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The Manor House

West Bromwich
Sandwell
West Midlands

Archaeological Recording

April 2010

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Project No. 2071

April 2010

The Manor House Wset Bromwich, Sandwell, West Midlands

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING

by

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for

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Museums Arts and Tourism Service

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West Bromwich Manor House, Sandwell, West Midlands

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SUMMARY

Birmingham Archaeology was commissioned in March 2010 by the Museums Arts and Tourism service of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council to undertake a programme of archaeological investigation and recording at West Bromwich Manor House, Sandwell, West Midlands (centred on NGR SP 005528 94308). Specifically, a number of drainage culverts around the manor house were identified during works and highlighted for recording.

A single stone-lined culvert with brick-arched vault was recorded extending beneath the forecourt area fronting the late 16th/ early 17th-century gatehouse range. This culvert was fed by two smaller drainage features running perpendicularly from the east. A further culvert was observed to the south-west of the manor house complex, within the original line of the moat and adjacent to the 16th-century kitchen range. It would appear logical to assume that the recorded features form part of a single drainage system, supported by a historical description of the gatehouse culvert as extending to 200ft in length, 'running inside (of) the inner wall of the moat to a point just past the kitchen ... and cross(ing) the moat into an adjoining field, where it formerly discharged into a pool.'

Access to the culverts was highly restricted and, unfortunately, no datable artefacts or diagnostic features were recovered or noted to allow for a firm estimate of construction date to be made. Interpretations thus remain speculative. However, it would seem logical that the culverts are contemporary with the erection of the gatehouse, the partial infilling of the moat and creation of the forecourt area. Such a drainage system would have been required to maintain free flow of water between the northern and southern arms of the moat to avoid problems of standing water and silting. It has been previously suggested that the culverts may have additionally functioned to flush away discharge from a privy attached at the southern end of the gatehouse range. An alternative construction date of c.1720 may relate to Sir Samuel Clarke's extensive works within the Manor gardens, at which time the remainder of the moat was infilled.

While the results are inconclusive, the current recording action has allowed, so far as was possible within the bounds of physical practicability and the constraints of Health and Safety considerations, for a detailed record of the exposed culverts to be made, and contributes towards the overall, cumulative archaeological record of the Manor House complex.

West Bromwich Manor House, Sandwell, West Midlands

Archaeological Recording, April 2010

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Project

- 1.1.1 Birmingham Archaeology was commissioned in March 2010 by the Museums Arts and Tourism Service of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) to undertake a programme of archaeological investigation and recording at West Bromwich Manor House, Sandwell, West Midlands (centred on NGR SP 005528 94308; Figure 1).
- 1.1.2 Specifically, a number of drainage culverts around the manor house were identified during works and highlighted for recording.

1.2 Designations

- 1.2.1 West Bromwich Manor House is included on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special architectural or Historical Interest as a Grade I Listed Building and as such is acknowledged as being of national importance. A copy of the list entry is included below as **Appendix A**.

1.3 Scope of Report

- 1.3.1 The project was undertaken in accordance with terms negotiated between Birmingham Archaeology and the Museums Arts and Tourism Service of SMBC, and set out in a letter of 10th March 2010.
- 1.3.2 This report outlines the results of the programme of investigation and recording, which has been undertaken in accordance with English Heritage guidelines as published in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice* (EH, 2006), within the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures* (IfA, 2008) and within the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers *Analysis and Recording for the Conservation of Works to Historic Buildings* (ALGAO, 1997).
- 1.3.3 This report has been prepared based upon information current and available as of April 2010.

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The principal objective of the project was to make a written drawn and photographic record of a number of drainage tunnels and culverts at the site, exposed during a phase of renovation work related to the re-establishment of the moat.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Historical Research

- 3.1.1 A rapid search was made of all relevant and readily available published and unpublished documentary source material, including historic maps, early photographs and drawings, written descriptions, and primary and secondary sources related to the Manor House held by the Sandwell Community History and Archives Service (CHAS), the local history sections of the Smethwick Library and more general reference materials held by the libraries of the University of Birmingham. Standard on-line resources such as A2A and www.imagesofengland.gov.uk, were also consulted. A full list of sources consulted is included below at section §.10.

3.2 Archaeological Recording

Drawn Record

- 3.2.1 The drawn record comprised the generation of plans and cross sections of the exposed features as appropriate.

Photographic Record

- 3.2.2 A full photographic survey was undertaken, comprising high resolution digital photography using a Nikon D50 digital SLR (6 megapixels). Where possible, photographs included graded photographic scales. All photographs were recorded on *pro-forma* recording sheets detailing subject, orientation, scales included, photographer and date.

- 3.2.3 A selection of site photographs is included below as plates.

Written Record

- 3.2.4 A written description was prepared to supplement the photographic and drawn records, summarising the history, character, date, techniques of construction, phasing and significance of the features exposed, so far as was possible given restricted access.

4 SITE LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

4.1 Site Location

- 4.1.1 West Bromwich Manor House is located on the north side of Hall Green Road, 1.5 km north-west of the historic settlement core as represented by the Parish Church of All Saints at Lyndon and approximately 3.25 km north of the modern centre of West Bromwich (Figure 1).

4.2 Site Location

- 4.2.1 West Bromwich is located on the Coal Measures, straddling the exposed and concealed sections of the South Staffordshire coalfield (VCH 1976). The local area is based upon an underlying solid geology of sedimentary beds (limestone, shale, sandstone and coal layers) known as the Yoredale Series and Coal Measures, capped by drift geology of

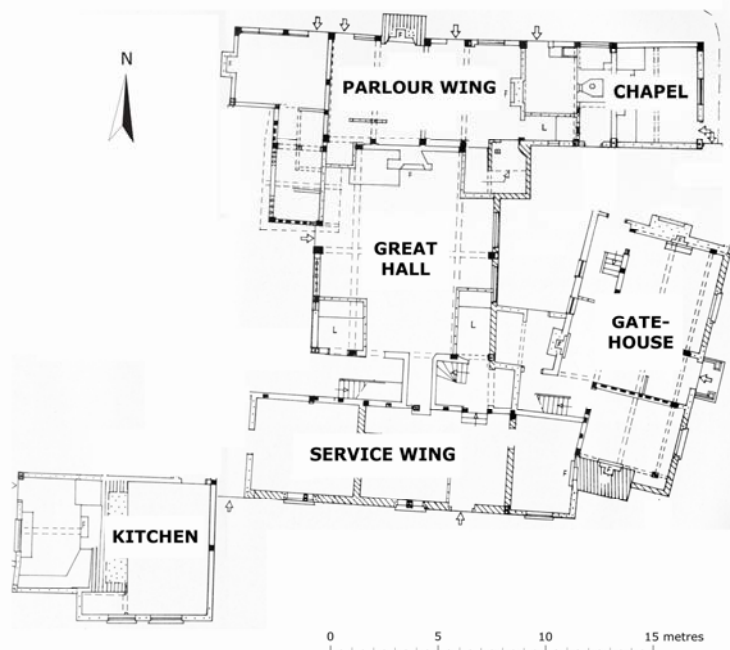
glacially associated sediments. The immediate vicinity of the site is defined by a body of clays within this glacial drift, forming a geological 'island' of relatively impermeable material (Breeze 2006, 1).

