

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

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**MOSELEY ICE HOUSE:  
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
WATCHING BRIEF**

by  
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## MOSELEY ICE HOUSE

### AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

*Andy Hammon (17th December 1998)*

#### **1. Introduction**

The Moseley ice house is located within the privately owned (by the Moseley Society) Moseley Park, which is situated just off Alcester/Salisbury Road (NGR SP 4075 2833) (Fig.1). The ice house consists of a brick structure with an arched entranceway and tunnel leading to a domed (almost 'egg' shaped) storage area, all of which is covered by a earthen mound. The ice house was probably built in the late eighteenth century to store ice collected from the nearby pond (located to the east).

Consolidation work is being carried out on the brick structure and this has necessitated the removal of some of the earthen mound. Additionally, the entrance way has two slightly curving walls leading up to it, which have been uncovered, and each has had a small trial pit dug at its southernmost extremity (Trenches 1 and 3) (Fig.2). These trial pits have revealed hitherto unrecorded brickwork and stone.

#### **2. Archaeological brief**

The aims of the watching brief were twofold:

- to record the brickwork and stone noted in the small trial pits at the end of the walls.
- to excavate and record a small trench through the earth bank leading up to the entranceway to ascertain its original level and method of construction (Trench 2) (Fig.2).

#### **3. Methods**

The trial pits (Trenches 1 and 3) were cleaned vertically and horizontally to determine overall relationships before being recorded.

Trench 2 was excavated and cleaned by hand to a level which determined the nature of the original surface before it was recorded.

A series of general colour slide photographs were taken of the ice house and the trial pits and trench from a variety of angles and orientations. In addition colour slide photographs were specifically taken of each exposed area to record in detail the brick work, stone and original surface (Trenches 1, 3 and 2 respectively).

Vertical sections from each trial pit and the trench were recorded at a scale of 1:20 (forming part of the primary archive).

Detailed plans of each pit and the trial trench were recorded to demonstrate the exposed brickwork and stone as well as the original surface at a scale of 1:10 (Fig.2).

A 1:20 plan showing the location of Trenches 1-3 in relation to the ice house entrance and the earthen mound was also made (Fig.2).

The primary archive will shortly be deposited with a suitable repository after consultation with the Planning Archaeologist.

#### **4. Results**

Cleaning the trial pits (Trenches 1 and 3) and excavating the entranceway trench (Trench 2) revealed the following:

*Trench 1* - measuring 0.6m by 0.65m. A stone block (approximately 200x500x150mm) was found to be overlying six observable bricks (which were of a similar size and material to that used in the ice house) set in mortar.

*Trench 2* - measuring 0.6m by 2.2m. This trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.7m. A continuous brick surface was discovered running the entire length of the trench and beyond. The bricks were laid out in the 'stretcher' pattern. The brick surface was found to be roughly horizontal/level. Again, the bricks were of a similar size and material to those used in the construction of the ice house.

*Trench 3* - measuring 0.5m by 0.55m. A similar brick and mortar structure to that noted from Trench 1 was recorded, although it was more poorly preserved. No whole bricks were present.

#### **5. Discussion**

The bricks and mortar recorded at the ends of the two entranceway walls (Trenches 1 and 3) have been interpreted as a continuation of the wall footings, which have subsequently been truncated. It is not known how much further the walls originally extended away from the ice house.

The stone block (Trench 1) had no obvious function and may not be part of the original structure, although it was on the same alignment as the gently curving entranceway wall.

The brick surface recorded in Trench 2 must be the original pathway to the ice house.

From the pathway's vertical position (Trench 2) it may be postulated that there would have been a step up into the ice house doorway. Unfortunately, it was not possible to extend the trench to the door, so as to be able to establish the exact relationship, as shoring supporting the archway prevented it.

