



7-11 Brookend Street Ross on Wye HEREFORDSHIRE

*Archaeological Trial Trenching
and Building Appraisal*



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EXCAVATION • RESEARCH • GEOPHYSICS • ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY

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Cover picture

7-11 Brookend Street, Ross on Wye

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7-11 Brookend Street,
Ross-on-Wye,
Herefordshire

**Archaeological Trial Trenching
and Building Appraisal**

Text

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Trial Trenching

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Building Appraisal

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Ross-on-Wye,
HEREFORDSHIRE**
NGR SO 6005 2439
***Archaeological Trial Trenching
and Building Appraisal***

1. Summary

Archaeological Investigations Ltd was commissioned by Turley Associates on behalf of Aldi Supermarkets to undertake trial trenching and building appraisal on the site at Brookend Street in Ross on Wye.

Investigations on the site were hampered by the considerable amount of ground water present; encountered on the western (street frontage) side of the site at about 1.4m, and at the eastern side of the site at about 1.8 – 2m in the northern corner (Trench F).

Trench B, in the north-east part of the site revealed a layer, comprising iron slag and charcoal and containing pottery of 13th century date. No features were present and it is possible that the layer of iron working debris was deposited in order to raise the area above flood levels. Trench D in the south-western part of the site contained a recent footing, filled with mortar and other building debris – chiefly brick and pantiles. Other trenches showed evidence of the ground having been raised in the post-medieval period, with 2m of late 19th /early 20th century rubbish deposited at the western side of the site. At this depth water began to seep into the trench and it was necessary to halt excavation.

Although archaeological features were not seen the presence of a quantity of iron working debris, including hammerscale, suggested that smithing had taken place in the immediate area. Pottery associated with this material was dated to the 13th century and pottery of similar date from the layer sealing this material suggested that it was deposited soon afterwards, though it is possible that it was used as a levelling deposit, rather than representing iron working in situ.

Building appraisal was also carried out on the site, but was limited due to problems gaining access to the properties.

2. Introduction

Archaeological investigations Ltd was commissioned by Turley Associates on behalf of Aldi Supermarkets to undertake trial trenching and building recording on the above site. A planning application has been submitted to Herefordshire Council to develop the site as an Aldi supermarket with car parking. The proposed works may have affected a site of archaeological significance. In line with Planning Policy Guidance Note 16, sections 21 & 22 the Planning Authority was advised that a programme of archaeological work was required, taking the form of an archaeological evaluation and an appraisal of the buildings on the site. A meeting on site with Julian Cotton, Archaeological Advisor for Herefordshire District Council, addressed the various logistical challenges presented by the site.

The site (Fig. 1) lay on the northern edge of the town centre of Ross-on-Wye and on the western side of Brookend Street. At the time of the investigations it was mixed use, with the majority of the site occupied by a car sales, repair and valeting business, consisting of a number of buildings and tarmac surfaces, and the remainder by a terrace of derelict houses and their gardens. An electricity substation and part of the lawn of Millbrook House also fell within the boundaries of the development. The extent to which archaeology has been preserved within the area of the site under investigation was not known. The area was fairly flat and lay at a height of approximately 33m OD. The south-eastern edge of the area fronted onto Brookend Street. The south-western and north-western perimeters were bordered by car parking for the public swimming baths. The north-eastern area adjoined Millbrook house. The underlying geology consists of alluvium over Brownstones of the Old Red Sandstone Formation.

3. Historical and archaeological Background

The area was intensively occupied during the Roman period, and lay just to the east of the Roman town of Ariconium with Roman coins found in the area. The Domesday Book mentions the presence of a settlement/s with a mill at Ross by 1086. A priest is also mentioned, implying the presence of a church (Thorn and Thorn 1983). This may imply two settlement *foci*, one around the church and another at the site of the mill, but this theory has not been tested (Druce 1980, 9). The manor was owned by the canons of Hereford and in the early 12th century there was active promotion of growth of towns within their lands. In the long term Ross proved to be one of the most successful. A weekly market was granted in *c.* 1140 and was been maintained thereafter (Buteux 1995, 2).

Ross thrived in the medieval period, though was less prosperous than either Ledbury or Bromyard, and the surviving 1277 Rent Roll of the Bishop of Hereford has been interpreted to show that all of Brookend was built up from the market place to the mill (Hughes and Hurley 1999, 16-7). The parish map of 1823 (Fig. 2) may show the layout of medieval burgage plots in this part of the town.

By the beginning of the 14th century the town may have begun to decline, as no representatives were sent to parliament in 1305 due to a lack of resources to pay them with. The Black Death and raids from Wales led to further decline in the later 14th century. However, Ross managed to survive as a market town through the anxious times of the 14th

century and by 1500 was one of only nine market towns in the county. By 1600 it was the only market centre south of Hereford and became the main wool market in the region. Transport improvements in the 18th century meant that Ross-on Wye became a hub and increasing interest in areas of natural beauty meant that it became a tourist centre for the Wye Valley (Buteux, 2-3).

By the 19th century Brookend Street had become known for its poverty and poor living conditions, being described as “the Wretched End of Town” (Druce 1988, 9). In 1872 the *Ross Gazette* referring to Brookend, stated that “the lower part of the town [was] in a bad state. Something like 150 people had had notices to remove nuisances, pigsties, privies and attend to their bad drains” (Druce 1988). A large number of these people may have lived in back courts such as Clarkes Row, Townsend Row and Batts Gardens. The First Edition Ordnance Survey of 1888-9 (Fig. 3) shows numbers 7 and 9 present on the street frontage, but the remainder of the Site was occupied by a farm, farmyard and orchards. The site itself remained open and “the rich smell of cow and pig dung that came from some old sheds that until 1906 stood where there is now a large garage [Butchers]. Until their removal these particular sheds were part of a small farm here whose fields and orchard were almost entirely within the town’s boundaries”.