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

It is beyond the scope of the current project to review the general history of West Bromwich and the Manor House, subjects which have been previously addressed in some detail (Chitham 2009; Hodder 1990; Jones 1976; VCH 1976). A brief summary of the history of the Manor House is included for ease of reference.

5.1 The Manor House

- 5.1.1 West Bromwich Manor House, known in the 18th century as West Bromwich Hall or simply as Bromwich Hall, is located c.1.5km north-west of All Saints Church at Lyndon. There has been a manor house at West Bromwich since the early 1220s though the earliest elements of the standing building complex appear to date from the late 13th century.¹ The original house was built by the de Marnham family at the centre of an extensive agricultural estate at West Bromwich, the manor being held jointly from the Dudley barony by the de Marnham and Devereux families; only the Great Hall survives from the original structure. Successive occupants of the hall modernised and extended the manorial accommodation to contemporary taste, such that by the late-18th century, the buildings were described as comprising a 'large pile of irregular half-timbered buildings, black and white, and surrounded with numerous out-houses and lofty walls' (Shaw 1801, 128). Jones (1976), based upon a detailed analysis and record of the fabric of the buildings, identified six principal phases of development spanning the years down to the later 16th century.



Schematic plan of Manor House (after Jones 1976, fig. 1)

¹ Dendrochronological analysis of timbers from the central base cruck of the great hall have provided felling dates of 1275 (Hodder 1989, 30).

- PHASE I: hall, c.1300.
- PHASE II: addition of cross-wings c.1400.
- PHASE III: addition of chapel, late 15th/early 16th century.
- PHASE IV: hall improvements, including oriel, 16th century.
- PHASE IVa: addition of kitchen wing, c.1550-1600.
- PHASE V: addition of gatehouse, c.1600.

5.1.2 Later improvements and alterations were implemented on a more piecemeal basis. By the early years of the 19th century the house had passed out of family ownership and was beginning to be subdivided for multiple occupation as tenements (Jones 1976, 5).

5.1.3 By 1836, the old manor house is recorded as having been occupied by three families, including the Reverend PG Harper, curate of the Parish (Willett 1882, 20) while the 1841 census records five families in residence including George Adams and George Kidson, both of whom are later recorded in the tithe apportionment (see Table 1 below). By 1880, internal subdivision had been undertaken to such an extent that it was impossible to discern any remnant of the original hall (Chitham 2009, 142), and the house was referred to simply as nos. 144-160 Hall Green Road.

Parcel	Proprietor	Occupier	Description	Cultivation
3146	Trustees of Mr James Smith	Philip Gunter	Dove Moor	Pasture
3147		George Kidson	Dovehouse Close	Pasture
3148		George Kidson	Rick yard	
3149		George Kidson	Gardens	
3150		Philip Gunter	Lower Meadow	Pasture
3151		George Dyer	Cottage and Garden	
3152		Philip Gunter / George Adams	Bromwich Hall and garden	
3153		George Adams	Orchard and stable	Pasture
3154		George Kidson	House, building, yard	
3155				

Table 1:

Tithe records pertaining to West Bromwich Manor and associated lands, 1852 (see Figure 3).

5.1.4 Internal subdivision is illustrated in early Ordnance Survey mapping (Figure 4) which shows the main house sub-divided to form 10-11 separate units.

5.1.5 The property was acquired by the West Bromwich Corporation in 1950 when the buildings were reported to be in a dilapidated state (see Figure 7a), being described in contemporary news articles as '...an eyesore of cement clad Victorianism containing nine tenement slums'.² Initial plans for the site entailed the demolition of the dilapidated buildings, freeing up the associated land to be used as a community open space. During investigative works, however, the antiquity of the buildings became apparent and initial plans for demolition were accordingly dropped. A full programme of restoration of the house was proposed and undertaken between 1957-60 by James A Roberts of Birmingham (Jones 1976, 5).

6 PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

6.1 The built fabric of the manor house was subjected to a full and detailed study on the occasion of its restoration in 1957-61, and has been previously published in the

² Express and Star, Sept. 28, 1957 (SCHAS News cuttings scrapbook 12, p.218-221).

Transactions of the South Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society (Jones, 1976).

- 6.2 The site had been the subject of a previous research project which included desk-based study and non-intrusive survey (Breeze 2007).
- 6.3 A recent archaeological evaluation and watching brief undertaken by Birmingham Archaeology (Halstead 2010) investigated the line of the original medieval moat and exposed a sandstone revetment lining the inner edge of the moat.

7 OBSERVATIONS

7.1 Culvert [A] (Figure 5; Plates 1-5)

- 7.1.1 Culvert [A] is accessed via a hatch located to the south-west of the Manor House complex, within the line of the re-excavated moat and immediately adjacent to a modern extension to the Phase IVa kitchen range (Figure 5; Plates 1 and 2). At the time of survey, the culvert was filled with water and required pumping before inspection (Plates 3 and 4).
- 7.1.2 Upon completion of pumping operations, the culvert was revealed to be of too constrained a nature to allow for any form of safe access for inspection and detailed recording, a further deciding factor being the rapid re-fill rate of the channel once the pump intake pipe was removed. For this reason, recording of the channel was restricted to general observation and photography from the exterior and limited probing of the channel with an endoscopic camera to attempt to ascertain the alignment of the feature.
- 7.1.3 The interior of the culvert narrows down considerably immediately north-east of the access area, the body of the tunnel being little more than 0.5m wide and a similar height (Plate 5). The walls of the tunnel were of roughly squared and coursed sand stone, ceiled over by simple timber shuttering, presumably related to the construction of the modern extension. The visible section of culvert was noted to be aligned approximately towards the south gable end of the kitchen block, though it was not possible to ascertain the course of the tunnel to any length; it is feasible that it may link up with Culverts [B] and [C] to the north-east.

7.2 Culvert [B] (Figures 5/6; Plates 6-9)

- 7.2.1 Culvert [B] is aligned approximately east-west, flanking the southern side of the main entrance driveway to the Manor House (Figure 6a; Plate 6), dropping from east to west in the direction of the south-east corner of the gatehouse. A 5.5m long section of the culvert is open (Plates 7 and 8), the stone capping having been removed, allowing for inspection of the interior profile (Figure 6b; Plate 9). The culvert measures between 0.36 – 0.40m wide, the flanking walls constructed of roughly hewn grey/green sandstone blocks with occasional use of tile/brick; the base of the channel lies 0.63m below surrounding ground level with the void itself being approximately 0.30m (1ft) tall, capped by two courses of stone. The upper stone cap is flat though the lower block is crudely worked to form a rudimentary arch (Plate 9). Probing of the tunnel with ranging rods and endoscopic camera revealed that it extended on a straight alignment for at least three metres to both east and west; to the west, it is

assumed that it merges with Culvert [C] which runs perpendicularly beneath the gatehouse forecourt.