Prior to this investigation it was assumed that a ramp sloping down towards the ice house doorway was present under the built up material. If such a slope to the entrance had existed the doorway in all likelihood would have opened inwards. However, with the roughly horizontal/level brick pathway the door may have opened outwards.

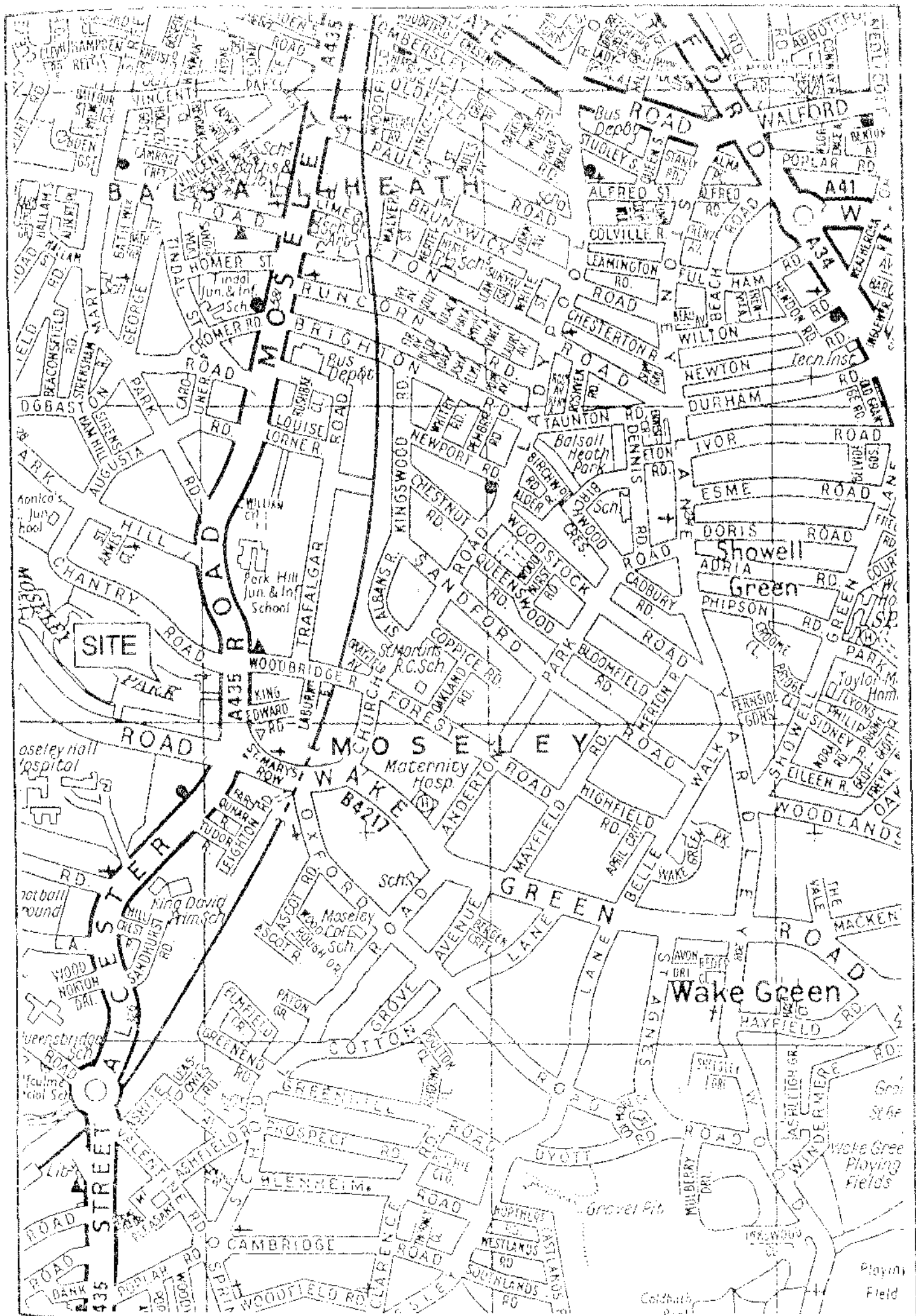
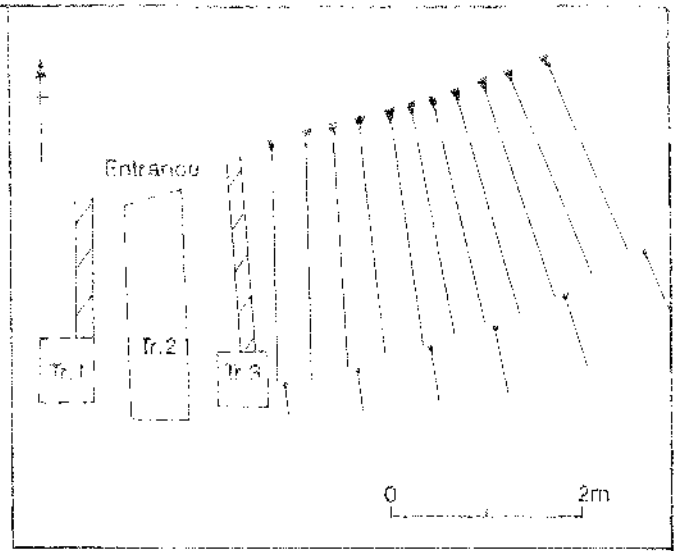


