

ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES  
DURHAM UNIVERSITY

on behalf of  
Anita Hibbitts

The Brown Trout Public House  
Sunnybrow  
Crook  
Co Durham

archaeological building recording

report 5556  
May 2021

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## **1. Summary**

### **The project**

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological recording project conducted in advance of proposed alteration work at the former Brown Trout public house, Sunnybrow, Crook, Co Durham. A photographic and drawn survey at Level 2 has been carried out.
- 1.2 The works were commissioned by Anita Hibbitts and conducted by Archaeological Services Durham University.

### **The building**

- 1.3 The Brown Trout was probably built as a private house around the middle of the 19th century, at the time when Willington Colliery was established. It may have been connected with the pit's coke works. It became a public house before the end of the century; it was called The Joiner's Arms. This name was used until at least the 1970s. After a period of disuse, the pub was re-opened as The Brown Trout. It was closed within the last two years.
- 1.4 The building's materials and design are typical of vernacular houses of the region. The house was modified when it became a pub and it was modernised in recent times. The few original features that survive are the staircase and some window openings.

## 2. Project background

### Location (Figures 1 and 2)

- 2.1 The former Brown Trout public house is on the south-east edge of Sunnybrow, Crook, Co Durham, at Ordnance Survey grid reference NZ 19704 34115.

### Development proposal

- 2.2 Proposals have been drawn up for residential conversion of the disused public house. The planning reference is DM/20/02626/FPA.

### Objective

- 2.3 The objective of the project was to provide a record of the building in its present state. The regional research framework (Petts & Gerrard 2006) contains an agenda for archaeological research in the region, which is incorporated into regional planning policy implementation with respect to archaeology. In this instance, the scheme of works was designed to address agenda item MOvii: Sports and leisure.

### Specification summary

- 2.4 The works have been undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, reference WSI21097, provided by Archaeological Services Durham University and approved by Durham County Council's Archaeology Section. The recording work is at Level 2, as defined in national guidance (English Heritage 2016).

### Dates

- 2.5 The building was examined on 14th April 2021. This report was prepared for May 2021.

### Personnel

- 2.6 Research, survey and report preparation work were carried out by Richard Annis, and the illustrations were prepared by Janine Watson.

### Archive/OASIS

- 2.7 The project archive is currently held by Archaeological Services Durham University and will be transferred to the Archaeology data Service, in accordance with the guidance set out in *Standards for all Building Recording work in County Durham and Darlington*. Archaeological Services Durham University is registered with the Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigationS project (OASIS). The OASIS ID number for this project is **archaeol3-420820**.

## 3. Landuse, topography and geology

### Landuse

- 3.1 The Brown Trout stands on Prospect Place at the south-east end of the village of Sunnybrow. The building covers approximately 164 square metres. The site is surrounded by houses and there is open ground, formerly the site of colliery coke ovens, to the east.

### Site and situation

- 3.2 The house stands at an elevation of 80m OD and faces south-south-east over the steep valley of the Holy Well Burn and the River Wear. The site is roughly level from east to west but has a steep fall from the north to south boundaries.

### **Geology and soils**

- 3.3 The bedrock is mudstone, sandstone and siltstone of the Pennine Lower Coal Measures. These rocks are overlain by glacial till.

## **4. Historical and archaeological development**

- 4.1 Sunnybrow is a pit village that developed around Willington Colliery, a mine that was opened in 1840. Working had ceased by 1919 and the colliery was eventually closed in 1932 (DMM). Its coal was entirely used for coke-making and there were ovens close to the present Brown Trout.
- 4.2 The site was formerly part of Helmington Row township in the parish of Brancepeth. The 1839 tithe map for the township (DULASC) shows open arable land at the site, which was then owned by George Allison and farmed by his tenant, Edward Dixon. Shortly after the tithe survey was completed the area was radically changed by the arrival of the colliery and the pit village. The first edition Ordnance Survey map, surveyed in 1857, shows the Old and New Pits, terraced houses and coke ovens (Figure 3). The present Brown Trout is shown as a detached house with a garden on its south side. It is not marked as a public house. The building may have been connected with the gas works that is shown immediately to the north, which used gas from the coke ovens. The map shows the heapstead of the pit about 75m north-east of the house and five banks of ovens to its east.
- 4.3 The footprint of the building remains unchanged on all later maps (Figure 3). Before the end of the 19th century it had become a public house; it is labelled as the Joiner's Arms on the 1897 map and this name was used until at least the late 1970s. In a curious choice of site, a Temperance Hall was erected beside the east end of the pub, on the south-east side of the present site. A directory entry (Whellan 1894) records that this hall was given to the village by the colliery owners Strakers & Love in 1889. The building is labelled 'Temperance Hall' on the 1920 map but later editions show it simply as 'Hall'. It survived until the second half of the 20th century and its site is now part of the forecourt of the Brown Trout.

