


Mercian Archaeology

-taking the past into the future

*Archaeological Watching Brief at
The Shoulder of Mutton, St John Street, Bromsgrove,
Worcestershire*

A photograph of a person wearing a blue hard hat and a high-visibility yellow and green safety vest over a grey t-shirt. The person is pointing their right hand towards a brick wall. The wall is made of reddish-brown bricks with some lighter-colored mortar. The text is overlaid on the image in a dark blue, italicized serif font.

*An Archaeological Watching
Brief at The Shoulder of
Mutton, St John Street,
Bromsgrove, Worcestershire*

A Report for the Punch Pub Company

November 2004

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Project: PJ 123

WSM 33945

***Mercian Archaeology** undertake archaeological projects across much of the West Midlands and the Welsh Marches. **We specialise in Historic Building Recording and Analysis.** We also undertake archaeological watching-briefs, evaluation and excavation, desk-based assessment, historic landscape assessment and osteological analysis. We now also carry out historic reconstruction and can produce illustrations for publication, website or interpretative panels.*

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Mercian Archaeology
Flat 1 Malvern House
7 Malvern Road
Worcester WR2 4LE

Martin Cook
Tel:
Mobile: 07850 918755
E-mail: mjcook@globalnet.co.uk

Paul Williams
Tel: 01905 420087
Mobile: 0773 604 1925
E-mail: paulwilliams@mercianarchaeology.co.uk

Fax: 01905 420087

www.mercianarchaeology.co.uk

1. Project Background

1.1. Location of the Site

The historic market town of Bromsgrove is situated off the A38 Birmingham to Bristol road, approximately midway between Birmingham to the north and Worcester to the south (NGR SO 9571 7061). St John Street lies centrally within the town close to the market place and the church of St John the Baptist (Figure 1).

Bromsgrove lies between 95m and 80m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum) in the valley of the Spadesbourne Brook, which flows into the River Salwarpe to the southwest.

1.2. Project Details

A planning application was presented to Bromsgrove District Council for the erection of an extension to the rear of The Shoulder of Mutton public house (B/04/0508). The planning process determined that the proposed development site lies within an area of the town that, due to the close proximity of church and market place, may have developed during the medieval period, it was also thought possible that the area may have been the location of Almshouses, referred to in the early 18th century (WSM 21486). It was determined that there may be buried remains associated with the early development of the town on the site. As a result, the Planning Archaeologist, Worcestershire County Council, placed a ‘watching brief’ planning condition on the application, for which a brief of work was written (WAS 2004).

1.3. Reasons for the Watching Brief

The archaeological watching brief has been suggested as the appropriate response to the threat posed to the potential archaeological site by the development process. This would involve the excavation of foundation and service trenches for the proposed extension.

A watching brief is defined as:

A formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be in a specified area on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed (IFA 1999).

A watching brief at the site was proposed in order that a record of any archaeological remains or deposits encountered during the excavation of the foundations for the building, may be made and placed into context using our current archaeological knowledge of the area.

2. Methods and Process

2.1. Project Specification

- ❑ The project fieldwork conforms to the Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief (IFA 1999).
- ❑ The archive conforms to the standards and guidelines established by the Archaeological Data Service.
- ❑ The project conforms to a brief prepared by the Planning Advisory Section, Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service (WHEAS, 2004) and for which a project proposal and detailed specification was produced (Mercian Archaeology (2004).
- ❑ Mercian Archaeology adhere to the service practice and health and safety policy as contained within the Mercian Archaeology Service Manual (Williams 2003)

2.2. Aims of the Project

The watching brief aimed to:

- ❑ Use the results of the archaeological work to produce a report highlighting: -
 1. The survival and location of any archaeological deposits.
 2. Make an analysis and interpretation of all identified natural and cultural deposits
- ❑ Based on the above, establish the significance, survival, condition and period of the archaeological remains and place them within context at local, regional or national level where relevant.