Fig 1



- Stone
- Mortar
- Brick Walls

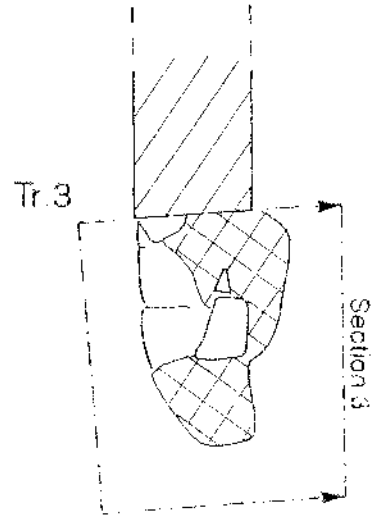
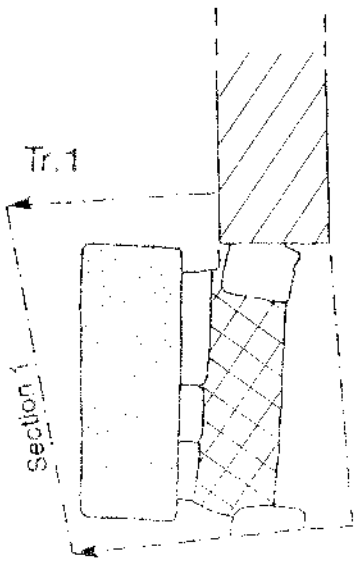
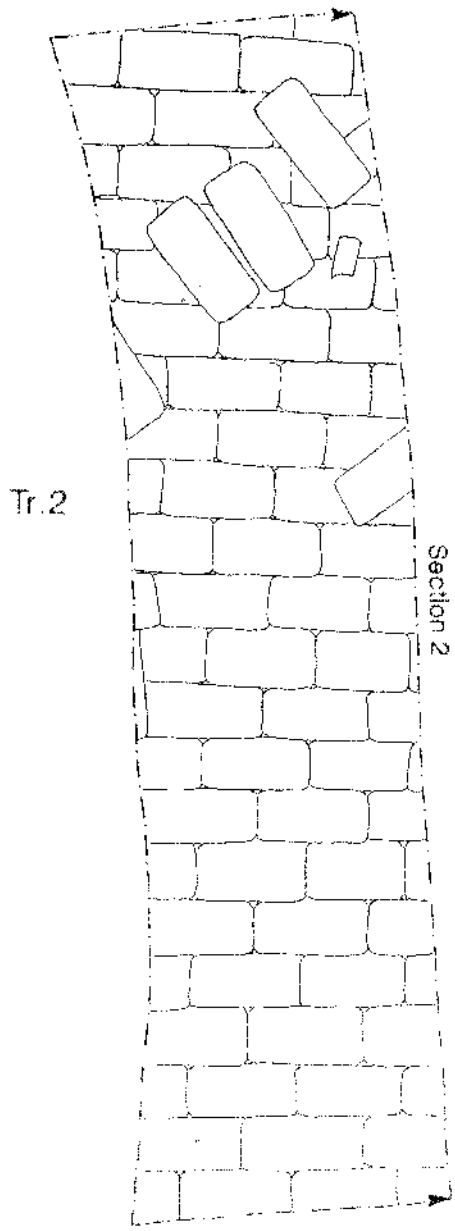