## **5. The building (Figure 4)**

### **Exterior**

- 5.1 The building's level site is cut into the natural slope of the valley; the ground to the north is well above the level of its forecourt, while the garden to the south is much lower (Photograph 1). The materials and form of the house are typical of the region. The walls are built of local sandstone with red brick chimney stacks and the low-pitched roof is covered with slate. There is dressed stone in the quoins at the corners of the building and in the window lintels and sills. There is a two-storey outshut extension on the north wall and a lean-to porch, also of two storeys, on the east front (Photograph 2). The large outshut projects slightly beyond the east gable. It is large enough to place the porch and door at the centre of the east face (Photograph 3). A small area of rebuilt stone at the peak of the east gable shows that a chimney has been removed (Photograph 4). The walls are quite plain, with no plinth, offsets, gable coping or kneelers. A small lean-to beside the porch is covered with painted render (Photograph 5). All of the original windows have been replaced with double-glazed uPVC units.

- 5.2 The south front faces a narrow terrace with a retaining wall above the garden. This two-bay face has widely separated windows, with a door at the west end (Photographs 6, 7). Slightly set back from this front is a later lean-to games room extension at the west end; this is built of brick. This has a small blocked window near the north end; the present west window is set into a larger original opening (Photographs 8, 9). A single-storey lean-to passage at the back of the house contains a bricked-up back door (Photograph 10). The old back passage is now abutted by a modern kitchen with random sandstone walls and a flat roof (Photograph 11).
- 5.3 Unconnected with the former Brown Trout, but an important part of Sunnybrow's history, is a plaque attached to the fence outside the pub's south door. This is the original inscription from the memorial that stands a short distance to the east of the house. It was removed in 2017 when the memorial was refurbished and a new version of the plaque was installed. The inscription commemorates the Rocking Strike of 1863, in which miners fought against unfair practices by mine owners regarding the measurement of, and payment for, individual tubs of coal brought up from the workings. It is also a memorial to local men who died while working in the mines. It reads
- WEAR VALLEY DISTRICT COUNCIL / ERECTED TO COMMEMORATE THE ROCKING STRIKE / OF 1863 WHICH WAS THE FORERUNNER / OF THE CHECKWEIGH SYSTEM / IN THE COLLIERIES OF COUNTY DURHAM / AND / IN MEMORY OF THE MEN AND BOYS KILLED / IN THE MINES OF SUNNYBROW, BRANCEPETH AND OAKENSHAW / UNVEILED 19TH MARCH 1976 BY / J. GORMLEY, O.B.E. / PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF MINeworkERS

### **The ground floor**

- 5.4 The door at the east end leads to a passage with an open well staircase, now boxed in, leading to a flat on the first floor (Photograph 12). There is a hatch on the south side of the lobby that opens into the rendered lean-to at the end of the bar; this was used for off-sales and, as local people remember, for selling ice-creams.
- 5.5 The bar has been refurbished in recent years ago and, as is often the case with old public houses, internal walls have been partly removed. This work has created a large L-shaped bar area on the south and west side of the building (Photographs 13, 14). The only older features here are the panelled folding shutters in the east and south windows (Photograph 15). The off-sales hatch is served by the lean-to extension at the west end of the bar (Photograph 16). The north wall in the back part of the bar is hidden by later fixtures and the kitchen door (Photograph 17). The altered chimney breast contains a cast-iron grate and a cylindrical oven; these have been brought from elsewhere and are not functional (Photographs 18, 19).
- 5.6 The modern kitchen incorporates the older passage, which is now a store (Photographs 20, 21). The brick-built games room at the west end is equally plain inside (Photograph 22). There are a few old features in the staircase hall, separated by a panelled arch from the back part of the bar. Though the open-string stair is now boxed in, some moulded tread ends can be seen (Photograph 23). The changes here were almost certainly the result of the creation of a pub from an existing house, and the need to separate public areas from private accommodation upstairs. Modern finishes conceal the walls in the toilets at the north-east side and the only visible feature is the reduced east window (Photograph 24).

### **The first floor**

- 5.7 The landing shows something of the original appearance of the house, with its narrow well stair, panelled window openings and elliptical arch to the western rooms (Photographs 25-27). The large and fairly plain south-eastern living room has panelled shutters and a shallow chimney breast, its south recess now boarded over (Photographs 28-30). The adjoining bedroom is similar, and in both rooms the original fireplaces have gone (Photographs 31, 32). The back bedroom has been subdivided in recent times to create a small store; the remaining L-shaped room has a blind chimney breast and a modern window at the north-west corner (Photographs 33, 34). The upper rooms in the northern outshot have lower floors and sloping ceilings. They are now used as the bathroom and kitchen of the flat (Photographs 35, 36).