3. The Documentary Research

3.1. The Topography

The soils in Bromsgrove lie mainly within an area of brown earths of the Crediton association to the north and Bromsgrove association to the south (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Ragg *et al* 1984). The underlying geology consists of Triassic Bromsgrove Sandstone (British Geological Survey 1:50,000, sheet 182), which may be evidenced outcropping around the area, notably in a vertical cliff face to the rear of The Shoulder of Mutton above which, stands The Church of St John the Baptist. The usefulness of the local sandstone as a building material is evidenced in the fabric of many surviving ashlar sandstone walls and buildings in the area. The Shoulder of Mutton and the adjacent building both have much surviving sandstone walling within their fabric.

A Brief Archaeological Overview

The earliest references to Bromsgrove are in 11th century copies of proposed earlier 9th century charters. The place-name appears as *Bremesgraf*. At Domesday the manor is referred to as *Bremesgrave*, this had changed to *Bremmisgrave* by the mid-13th century and by two centuries later Bromsgrove was being written as Bromsgrove. Mawr and Stenton suggest the place-name derives from the old English personal name *Breme*, suggesting *Breme's Grove* (a thicket) (Mawer and Stenton, 1927).

Bromsgrove is set along the Roman road (WSM 03317) from Droitwich to the south and the former Roman centre of Wall in the opposite direction. It has been suggested that Bromsgrove was probably the site of an Anglo-Saxon minster church, which may have been within a fortified settlement, or burh (Buteaux *et al*, 1996).

The present town of Bromsgrove began to take shape during the mid to late 12th century. Bromsgrove was granted the right to hold a weekly market in 1200 a (VCH IV 1913, 20). In 1327 the John de Mortimer was given permission to hold a Tuesday market and fair for three days at the Feast of the Decollation of St John the Baptist. The market and fair has been held ever since (Buteaux *et al* , 1996).

By the early 16th century Bromsgrove had developed into a thriving cloth manufacturing centre, with water taken off the the Spadesbourne Brook and other tributaries of the Salwarpe to power the mills.

When antiquarian John Leland visited the town in the mid-16th century he described it as 'just one street with a good weekly market, which depends to some extent on its cloth trade. (Buteaux *et al*, 1996).

From the 17th century Bromsgrove diversified into nail production, for which it is possibly historically best known. The nail industry continued well into the late 19th century (VCH 1913, 21).

Bromsgrove came into its own in the 19th century, resulting in increased production and population expansion. Nail production, button manufacture, cloth production, glass making and brass founding were all common industries within the town.

The Shoulder of Mutton was apparently built in 1610 as a coaching inn (Hazlehurst 1995, 62) on the busy Bristol to Derby turnpike. The former house next door to the pub bears the date 1674 with the initials RD on the tiebeam, indicating development or redevelopment along St John Street during the early to mid-17th century.

The Shoulder of Mutton is referred to by name in a paper given by W.Cotton to members of the Bromsgrove Institute in 1881. Cotton describes a link between the church and the pub, indicating that much church business takes place on the premises. He also indicates that there was another public house opposite The Shoulder of Mutton called The Leg of Mutton (Cotton 1881).

The present building is not listed, probably as the outside has been altered so much that it was missed during the listing processes. However, the structure contains much 17th century timber-framing and remains of early sandstone walls (Plate 3).

3.2. The Cartography

The earliest available map of the area was the 1840 Tithe Apportionment Map of Bromsgrove WRO: x760/46. The map shows the St John Street frontage built up with the rear property boundaries bordering the churchyard of St John the Baptist (Figure 2). The tithe apportionment makes no reference to The Shoulder of Mutton or a public house within this block, instead the buildings within the whole block are listed as ‘houses and yards owned by the proprietors of the houses of the town of Bromsgrove’ (WRO: BA 1572, f760/45).

Only the small-scale 6” to 1 mile 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1883 was available at the Worcester Records Office. This was limited in detail and of little use (Figure 3).

Cartographic Sources Used

Source	Reference Number
Tithe Apportionment and Map of Bromsgrove (1840)	Worcester Records Office BA 1572 Ref: x760/46 and f760/45
Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 6”. Worcestershire Sheet XV.SE (1883)	Worcester Records Office
Ordnance Survey 2nd Edition 6”. Worcestershire Sheet XV.SE (1903)	Worcester Records Office

Other sources used are referenced within the report.

