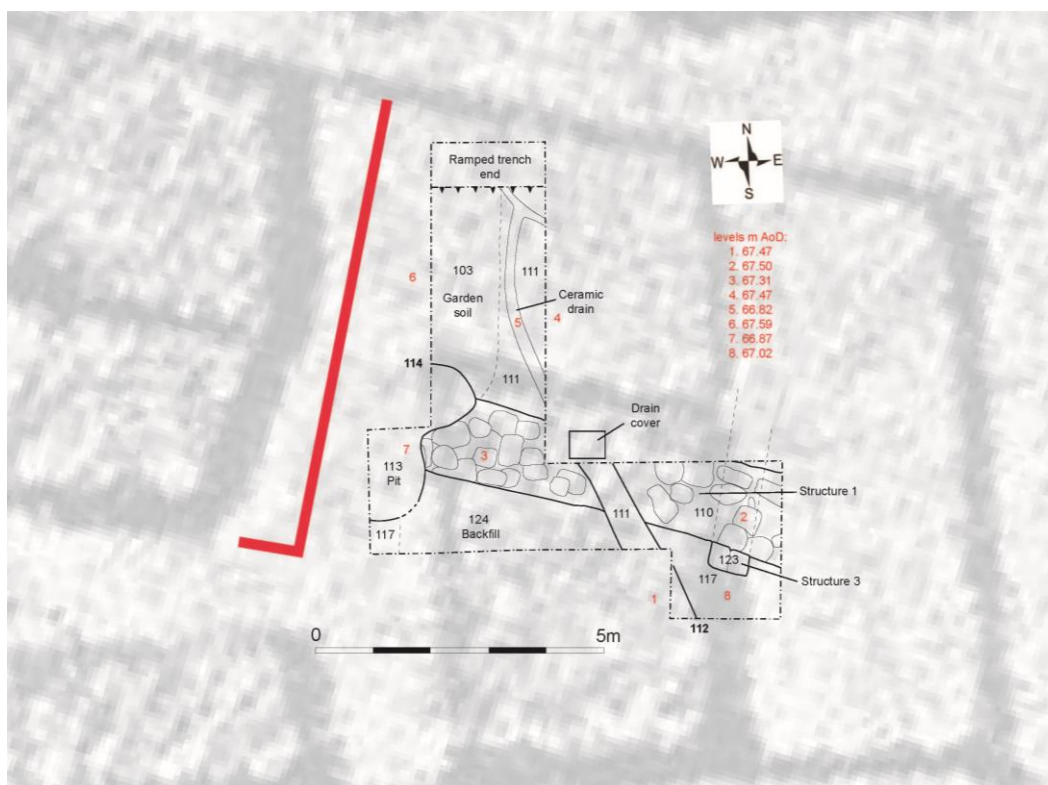
### 5.1 Phase 1: Pre-construction deposits

The earliest archaeological deposits revealed by the trial trenching were silty sands (117 and 118) that had accumulated to 1.3m above the natural sand, perhaps as deliberate levelling episodes. The deposits contained little artefactual material beyond clay pipe fragments and charcoal flecks. The character of these deposits were distinct from all later deposits, and the lack of organic inclusions or ceramic material, but inclusion of clay pipe, would suggest an origin in the early post-medieval period, perhaps Civil War date given the proximity of the site to the north-eastern corner of the castle and civil war defences.

### 5.2 Phase 2: Structure 1

The wall footing (110) running east-south-east – west-north-west across the site matches the alignment of a structure recorded on the Leith and Smith map of 1835 (Figures 2 and 15), and shares the alignment of the rear of the structures on Bank Street. This had been laid onto and cut into the top of levelling deposit (117). Internally a void 1.1m in depth had been formed on the south side which had been floored with compacted silty sand (122) similar to (and probably the same as) the levelling deposit (118). Stone slabs had been laid on this deposit along the same orientation as the wall footing (110). This suggests a contemporary cellar to the building that is shown as being in existence by the time of the 1835 map.