### **The cellar**

- 5.8 A single large room under the south-east part of the bar has a narrow store and a stair on its north side (Photograph 37). The wall between cellar and store is stone while the other is brick. It is possible that the cellar was remodelled after the house became a pub. At the same time, a barrel drop was created on the east side of the main room. This is more sophisticated than the plain shafts seen in many small pubs, as it has a ramp with steel rails and a set of steps at the centre (Photograph 38).

## **6. Conclusions**

- 6.1 The Brown Trout was probably built as a private house around the middle of the 19th century, at the time when Willington Colliery was established. It may have been connected with the pit's coke works. It became a public house before the end of the century; it was called The Joiner's Arms. This name was used until at least the 1970s. After a period of disuse, the pub was refurbished and re-opened as The Brown Trout. It closed within the last two years.
- 6.2 The building's materials and design are typical of vernacular houses of the region. The house was modified when it became a pub and it was modernised in recent times. The few original features that survive are the staircase and some window openings.

## **7. Sources and references**

DMM *Willington Colliery, also known as Sunnybrow Colliery*. Durham Mining Museum website, online at <http://www.dmm.org.uk/colliery/w048.htm>

DULASC Tithe plan and apportionment for the township of Helmington Row. Durham University Library Archives and Special Collections reference DDR/EA/TTH/1/122.

Whellan, 1894 *History, topography and directory of of the County Palatine of Durham*. London: Ballantyne, Hanson & Co.



## Appendix: Catalogue of archive photographs

The photographs were taken by Richard Annis on 14th April 2021, using a Nikon D3300 DSLR camera. Digital filenames are 01-38\_Sunnybrow\_Brown\_Trout\_5556.

No	Subject	Looking
1	The house stands on a sloping site with the front garden well below the level of the terrace. A view looking west	W
2	The substantial two-storey rear outshut at the middle of this view does not run the full length of the building	SW
3	A view of the east face of the pub, with the projecting porch and stair window	W
4	The peak of the east gable has been rebuilt after the removal of a chimney stack	W
5	The south-east corner of the building and the later lean-to beside the porch. The steel doors of the barrel drop can be seen, lower right	NW
6	The front of the house and the terrace, seen from the south-east	NW
7	As elsewhere, the masonry and design of the south front is very simple. A view looking north-east	NE
8	The brick-built games room at the west end of the building	NE
9	The west end of the games room has a small blocked opening at the extreme left and a reduced window opening at the centre	NE
10	The north-west corner of the building, showing modernised windows and the bricked-up door of the rear passage	SE
11	The kitchen extension at the rear of the building runs up to the end of the old outshut	SW
12	A view looking through the Brown Trout's east door. The stairs to the flat are behind the door at the right	W
13	The bar, seen from the south-west corner; the extent of opening-up of the internal walls can be seen here	NE
14	A view looking west along the front part of the bar. The chimney breast at the far end is a modern feature, with the door to the games room to its right	W
15	Panelled shutters on the east window of the bar	NE
16	A view looking east behind the bar counter. The cupboard at the far end is in the lean-to extension	E
17	The back part of the bar and the door to the kitchen. A view looking north-west	NW
18	Both of the chimney breasts in the west wall of the bar have been altered	SW
19	An old grate and cylindrical oven have been installed for decorative effect in the back part of the bar	NW
20	A view looking south-west from the kitchen. The space beside the door is the old back passage of the original house	SW
21	A view from the bar across the rear passage into the kitchen	NW
22	The brick games room at the west end of the pub. A view looking south	S
23	Moulded tread ends on the exposed stairs in the hall.	NW
24	The east window in the outshut has been reduced in size to serve the women's' toilets	SW
25	A view looking east across the landing	E
26	The panelled window in the porch extension. The moulded brackets at the top corners are not original	NE

No	Subject	Looking
27	The landing and the plain banister rail seen from the east end. The hatch at the right opens into the sitting room	W
28	The living room, seen from the doorway at the north-west corner	SE
29	Hinges can be seen on the folding shutter of the east window in the sitting room	SE
30	The chimney breast in the east wall of the same room. A change in the shade of the wallpaper left of the fireplace shows where a recess beside the breast has been covered over	SW
31	The bedroom has panelled window splays like those seen elsewhere in the building	SW
32	The east side of the window has a shutter that has been firmly screwed open, as can be seen here	SE
33	The altered back bedroom, seen from the door. The chimney breast has no fireplace. The darker green wall at the right is the corner of the inserted store room	NW
34	A modern window at the north-west corner of the back bedroom	NW
35	The bathroom floor is well below that of the landing, where this photograph was taken from	NE
36	The kitchen at the east end of the outshut's upper floor	NW
37	A view looking north-west across the cellar. The staircase is behind the wall beside the fire extinguisher	NW
38	The east wall of the cellar and the barrel drop	SE