3.4. The Historic Environment Record Data

Considering the size of Bromsgrove, there has been little archaeological work carried out within the centre of town. Two archaeological watching briefs carried out on the site of the new market hall on the opposite side of St John Street located the remains of 17th century masonry buildings fronting the road (WSM 31097 and WSM 20645; Cook 1994). An excavation carried out in 1960 between St John Street and High Street also identified deposits and features of 17th century and later date (WSM 19661). A further evaluation and watching brief at 8-16 Worcester Road revealed post-medieval deposits and a possible medieval pit (WSM 31883).

4. The Watching Brief

4.1. The Fieldwork Methodology

The watching brief was undertaken on 18th and 19th October July 2004.

The photographic survey was carried out using digital format. A 1-metre scale was used where possible.

Proforma Record Forms were used to record the site stratigraphy in tandem with site notes to produce the final record contained within this report.

The methodology adopted and the favourable working conditions meant that the aims and objectives of the brief could be fully met and the fieldwork was successfully concluded.

4.2. The Fieldwork Results

The watching brief was carried out at the rear of The Shoulder of Mutton following the progress of the ground workers.

The flagged patio area was lifted and hardcore and debris cleared prior to the foundation trenches being excavated.

The foundation trenches were excavated by mini-digger to a maximum depth of around 1.50 metres below the flagged yard (ground level). The exposed profiles revealed a humic garden soil to a depth of around 0.30 metres [101]. This contained several large cobbles that are likely to have once formed part of a cobbled yard, probably for the stable yard at the rear of the former coaching inn. These would have been disturbed and moved during previous development on the site.

The garden soil had been cut through by the foundations of the 1960's-70's rear extension [103] to the pub, the backfill of the foundation trench [102] being indeterminable from the topsoil.

The garden soil sealed a buried soil layer, again very humic and dark brown in colour [104]; there were no cobbles in this layer. This deposit was around 0.35 metres thick and lay over a

disturbed layer [105] containing pockets of redeposited natural (parent material). The natural undisturbed and sterile parent material [106] was encountered at around 1.20 metres below the flagged patio surface. This was of a light to mid-grey clay-marl. The foundation trenches for the new extension cut into this material.

There were no dateable finds recovered from any contexts during the watching brief.

5. Discussion of the Physical and Documentary Evidence

The watching brief determined that there were no significant archaeological features within the area of trenching for the proposed development. The deposits however show evidence of two periods of heavy disturbance, although due to the lack of finds it is not possible to date these events. Layer [105] contained pockets of disturbed natural parent material indicating that there had been digging into the natural at sometime. There were no dateable finds to date the layer of disturbance, but it seems likely that this deposit dates from the 17th century when The Shoulder of Mutton was first built.

This was overlain by a layer of humic soil [104], typical of a garden plot soil. Again there were no dateable finds, but this layer was cut through during the mid 20th century extension work at the pub, indicating it was pre mid-20th century. The topsoil [101] and backfill of the mid-20th century foundation cut [102] contained large cobbles that must have originally been part of a cobbled yard. It is likely that these were part of the yard surface of the stable area at the rear of the pub and probably date from the original 17th century build. These may have been disturbed during the mid-20th century work at the pub, or possibly during much earlier works.

There is no evidence as yet, for the plots on this side of St John Street having been laid out prior to the 17th century. The usual form of long-narrow burgage plots typical of medieval property boundaries is not evident here. This seems likely to be because the sandstone rock face at the rear of The Shoulder of Mutton prevents this form, therefore, evidence for medieval settlement of this block of the historic core of Bromsgrove may only be found by further archaeological investigation, or as is likely, this area was probably developed from the 17th century onwards, when land in the town centre was at a premium.

6. Conclusion

The results of the archaeological watching brief demonstrate that there was no significant archaeological remains or deposits located within the area of trenching. The physical evidence indicates that the site is likely to have been developed from the 17th century. It seems likely that at this time, when undeveloped land within the historic core of Bromsgrove would have been at a premium, long narrow planned plots were replaced by piecemeal infill development on available land.