Perhaps contemporary with the construction of Structure 1 a pit [116] was cut to the north-west through levelling deposits (117) - (118), and filled with 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century rubbish (115).



**Figure 15**  
**Trench plan and archaeological features superimposed on 1835 map**

### 5.3 Phase 3: establishment of a garden soil

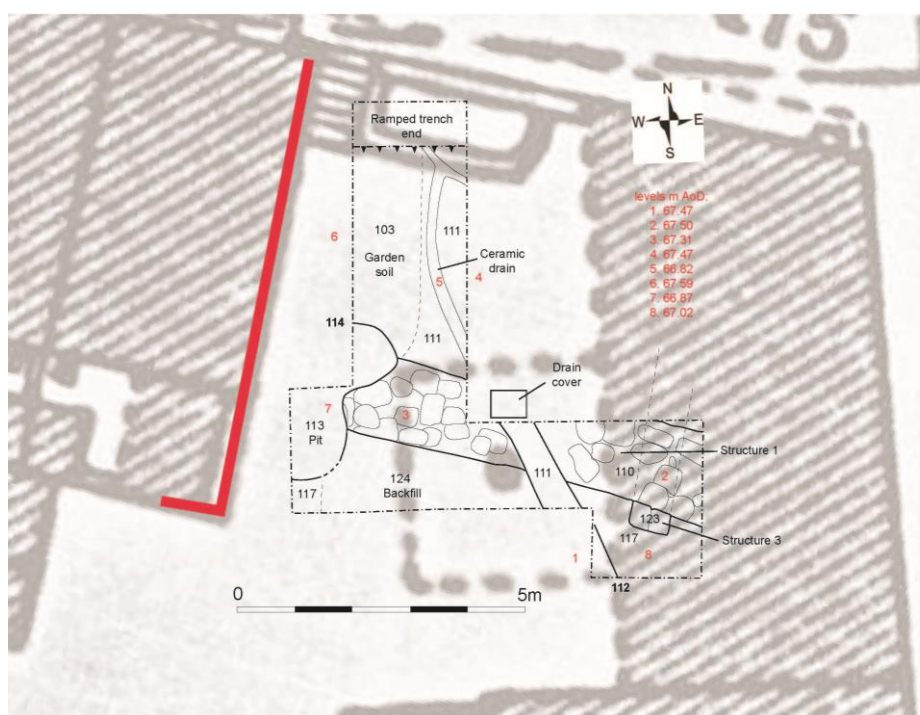
A period of usage is represented by the formation of a garden soil (103) which sealed pit [116] and was only found to the north of wall (110). This suggest some longevity in activity and a contrast between an interior south of the wall, and an exterior backplot area to the north of the wall.

### 5.4 Phase 4: Demolition of Structure 1

A large pit [114] was cut through the north-western end of wall (110). This appears to have been filled with re-deposited levelling material probably originating from (117) with some 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century ceramic artefacts. It would be logical to interpret this event with demolition of Structure 1, as the walls could not have continued to stand with a large pit at the north-western corner.

### 5.5 Phase 5: Structure 2

During the Victorian period the original cellar was altered. A square shaped, clay and rubble lined (107 and 108), structure was erected on a slightly different alignment, with rough stone wall (109) only along its northern edge. This latter had been partially cut into the post-medieval levelling deposits (117) and (118) which lay below the wall footing (110), and possible entrance steps were detected at its eastern end. The cellar was on a slightly different alignment ENE – WSW, rather than the east – west orientation of wall footing (110), suggesting a similarity with the orientation of the later buildings as recorded on the 1884 OS map (Figure 16). It seems possible that Structure 2 represents the lightweight feature depicted as dashed lines on the 1884 OS map of the buildings fronting onto Castle Terrace.