Photograph 1: The house stands on a sloping site with the front garden (left) well below the level of the terrace. A view looking west



Photograph 2: The substantial two-storey rear outshut at the middle of this view does not run the full length of the building



Photograph 3: A view of the east face of the pub, with the projecting porch and stair window



Photograph 4: The peak of the east gable has been rebuilt after the removal of a chimney stack



Photograph 5 (above): The south-east corner of the building and the later lean-to beside the porch. The steel doors of the barrel drop can be seen, lower right



Photograph 6 (left): The front of the house and the terrace, seen from the south-east



Photograph 7 (left): As elsewhere, the masonry and design of the south front is very simple. A view looking north-east



Photograph 8 (below): The brick-built games room at the west end of the building



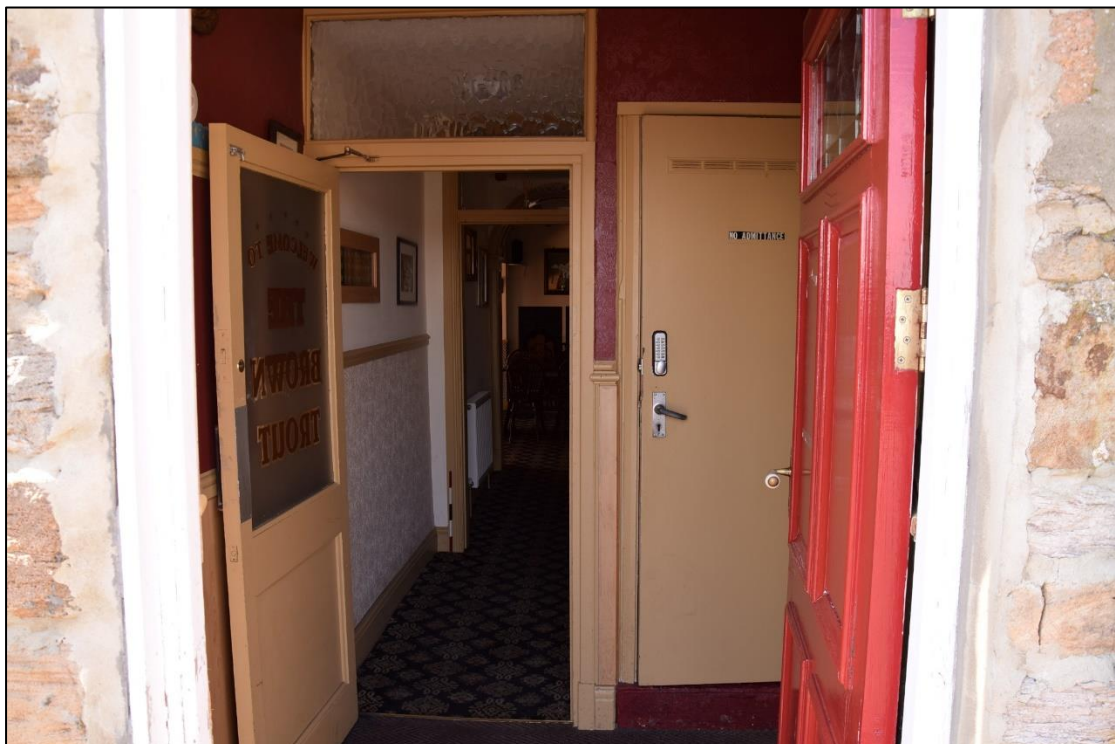
Photograph 9: The west end of the games room has a small blocked opening at the extreme left and a reduced window opening at the centre



Photograph 10: The north-west corner of the building, showing modernised windows and the bricked-up door of the rear passage



Photograph 11: The kitchen extension at the rear of the building runs up to the end of the old outshut



Photograph 12: A view looking through the Brown Trout's east door. The stairs to the flat are behind the door at the right





Photograph 13: The bar, seen from the south-west corner; the extent of opening-up of the internal walls can be seen here



Photograph 14: A view looking west along the front part of the bar. The chimney breast at the far end is a modern feature, with the door to the games room to its right



Photograph 15 (left): Panelled shutters on the east window of the bar

Photograph 16 (below): A view looking east behind the bar counter. The cupboard at the far end is in the lean-to extension





Photograph 17: The back part of the bar and the door to the kitchen. A view looking north-west



Photograph 18: Both of the chimney breasts in the west wall of the bar have been altered



Photograph 19: An old grate and cylindrical oven have been installed for decorative effect in the back part of the bar



Photograph 20: A view looking south-west from the kitchen. The space beside the door is the old back passage of the original house



Photograph 21: A view from the bar across the rear passage into the kitchen



Photograph 22: The brick games room at the west end of the pub. A view looking south



Photograph 23 (above):  
Moulded tread ends on the  
exposed stairs in the hall.