7. Acknowledgements

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Plates

Plate 1



Shoulder of Mutton from St John Street

Plate 2



The development area at the rear of The Shoulder of Mutton

Plates

Plate 3



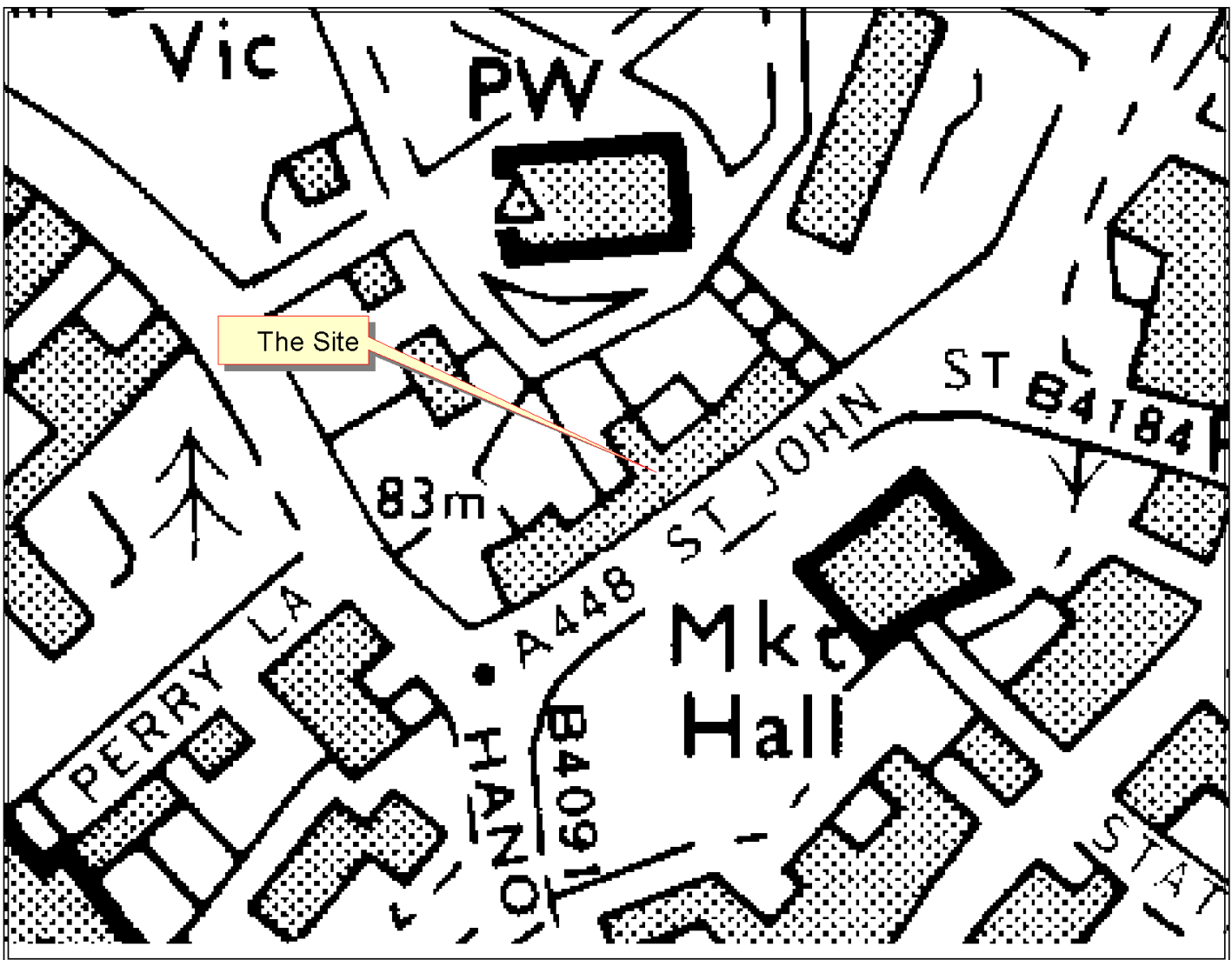
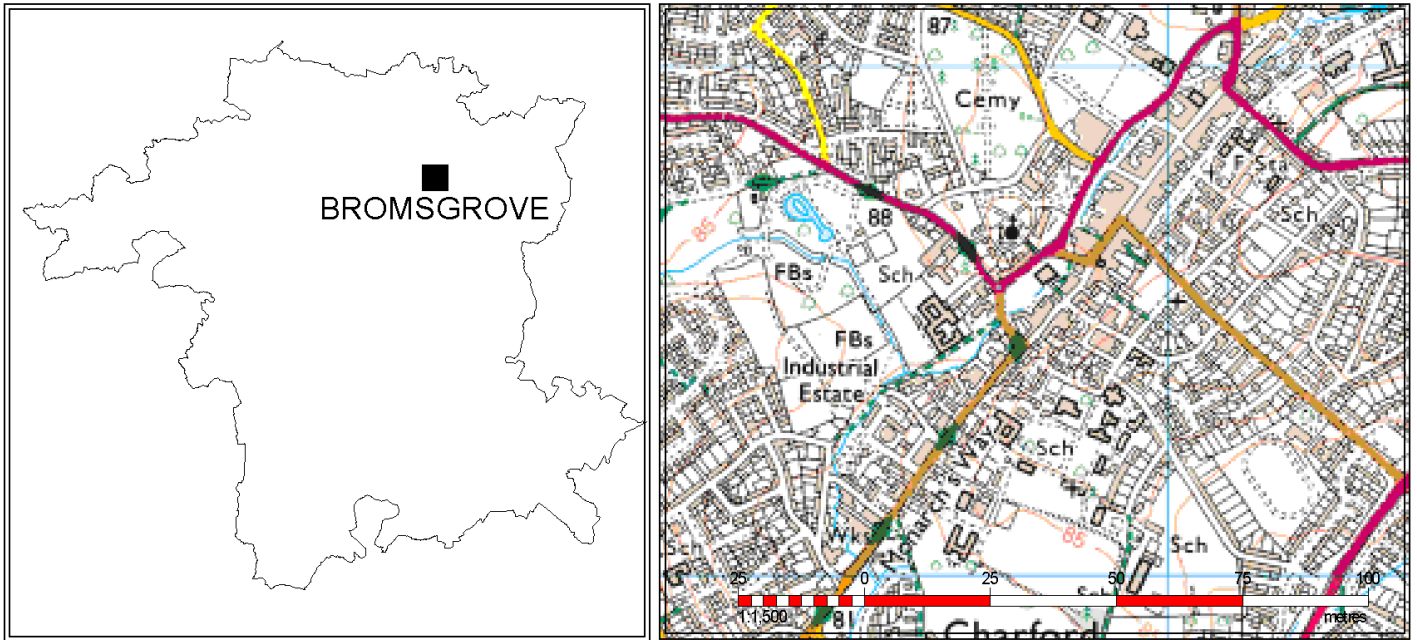
Timber-framing inside the pub