- 7.2.2 Culvert [B] is mirrored by a matching east-west aligned channel ([B2]) opening off the northern end of Culvert [C] (see below).

7.3 Culvert [C] (Figures 5-7; Plates 10-14)

- 7.3.1 Culvert [C] is aligned parallel to the east elevation of the gatehouse, running on an approximately north-south alignment beneath the flagged and cobbled forecourt area (Plates 10 and 11). Access to the culvert is highly restricted, limited to a small (0.65 x 0.38m) opening at the northern end where it opens off the north-eastern arm of the re-excavated moat (Figure 6c; Plate 12), making detailed recording problematic. Internally, the culvert is constructed of c.3 courses of roughly hewn sandstone blocks to the flanking walls within a pale creamy mortar, and is furnished with a brick barrel vault of 2-2¼ in. brick (Plate 13). Internally, the culvert widens out to the west immediately south of the northern opening to a maximum width of c.0.9m and stands >0.85m high to the crown of the vault, the base being obscured by a layer of accumulated soil and debris. The culvert was noted to extend to the full width of the gatehouse, a distance of c.12.5m, and is assumed to join with the western end of Culvert [B] to the south. The alignment of the culvert beyond this point was not ascertained, though it is feasible that it may run on a more southerly alignment to emerge as Culvert [A] to the south-west. Opening off the northern end of the western flanking wall was a subsidiary channel ([B2]), apparently aligned east-west and mirroring the arrangement of Culvert [B] to the south (Plate 14); restricted access did not allow for further investigation of this feature.

- 7.3.2 The tunnel would appear to have first been exposed during clearance work related to the refurbishment of the house in 1957 (see Figure 7b). Breeze (2007, 18) cites an anonymous archive source³ which describes the culvert as being '200ft long, running inside (of) the inner wall of the moat to a point just past the kitchen ... and cross(ing) the moat into an adjoining field, where it formerly discharged into a pool'. The latter pool is presumably that illustrated to the west of the manor house complex in the 1849 tithe map (Figure 4) and early OS editions (Figure 5a and b).

8 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

8.1 Discussion

- 8.1.1 Restricted access to Culvert [A] precludes the establishment of its alignment or detailed assessment of its early form and function. Given descriptions of Culvert [C] dating to the time of the building refurbishment (see §.7.3.2), it seems likely that it links up with the series of culverts recorded to the east of the gatehouse range, and originally formed part of a water management and/or sewerage system, though it is not possible to make firm assertions based upon the recorded evidence.
- 8.1.2 The location of Culvert [C] beneath the forecourt of the gatehouse suggests that it may well be associated with the building of that structure at the turn of the 17th century. It has been argued (VCH 1976, 16-18) that this section of the moat was infilled at an early date (c.1600), creating a forecourt before the newly erected gatehouse. Such a culvert would have been necessary to maintain free flow of water

³ Anon. report, Smethwick Library ref.A.197

between the northern and southern arms of the moat to avoid problems of standing water and silting, while Jones (1976, 34) has additionally suggested that it may have functioned to flush away discharge from a privy attached at the southern end of the gatehouse. An alternative construction date of c.1720 may relate to Sir Samuel Clarke's extensive works within the Manor gardens, at which time the remainder of the moat was infilled (*ibid.*). It is assumed that perpendicular culverts [B] and [B2] are contemporary with culvert [C], forming part of a single drainage system.

- 8.1.3 No datable artefacts or diagnostic features were recovered or noted during the current phase of work to allow for a firm estimate of construction date to be made.

8.2 Conclusion

- 8.2.1 The current recording action has allowed, so far as was possible within the bounds of physical practicability and the constraints of Health and Safety considerations, for a detailed record to be made of the series of exposed culverts at West Bromwich Manor.
- 8.2.2 While inconclusive in themselves, the results of the current recording action can be seen to add to the overall, cumulative archaeological record of the Manor House complex.

9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 9.1 The project was commissioned by Mr Frank Cauldwell of the Museums Arts and Tourism Service of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, to whom thanks are extended. Thanks are also due to Mr Bob Giles for arranging safe access to the site and to the staff at Sandwell Community History and Archives Service and Smethwick Library.
- 9.3 Project set up was undertaken by Dr Malcolm Hislop MIfA and the project managed in the field by Ric Tyler AIfA, both of Birmingham Archaeology. Documentary research and site recording were undertaken by Ric Tyler, assisted in the field by Phillip Mann. The current report was prepared and illustrated by Ric Tyler, and reviewed and edited by Dr Malcolm Hislop.

10 SOURCES

(a) Cartographic Sources (in chronological order)

- 1849 Fowler West Bromwich Parish (tithe).
- 1890 Ordnance Survey County Series 1:2500 map, 1st Edition
- 1909 Ordnance Survey County Series 1:2500 map, 1st Revision.
- 1913 Ordnance Survey County Series 1:2500 map, 2nd Revision.
- 1938 Ordnance Survey County Series 1:2500 map, 3rd Revision.
- 1965 Ordnance Survey National Grid Series 1:2500 map, Edition.

(b) Secondary Sources

ALGAO, 1997. *Analysis and Recording for the Conservation of Works to Historic Buildings*.

Breeze PS, 2007. 'The Manor House, West Bromwich 2006 investigations: a methodological examination of the intensive investigation of a manorial Site through non-intrusive methods.' Unpublished MA dissertation, University of Birmingham.

Chitham E, 2009. *West Bromwich: A History*. Chichester, Phillimore and Co. Ltd.

English Heritage, 2006. *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice*.

Halstead J, 2010. 'West Bromwich Manor House: Archaeological Watching Brief and Evaluation'. Birmingham Archaeology unpublished client report No. **2030**.

Hodder I, 1990. 'The Medieval Landscape of West Bromwich'. *Trans. S. Staffs. Archaeol. and Hist. Soc.* Vol. **XXX**, 30-33.

IfA, 2008. *Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures*.

Jones S R, 1976. 'West Bromwich (Staffs.) Manor House' extract from *Trans. S. Staffs. Archaeol. and Hist. Soc.* Vol. **XVII**.

Shaw S, 1798. *The History and Antiquities of Staffordshire*.

VCH, 1976. *The Victoria History of the County of Stafford, XVII: Offlow Hundred (Part)*. University of London.