Photograph 24 (left): The east  
window in the outshot has  
been reduced in size to serve  
the women's' toilets



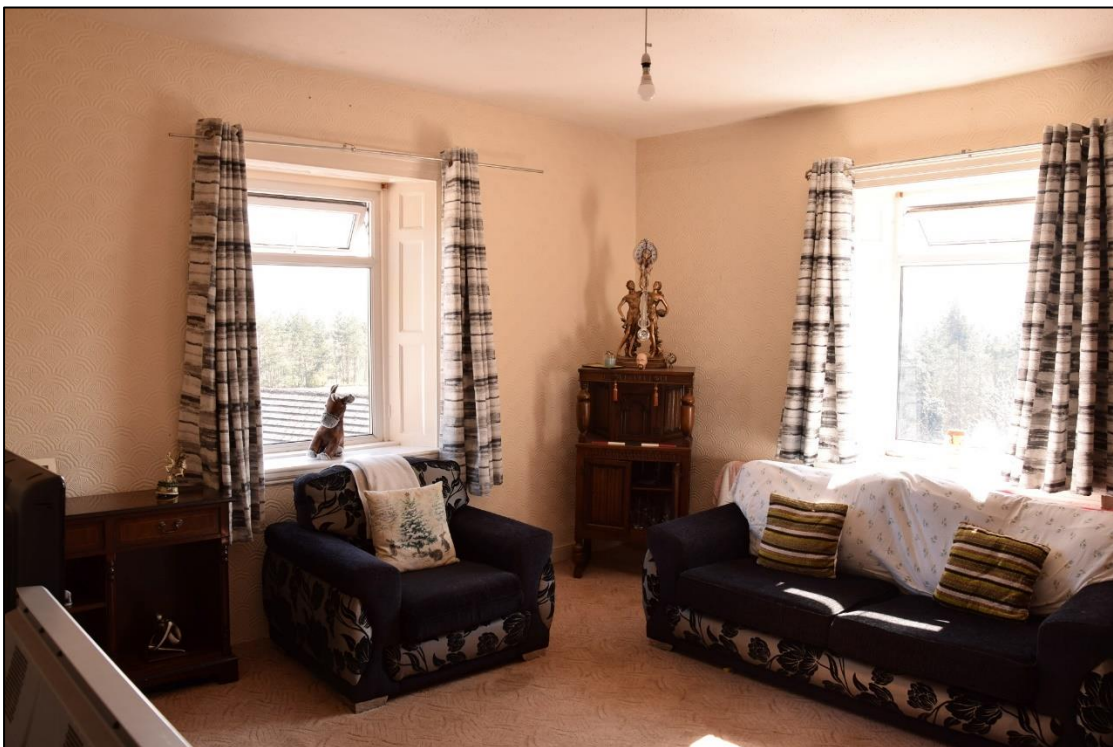
Photograph 25: A view looking east across the landing



Photograph 26: The panelled window in the porch extension. The moulded brackets at the top corners are not original



Photograph 27: The landing and the plain banister rail seen from the east end. The hatch at the right opens into the sitting room