Plate 4



*North-west facing section in the foundation trench for the new build
(See Figure 5)*

Figure 1: Location of the Site



Location of Bewdley, Worcestershire

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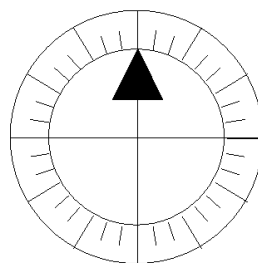


Figure 2: Extract from the Bromsgrove Tithe Map (1840)



The mid-19th century Tithe Apportionment Map for the Parish of Bromsgrove shows the development site to be within plot 2442 (see text).

Unknown scale

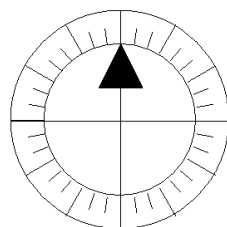
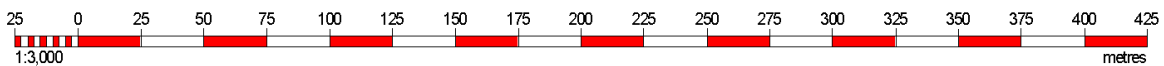
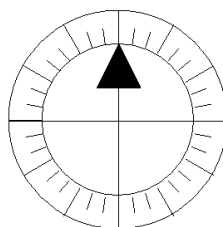


Figure 3: 1st edition Ordnance Survey (1883)



The first edition Ordnance Survey map shows the area on the north-western side of St John Street in similar form as today.