(c) On-line Resources

www.imagesofengland.gov.uk: English Heritage on-line catalogue of Statutory Listed Buildings

APPENDIX A: Statutory List Description

SANDWELL MB

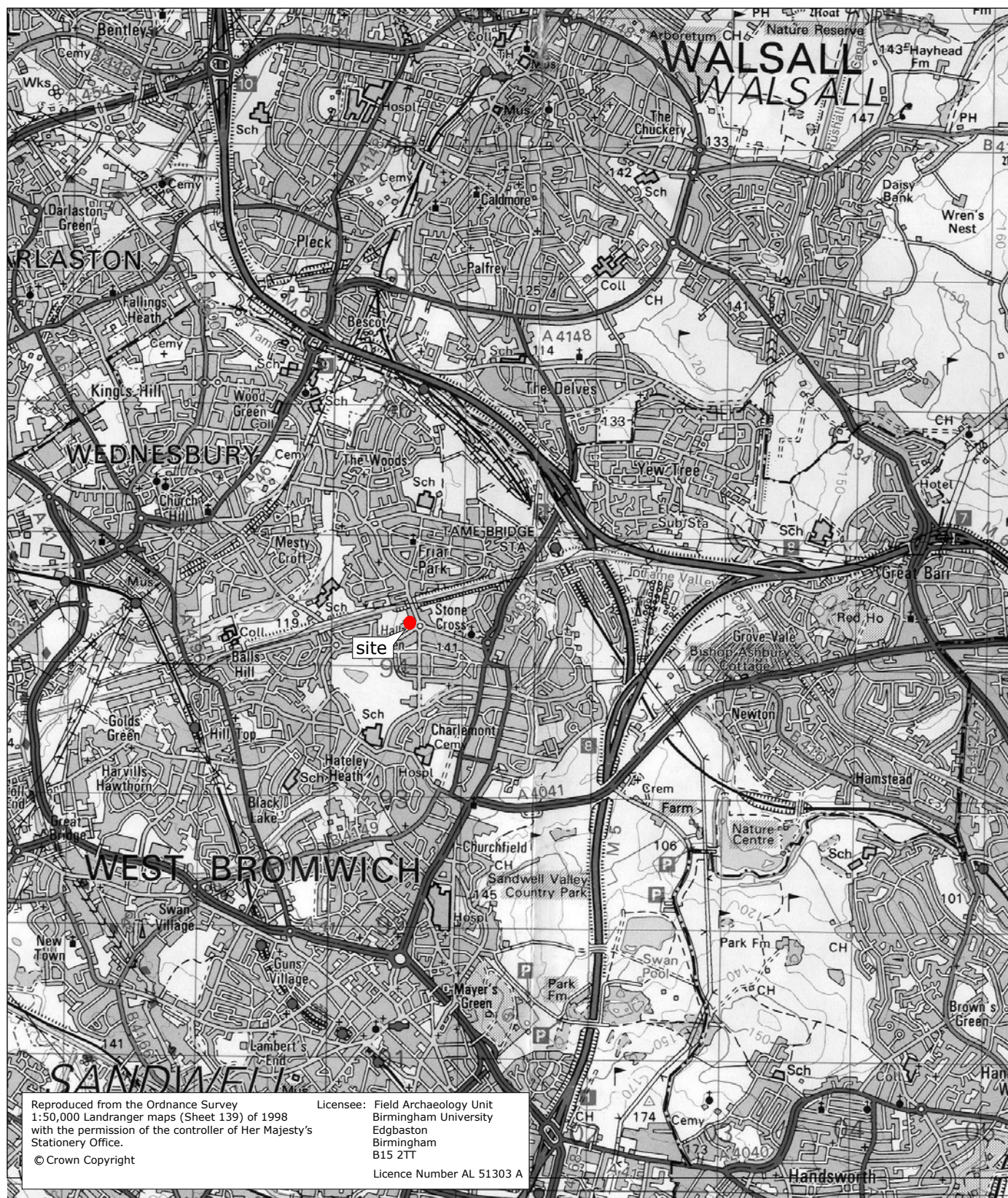
HALL GREEN ROAD
Hall Green,
West Bromwich
West Bromwich Manor House

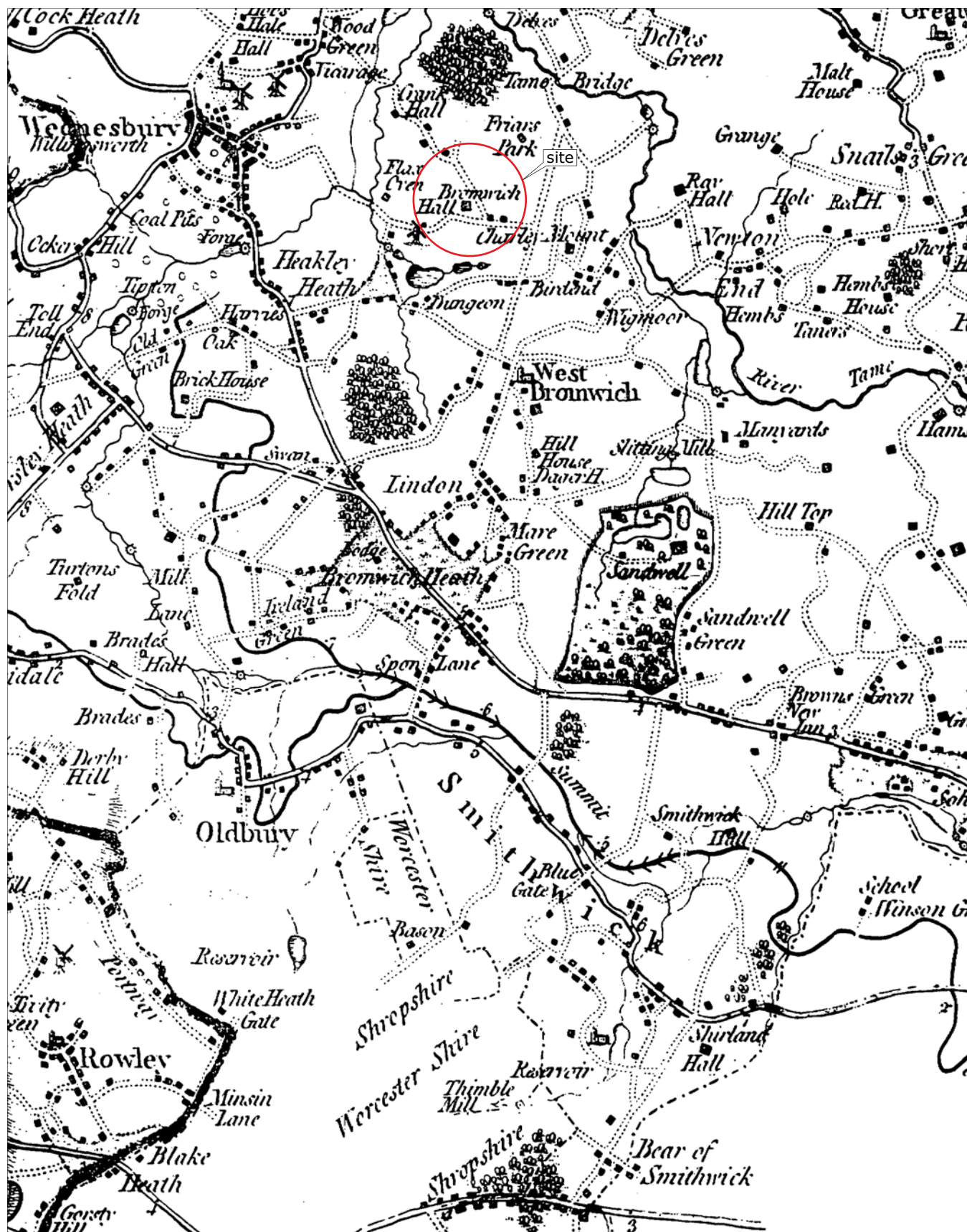
SP 09 SW
5/88
23.9.55

GV I

Manor house. (formerly listed as Nos 146 to 160 "The Old Hall")