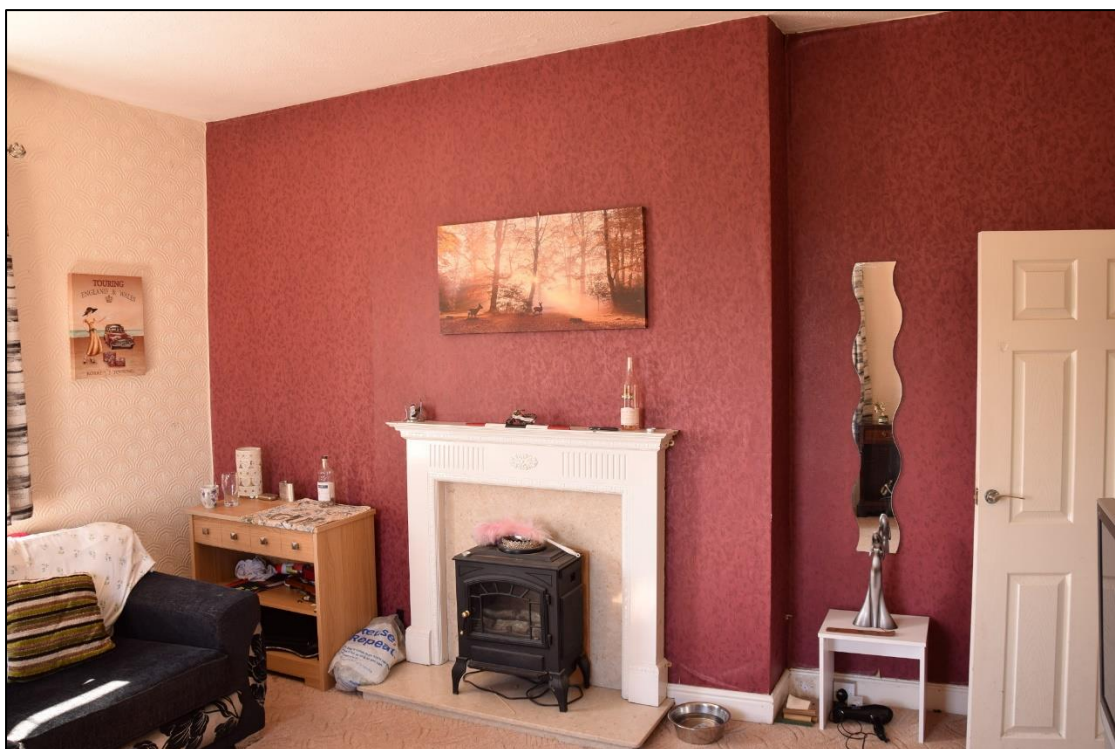


Photograph 28: The living room, seen from the doorway at the north-west corner





Photograph 29 (left): Hinges can be seen on the folding shutter of the east window in the sitting room



Photograph 30 (below): The chimney breast in the east wall of the same room. A change in the shade of the wallpaper left of the fireplace shows where a recess beside the breast has been covered over



Photograph 31 (above): The bedroom has panelled window splays like those seen elsewhere in the building



Photograph 32 (left): The east side of the window has a shutter that has been firmly screwed open, as can be seen here



Photograph 33 (left): The altered back bedroom, seen from the door. The chimney breast has no fireplace. The darker green wall at the right is the corner of the inserted store room

Photograph 34 (below): A modern window at the north-west corner of the back bedroom





Photograph 35: The bathroom floor is well below that of the landing, where this photograph was taken from



Photograph 36: The kitchen at the east end of the outshut's upper floor



Photograph 37: A view looking north-west across the cellar. The staircase is behind the wall beside the fire extinguisher