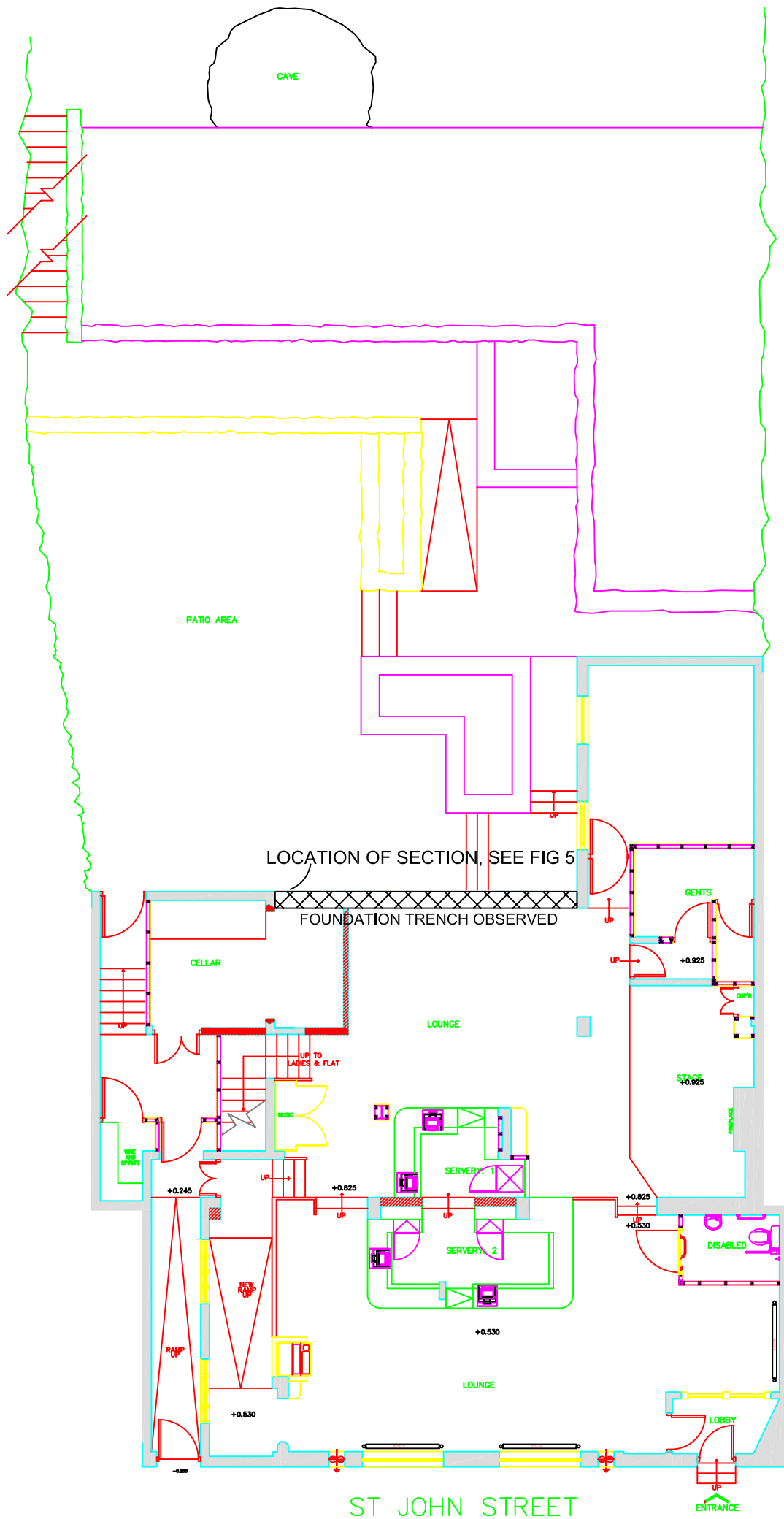
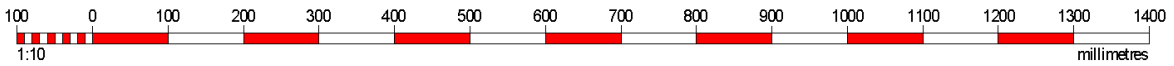
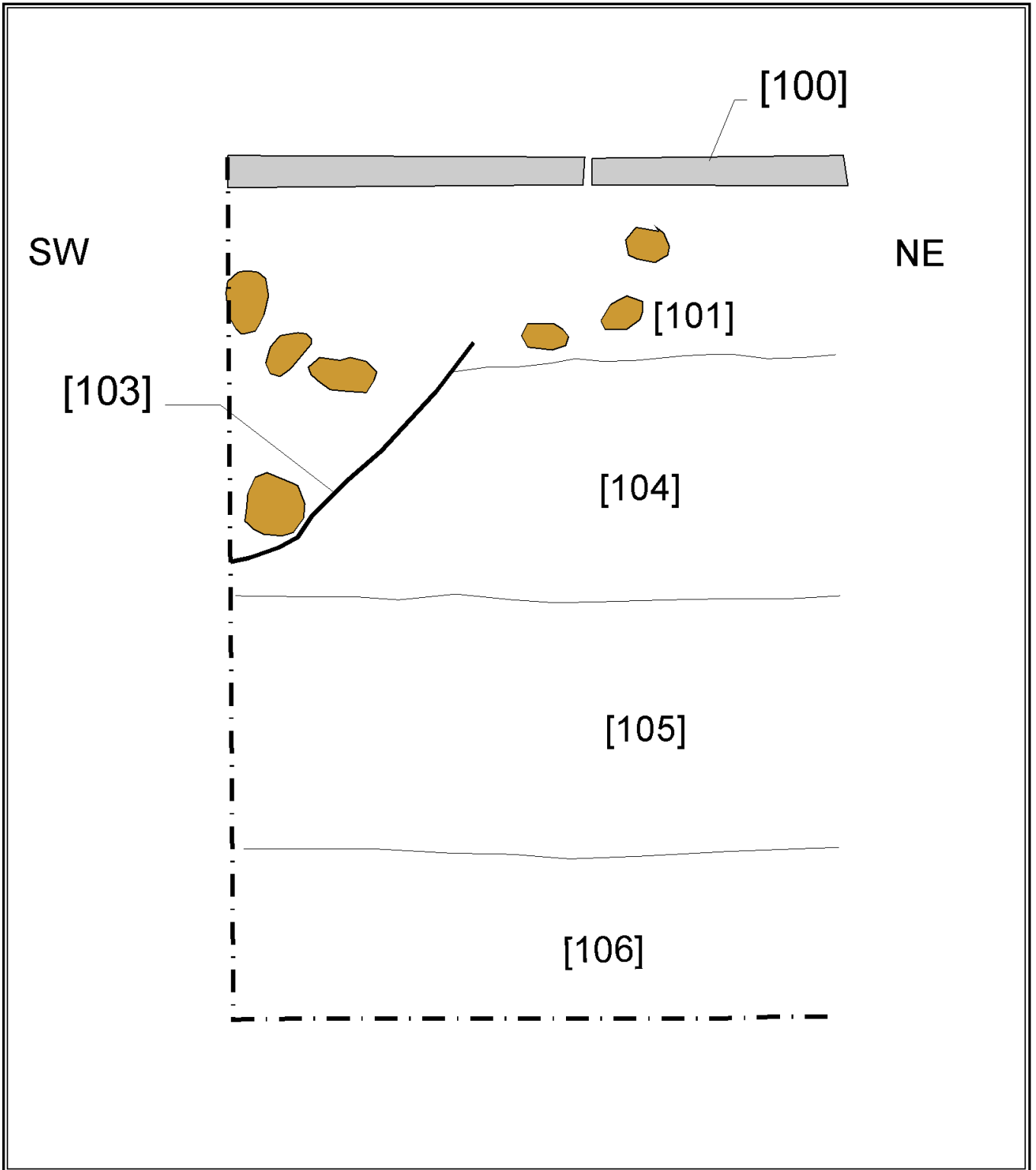


Figure 4: Location of Watching Brief at Rear of The Shoulder of Mutton
(Based on drawings kindly supplied by Creative Design)

Figure 5: NW Facing Section in Foundation Trench



See Figure 4 for location of section