Fig. 2

**BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE**  
Ice House, Moseley Park (SP 4075 2833; SMR 20144)  
**Brief for *Archaeological observation and recording***

**1. Summary**

Excavation as part of consolidation works on the ice house is exposing hitherto unknown details of the structure. This brief is for observation and recording to inform consolidation works and to contribute to proposed public interpretation.

**2. Site location and description**

The ice house is in Moseley Park, off Alcester Road/Salisbury Road. It was probably built in the late 18th century, and consists of a brick-built domed storage chamber approached along a passage and covered by an earth mound. It is grade II listed.

**3. Details exposed by consolidation works**

Consolidation work is underway to protect the structure and to provide occasional public access. Some removal of earth has been and will be necessary to inform consolidation works. This has so far consisted of clearance of the top of the walls alongside the entrance to the icehouse passage and trial pits at the end of these walls. The pits have revealed further brick and stone remains not previously visible. A trench is to be dug along the existing earth ramp leading down to the entrance to the icehouse passage to establish its original level.

**6. Stages of work**

The following are to be carried out by an appropriately skilled and qualified archaeologist:

(i) The trial pits already dug are to be cleaned and features exposed in them are to be recorded by written description, drawing and photography. No excavation is to be undertaken beyond cleaning exposed deposits for better definition and cutting back the edges of the pits to facilitate this.

(ii) The trench is to be excavated by contractors already on site, under archaeological supervision. Any evidence for the original level of the ramp is to be recorded by written description, drawing and photography. Once located, the original ramp level is to be protected from damage, and no further excavation is to be undertaken beyond cleaning exposed deposits for better definition.

(iii) In addition to the recording described above, a plan at an appropriate scale is to be made of the entrance area to show both sides of the walls alongside the entrance and the locations of the trial pits and trench.

Any finds are to be washed, marked and bagged at the end of the watching brief and any remedial conservation undertaken.

## **7. Staffing**

The archaeological observation and recording is to be carried out in accordance with the Code of Conduct, Standards, Guidelines and practices of the Institute of Field Archaeologists, and all staff are to be suitably qualified and experienced for their roles in the project. It is recommended that the project be under the direct supervision of a Member or Associate Member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists

## **8. Monitoring**

The archaeological watching brief must be carried out to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning and Architecture, Birmingham City Council, and will be monitored on his behalf by the Planning Archaeologist.

## **9. Reporting**

The results of the archaeological observation and recording are to be presented as a written report, containing appropriate illustrations and a copy of this brief. A copy of the report must be sent to the Planning Archaeologist.

## **10. Archive deposition**

The written, drawn and photographic records of the archaeological watching brief, together with any finds, must be deposited with an appropriate repository within a reasonable time of completion, following consultation with the Planning Archaeologist.

## **11. Publication**

The written report will become publicly accessible, as part of the Birmingham Sites and Monuments Record, within six months of completion. The contractor must submit a short summary report for inclusion in *West Midlands Archaeology* and summary reports to appropriate national period journals.

**DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE  
BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**

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