Photograph 38: The east wall of the cellar and the barrel drop

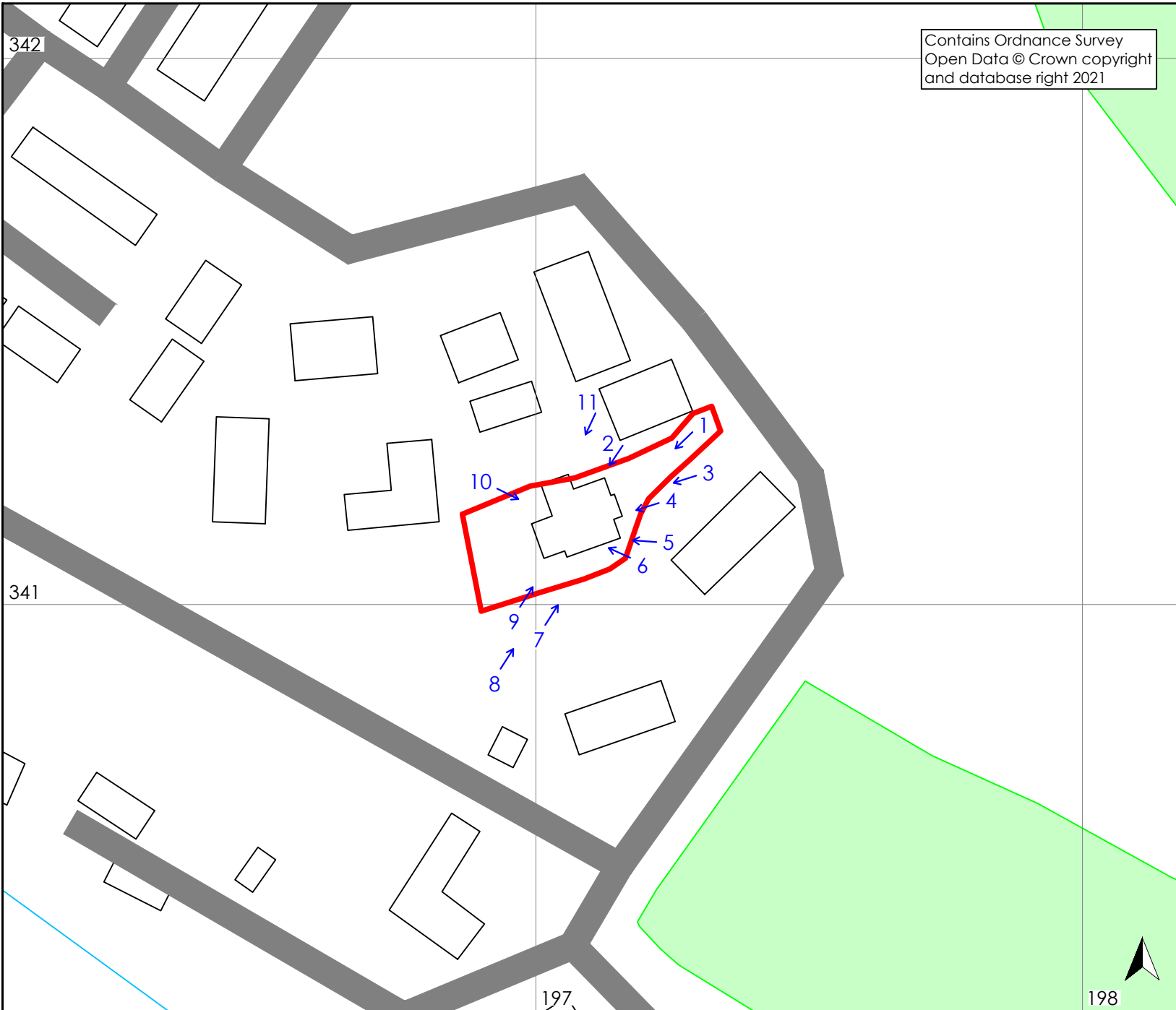
Figure 1: Site location

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 site boundary

0 1km  
scale 1:20 000 for A4 plot



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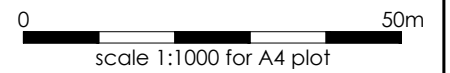
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