**Figure 16**  
Trench plan and archaeological features superimposed on 1884 map

## 5.6 Structure 3

There was only minimal evidence for the existence of the building depicted on the 1884 OS map (Figure 16), with the candidates either being either the stub of wall footing remaining in the east of the trench (123) or the roughly north south orientated section of foundation (109). There are problems with both interpretations. Given the truncated nature of the remains of (123) it would seem hard to extrapolate the size of the building from the remains, and the shallow nature of its depth suggests it can only have carried at most a single storey building. Wall (109), appears to be in the right place for a structure depicted on the 1884 OS map. However footing (110), representing the 1835 structure extends well beyond its position which is something that, based on the historic mapping, shouldn't be the case.

## 5.7 Phase 6: Demolition of Structures 2 and 3

This event is represented by the tipped lenses recorded as backfill within Structure 2, the mortar-rich horizon (104), and silty-sandy deposits (105) beneath (104), and (124) above, which both contained 19<sup>th</sup> century ceramic inclusions. Structure 3 was reduced to the stub of wall (123). A ceramic drain was inserted through wall footing (110) and levelling deposit (117), the cut for which was [112] and backfill of loose relatively modern material was recorded as (111).

Historic mapping would date this episode to the period between 1903 and 1926, as the Ordnance Survey shows the building present on the earlier map, but no longer extant on the later map.

## 5.8 Phase 7: Modern tarmac and yard construction deposits

The final episode recorded archaeologically was the construction of the existing yard. This consisted of hard-core (102) and a tarmac surface (101) which were found capping the archaeological sequence.



**Figure 17**  
**Photograph c.1900 looking north along Castle Terrace**



## 6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The small trial trenching investigation at The Habit can only provide a keyhole to glimpse the archaeological sequence and complexity of surviving remains within the site boundary. On the basis of the evidence from this evaluation seven separate phases of activity can be identified. These comprise:

Phase 1 (Post-medieval and pre-1835) – Deposition of levelling layers (117) and (118).

Phase 2 (pre-1835) – Construction of Structure 1 on southern side of site visible on 1835 map, and pit [116] to the north.

Phase 3 (c.1835) interior and exterior activity areas, south and north of wall footing (110), with cellar to south and accumulation of garden soil to north.

Phase 4 (pre-1884) demolition of Structure 1 shown on 1835 map, and pit [114].

Phase 5 (post-1835) – Construction of Structure 2: alteration of cellar from Structure 1. Construction of Structure 3 along eastern side of site as shown on 1884 OS map

Phase 6 (post 1884 and pre-1926) – Demolition of Structures 2 and 3. Installation of drainage [112].

Phase 7 (late 20<sup>th</sup> century) – Construction of current hard standing and yardage

It is possible that the earliest phase on site reflects land-use as part of the north-eastern extent of the castle zone, which was not built on until the late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Structural remains appear to accord with historic mapping to show the cultural development of the site during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, but little information has been gleaned as to the function of the structures. The clay lining of Structure 2 could suggest a use similar to root cellars in North America, which were used in an epoch before refrigeration, for keeping root vegetables cool and dry.

It is surprising how little archaeological evidence survives for the buildings shown on the 1884 OS map along the eastern side of the site, and which appear in early 20<sup>th</sup> century photographs. A photograph dating to c.1900 showing the upper winding house of the funicular railway also shows the Castle Terrace wall section, which at this time appears to have formed the eastern elevations and a gable end of three buildings; the two buildings to the north have their pitched roofs sloping towards Castle Terrace, whilst the southern building has the pitch perpendicular (Figure 17). The gable end of this building (fronting Castle Terrace) and neighbouring range appear to show window casements inserted into their upper sections (Figure 17).

Given the lack of significant archaeology in the northern section of the trench due to the cut of the ceramic drain [112], it appears unlikely that the proposed development will impact heavily on the currently known archaeological remains present on the site. Superimposition of the trench plan against the ground reduction areas of the proposed building (Figure 4) shows that this would occur in areas largely disturbed by relatively recent activity. Further south the buried archaeological sequence would be preserved in situ by the proposed house layout.