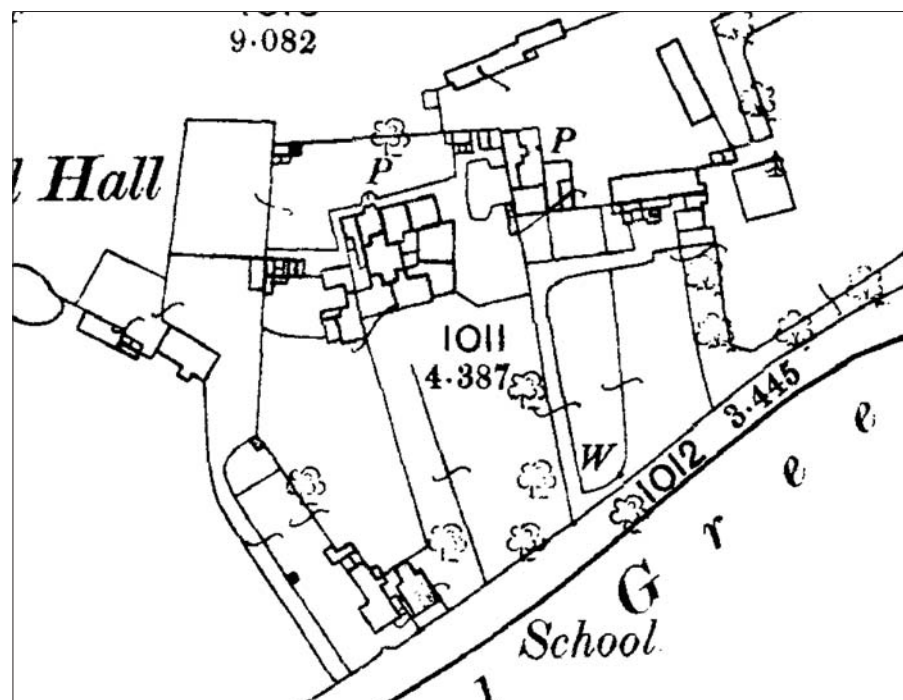
Circa 1300 with C15 and C16 additions and alterations. Extensively restored c1960 when C18 and C19 alterations were removed and the timber-frame exposed and repaired. Timber-framed with tile roofs. Buildings grouped around a courtyard and surrounded by a moat **The Hall:** the west wall was rebuilt late C16 and has a 14-light bay window with gabled chamber over. Interior: spere truss has solid screens between posts and side walls. Central base-cruck truss has double tie-beams clasping the roof plates, and an upper crown-post roof. Cross-wings added early C15 replacing earlier appendages to the hall. Each has a small annexe to the west and is of two bays with a central tie-beam truss and intermediate arch-braced collar-beam truss. Two ogee-headed service door- ways open into the south wing. The chapel block was added to the east end of the north cross-wing c1500. It has a full-height chapel to the east and a western half of two storeys. The kitchen block, adjoining the south- west corner of the south cross-wing, is late C16 with C17 alterations. The gatehouse is probably late C16 and closes the east side of the courtyard. It is jettied and has close-studding, with lozenge panels to the upper part of the first floor. A large brick chimney stack projects from its south gable wall. The building is discussed and illustrated in detail in Jones, SR, "West Bromwich (Staffs) Manor House", South Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society Transactions, Vol XVII, 1975-76.