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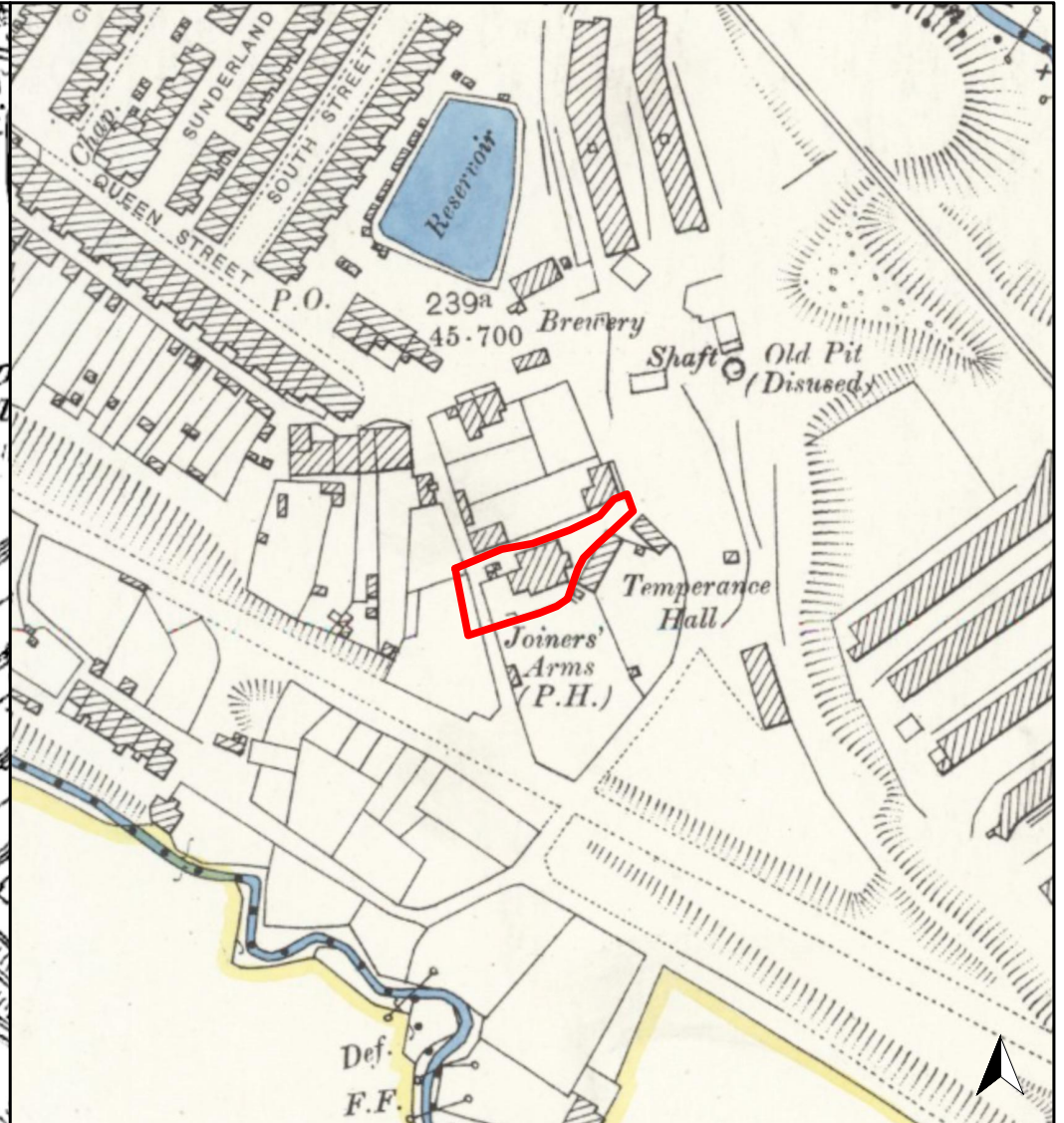
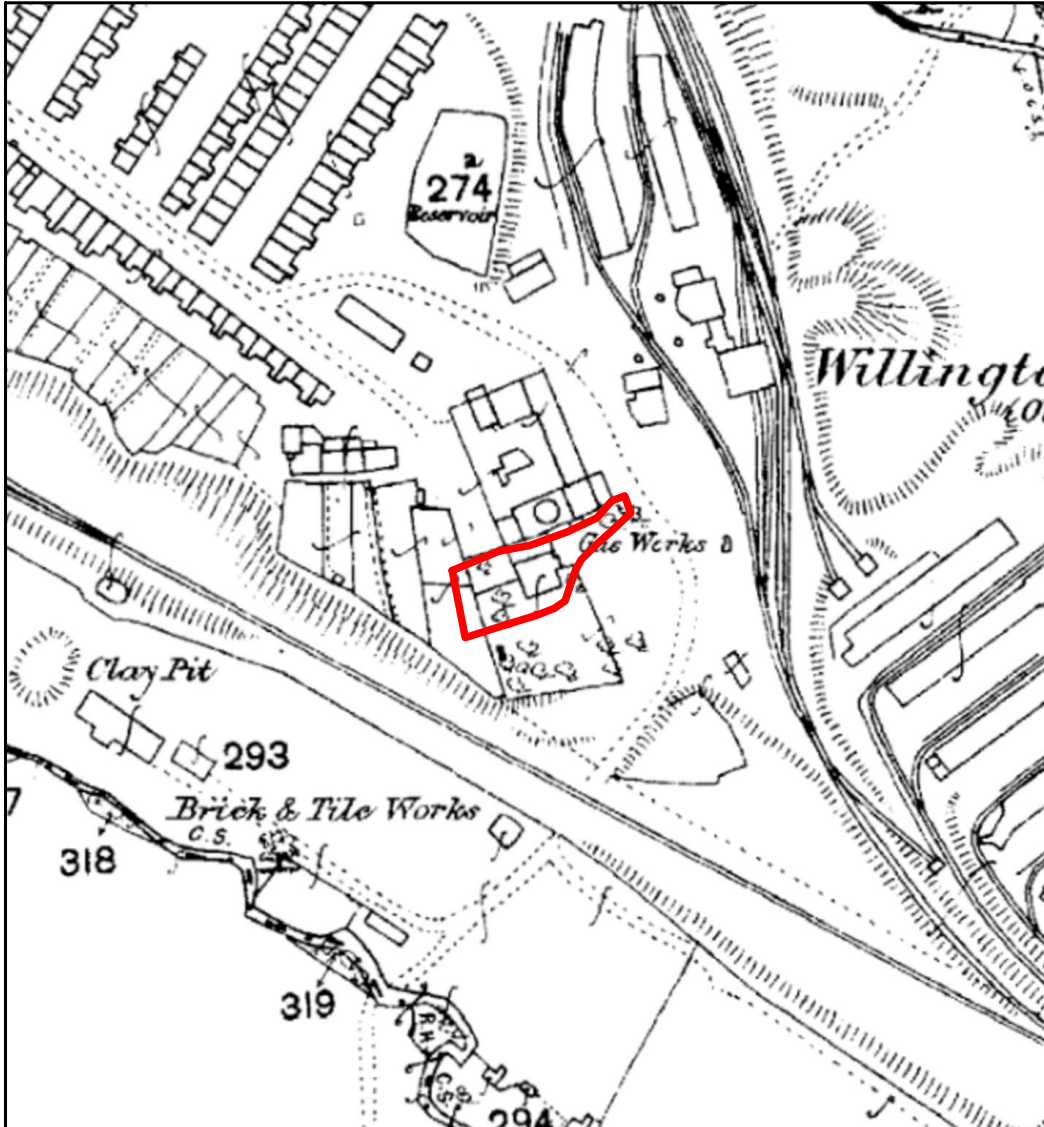
Figure 2: The site and the building



-  site boundary
-  photograph



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Figure 3: Extracts from the 1874 (left) and 1897  
Ordnance Survey maps showing the building

 site boundary

0 100m  
scale 1:2000 for A4 plot