## **7.0 CLOSURE**

This report has been prepared by SLR Consulting Limited with all reasonable skill, care and diligence, and taking account of the manpower and resources devoted to it by agreement with the client. Information reported herein is based on the interpretation of data collected and has been accepted in good faith as being accurate and valid.

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**AYLESBURY**

7 Wormal Park, Menmarsh Road,  
Worminghall, Aylesbury,  
Buckinghamshire HP18 9PH  
T: +44 (0)1844 337380

**BELFAST**

24 Ballynahinch Street, Hillsborough,  
Co. Down, BT26 6AW Northern Ireland  
T: +44 (0)28 9268 9036

**BRADFORD-ON-AVON**

Treenwood House, Rowden Lane,  
Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire BA15 2AU  
T: +44 (0)1225 309400

**BRISTOL**

Langford Lodge, 109 Pembroke Road,  
Clifton, Bristol BS8 3EU  
T: +44 (0)117 9064280

**CAMBRIDGE**

8 Stow Court, Stow-cum-Quy,  
Cambridge CB25 9AS  
T: + 44 (0)1223 813805

**CARDIFF**

Fulmar House, Beignon Close, Ocean  
Way, Cardiff CF24 5HF  
T: +44 (0)29 20491010

**CHELMSFORD**

Unit 77, Waterhouse Business Centre,  
2 Cromar Way, Chelmsford, Essex  
CM1 2QE  
T: +44 (0)1245 392170

**DUBLIN**

7 Dundrum Business Park, Windy  
Arbour, Dundrum, Dublin 14 Ireland  
T: + 353 (0)1 2964667

**EDINBURGH**

No. 4 The Roundal, Roddinglaw  
Business Park, Gogar, Edinburgh  
EH12 9DB  
T: +44 (0)131 3356830

**EXETER**

69 Polsloe Road, Exeter EX1 2NF  
T: + 44 (0)1392 490152

**FARNBOROUGH**

The Pavilion, 2 Sherborne Road, South  
Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 6JT  
T: +44 (0)1252 515682

**GLASGOW**

4 Woodside Place, Charing Cross,  
Glasgow G3 7QF  
T: +44 (0)141 3535037

**HUDDERSFIELD**

Westleigh House, Wakefield Road,  
Denby Dale, Huddersfield HD8 8QJ  
T: +44 (0)1484 860521

**LEEDS**

Suite 1, Jason House, Kerry Hill,  
Horsforth, Leeds LS18 4JR  
T: +44 (0)113 2580650

**MAIDSTONE**

19 Hollingworth Court, Turkey Mill,  
Maidstone, Kent ME14 5PP  
T: +44 (0)1622 609242

**NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE**

Sailors Bethel, Horatio Street,  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1 2PE  
T: +44 (0)191 2611966

**NOTTINGHAM**

Aspect House, Aspect Business Park,  
Bennerley Road, Nottingham NG6 8WR  
T: +44 (0)115 9647280

**ST. ALBANS**

White House Farm Barns, Gaddesden  
Row, Hertfordshire HP2 6HG  
T: +44 (0)1582 840471

**SHEFFIELD**

STEP Business Centre, Wortley Road,  
Deepcar, Sheffield S36 2UH  
T: +44 (0)114 2903628

**SHREWSBURY**

Mytton Mill, Forton Heath, Montford  
Bridge, Shrewsbury SY4 1HA  
T: +44 (0)1743 850170

**STAFFORD**

8 Parker Court, Staffordshire Technology  
Park, Beaconside, Stafford ST18 0WP  
T: +44 (0)1785 241755

**WARRINGTON**

Suite 9 Beech House, Padgate Business  
Park, Green Lane, Warrington WA1 4JN  
T: +44 (0)1925 827218

**WORCESTER**

Suite 5, Brindley Court, Gresley Road,  
Shire Business Park, Worcester  
WR4 9FD  
T: +44 (0)1905 751310



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