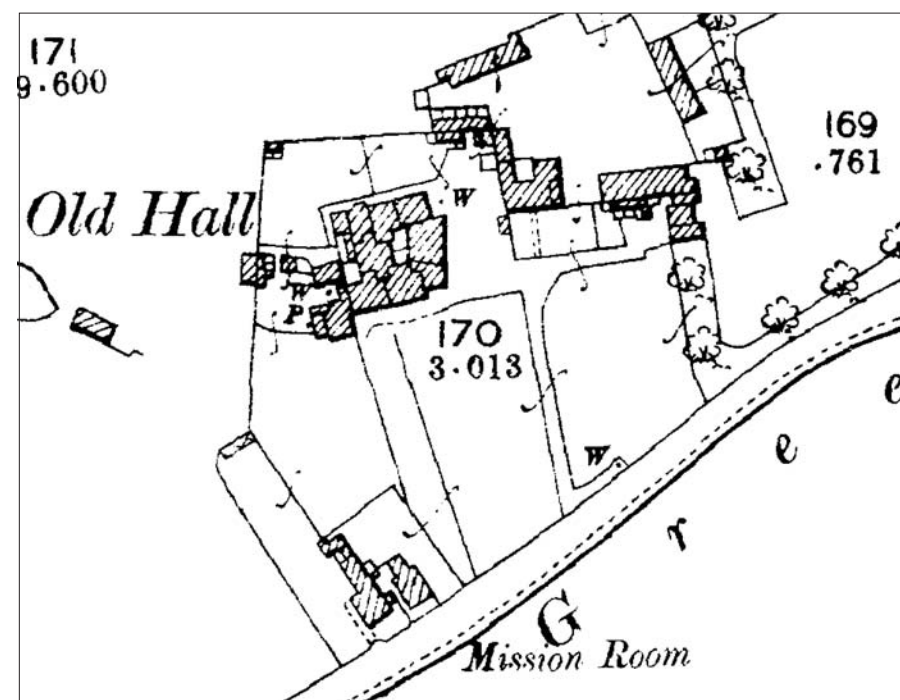




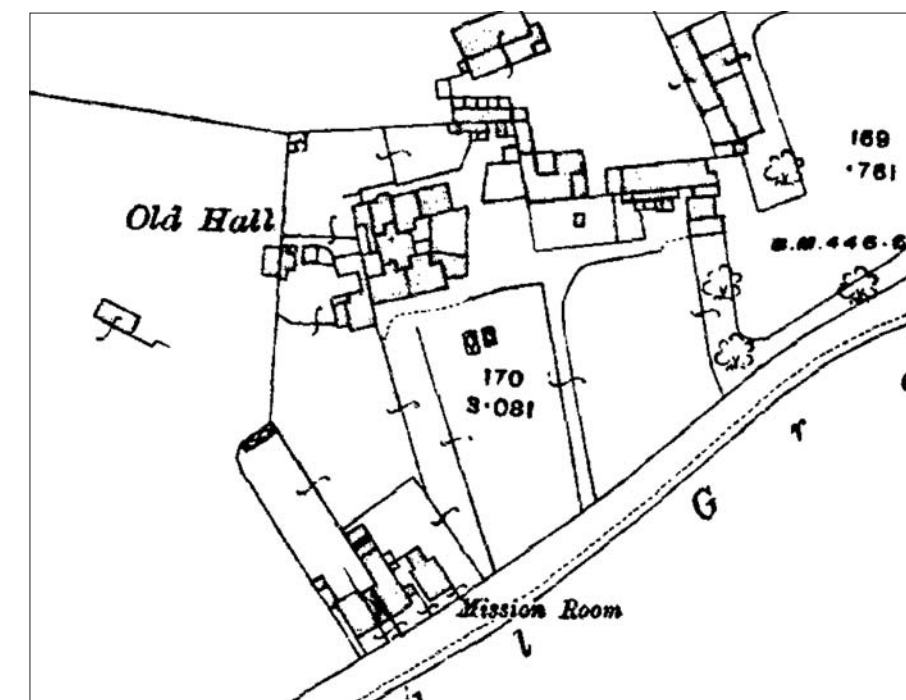
Sandwell Community History and Archives



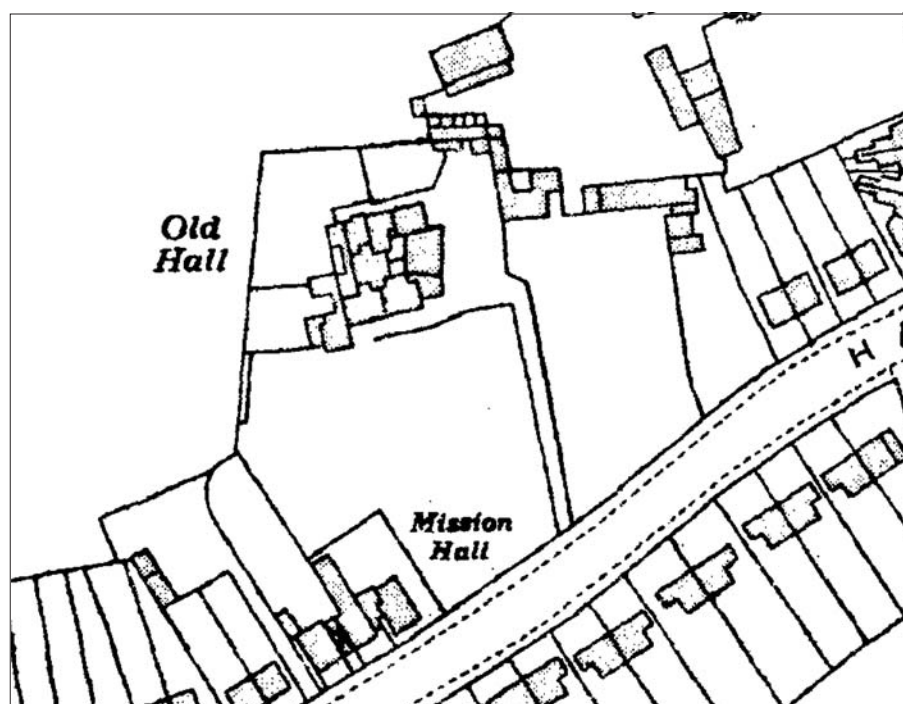
(a) 1st Edition, 1890



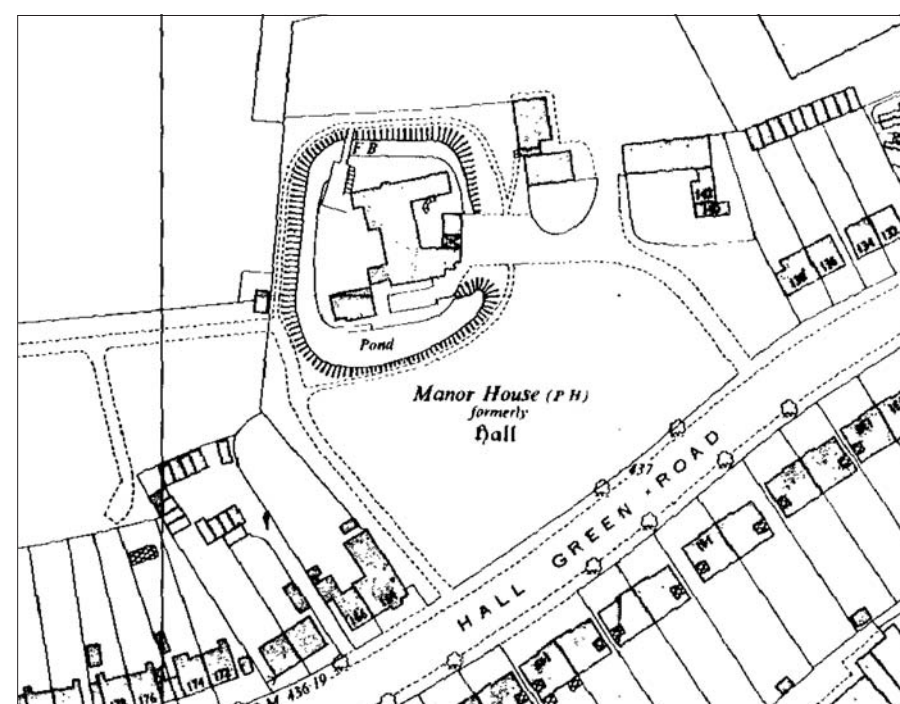
(b) 1st Revision, 1909



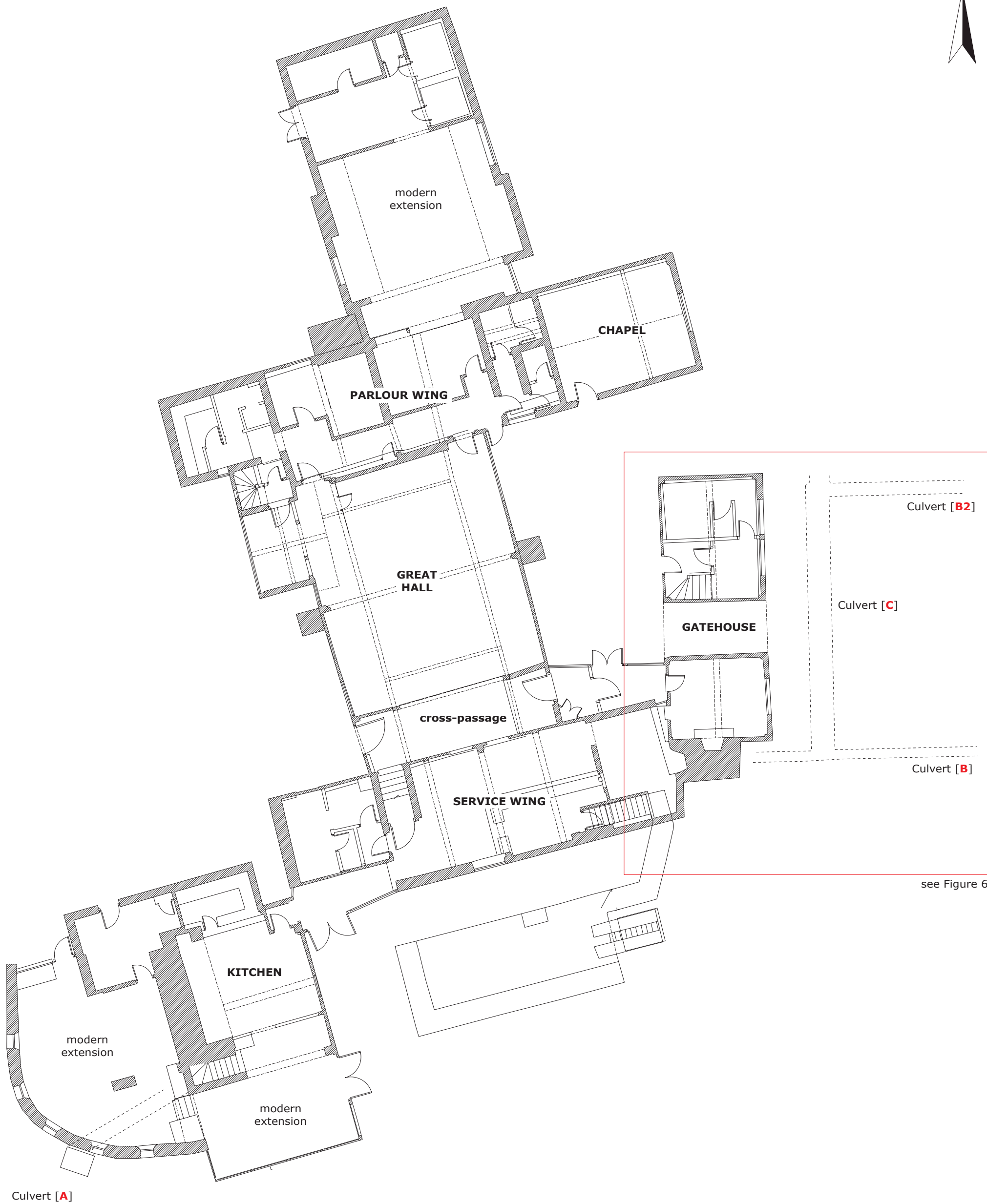
(c) 2nd Revision, 1913



(d) 3rd Revision, 1938

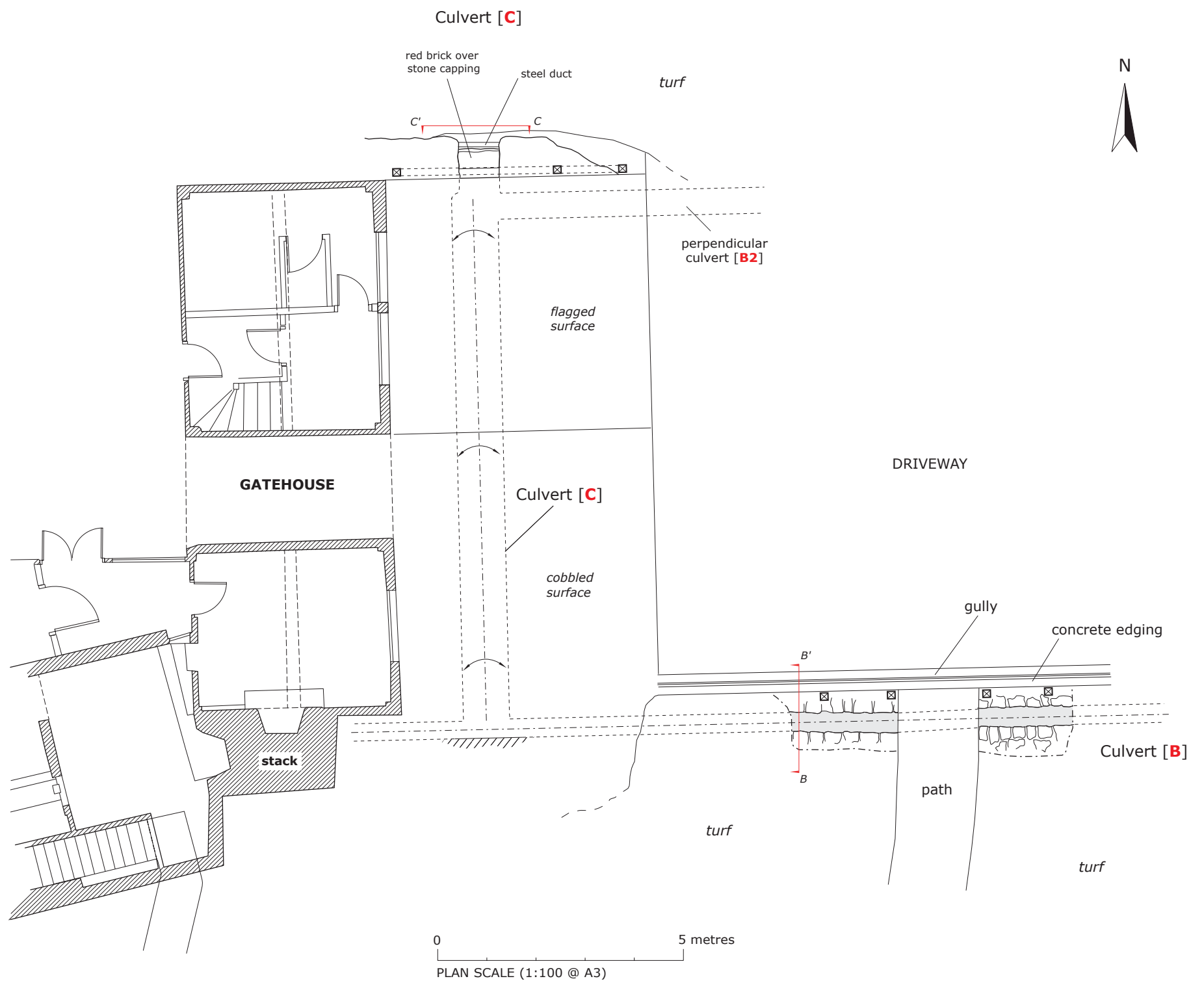


(e) Naional Grid Series edition, 1965

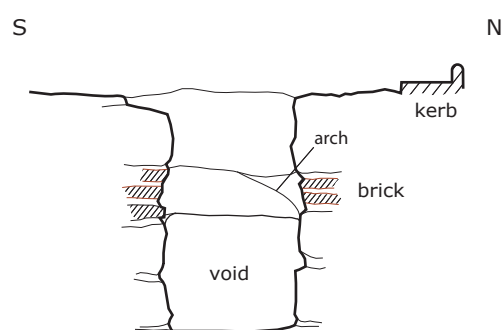


see Figure 6

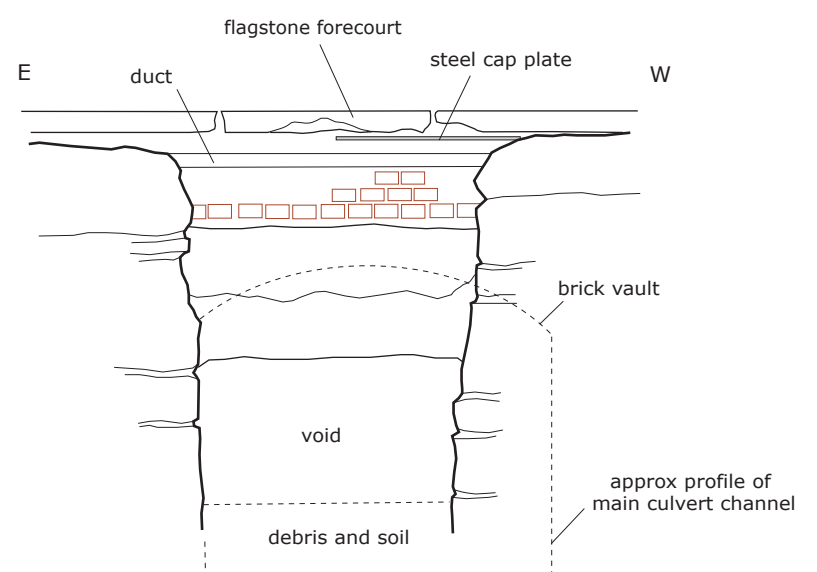
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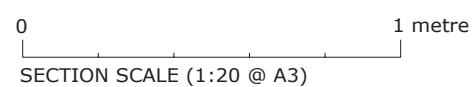
(a) Plan



(b) Culvert [B]; cross-section at B-B'

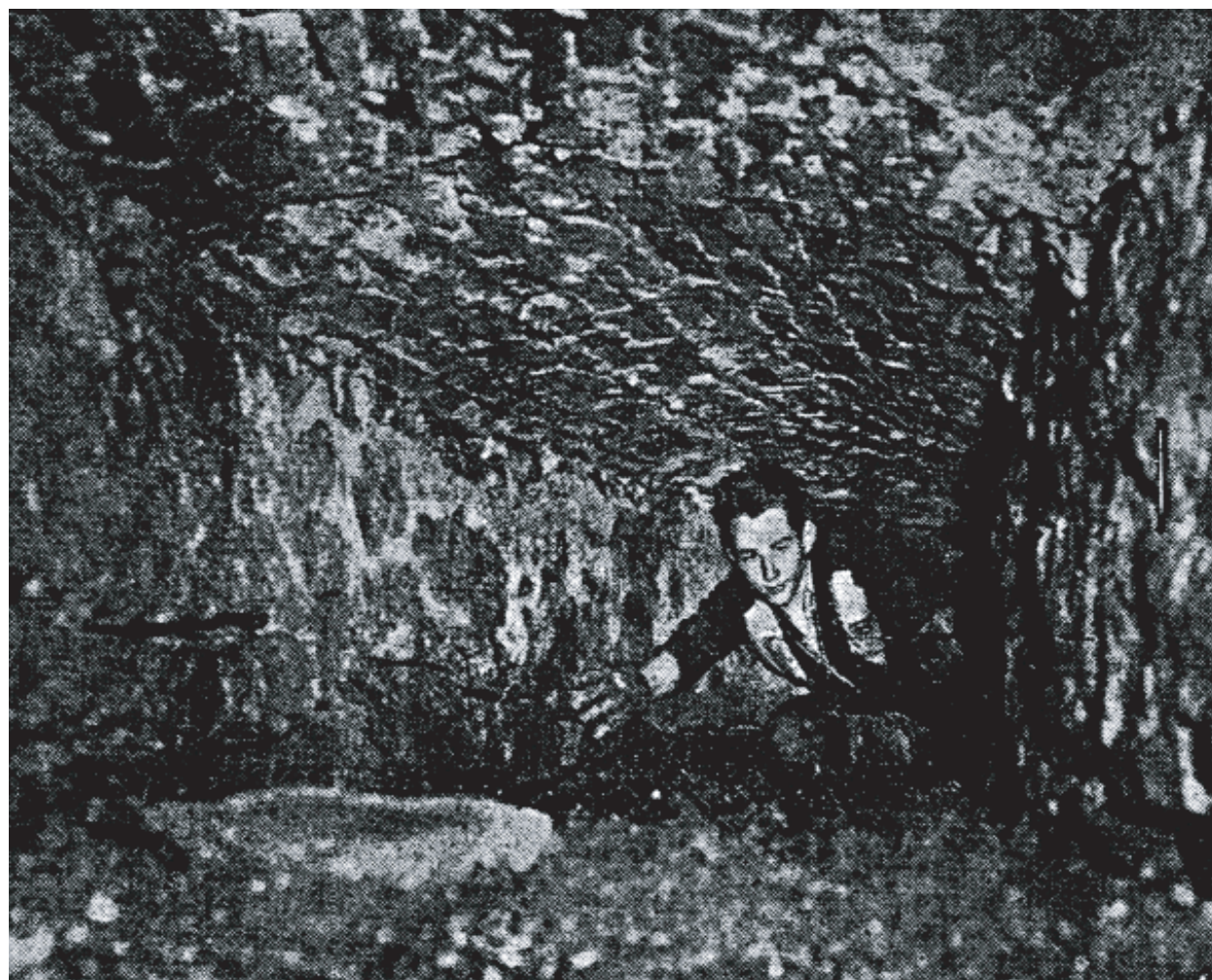


(c) Culvert [C]; cross-section at C-C'





(a) General view of Manor House prior to renovation work of 1957-61 (Chitham, 2009)



(b) Interior view of Culvert [C] during renovation work (Birmingham Mail 02/05/1957)



Plate 1: Culvert [A]; context shot looking north-east within C16th/17th kitchen range in background.



Plate 2: Access to Culvert [A] adjacent to modern extension.



Plate 3: Access hatch to Culvert [A]



Plate 4: Water-filled terminal to Culvert [A].



Plate 5: Culvert [A]; interior looking north-east; note high water mark on walls.



Plate 6: Culvert [B], context shot looking west.



Plate 7: Open section of Culvert [B] looking west.



Plate 8: Open section of Culvert [B] looking east.



Plate 9: Profile of Culvert [B] a west end of exposed section.



Plate 10: Culvert [C]; context shot looking south-west.



Plate 11: Culvert [C], north end.



Plate 12: Culvert [C], northern opening.



Plate 13: Culvert [C], interior looking south.



Plate 14: Culvert [C]; perpendicular channel [B2] opening off north end of east side, reflecting culvert [B] to south.