In 1902 the Ross Electric Light and Power Company built a generating station on part of the Site, near where a sub-station still stands (Morris 1980, 101).

Major changes to the Site took place in 1910 when George and William Butcher demolished their existing bicycle shop, The Motor House at 10 Brookend Street and rebuilt it as a car showroom (Ward 2005, 74). This building survives, as does the business, now trading as Gardner Butcher. In 1910 one of the buildings of the garage was used for the construction of an aeroplane (Druce 1988, 41) (Fig. 4), but despite all efforts it would not become airborne and the engine and propellor were eventually used to turn a rowing boat into a speedboat (Druce 1980, 106)! The 3rd Edition OS map (1929) (Fig. 5) shows a similar layout to today.

The Butchers’ advertisement, giving 24-26 Brookend Street as their address, indicates that the street numbering has changed since that date.

No previous archaeological work has been done on the Site. It is believed that archaeological work has taken place on the adjacent site of 12 Brookend Street within the last couple of years, but no results from this excavation could be obtained. Also the now demolished 6 Brookend Street (immediately adjacent to the south of the Site) was described as of 17th-century date, of two or more storeys, timber-framed and re-fronted in the 18th century (RCHME 1932, 165).

4. Aims and Objectives

The project was thought likely to produce results that are of local/regional archaeological importance.

The main aim of the project was to enable archaeological features to be identified in the areas affected by the proposal.

The main objective of the work was to identify the date and nature of features being investigated and to assess the survival, quality, condition and relative significance of any archaeological features, deposits and structures, both below and above-ground within the study area. A further aim was to produce a record of the features, and deposit an ordered site archive in a recognised depository.

5. Method

Trial Trenching

Six trenches were excavated in total (Fig. 6), providing approximately 2% coverage of the site, a percentage agreed with the County Planning Archaeologist as a result of constraints upon the size and position of the trenches. These included the position of known services (Trench E) a concrete slab (Trench F) access to the garages and the position of a borehole (Trench C) and of trees and shrubs (Trench D). In practice the depth of the trenches was determined by the depth at which ground water flowed into the trench. The depth of ground water was not established in Trench C as excavation ceased at c1m (31.87mOD) as a result of the discovery of hydrocarbon contamination. On the street frontage the depth at which ground water was established was approximately 31.50mOD, at the north-western end of the site it was approximately 31.30mOD.

Trenches were excavated by machine until the inflow of ground-water made further excavation impracticable. As a result of this condition it was not possible to carry out hand cleaning or excavation. Photographs were taken throughout on 35mm colour and black and white film. Trench plans were drawn at a scale of 1:50 where archaeological features were not present and at 1:20 in the case of the culvert in Trench C. Although archaeological deposits were present in Trench B and their depth beneath the ground surface established no features or structures were seen.

Building Survey

Photographs and record shots were taken of both interiors and exteriors of standing buildings. Investigative work took place to ascertain whether the current finish masked older structures. An account was produced characterising the standing buildings and identifying points of interest.

6. Results

6.1 Trial Trenching (Fig. 7)

Trench A

Trench A was positioned adjacent to a garage and close to the frontage of the site (Fig. 6). It measured 2.5m square and was aligned approximately north-east/south-west. It was excavated to approximately 1.4m in depth (31.42mOD) at which point a considerable amount of water flowed into the trench.

The upper surface lay above a considerable amount of brick rubble, some of the bricks showed no evidence of having been used, while others appeared to have been whitewashed. No archaeological features were present in this trench but a post-medieval brick surface lay in the northwestern corner of the trench 0.9m beneath the existing ground surface (31.92mOD). It is possible that it may have been a basement backfilled with bricks. As such it is likely that it would have been susceptible to flooding.

Trench B

Trench B measured 5.5m in length and 2.3m in width and was aligned approximately north-west/south-east. It was positioned in the garden of Brookend House. The topsoil was a brown silt loam, probably imported, approximately 0.3m deep and lying above a 0.2m deep mixed layer of topsoil and building rubble. This in turn sealed a 0.3m thick layer of building debris, including plaster and lime mortar with fragments of brick and tile. A robbed out wall was probably associated with this, on a slightly more northerly alignment, more or less parallel with neighbouring Brookend House.

Beneath the rubble was a layer of thick brown silt (103) containing occasional pieces of iron slag and pottery dating from the 13th to the 16th centuries. The layer beneath this (104) contained 13th to 15th century pottery but consisted mainly of iron working debris, including slag and burnt furnace lining. It lay at a level of 32.1mOD. Charcoal and hammerscale were also present. The presence of flake hammerscale suggests that the process involved was smithing, with a high temperature suggested by the shiny nature of the material.

At this point it was unfortunately necessary to cease excavation as a result of water flooding into the trench (32.1mOD). However, immediately before the trench was backfilled a further sample of 104, and of the deposit beneath it (106) was taken using the machine. This contained similar material to 104, but with a higher proportion of charcoal. The fact that industrial dumping continued to some depth may suggest that iron working took place in the immediate area.

Trench C

Beneath the modern surface the line of a culvert was immediately visible. This was partially capped with a concrete slab. The walls, approximately 0.3m wide, were built of stone, bonded with a cream/pink mortar. The internal width of the feature was 1.6m, with the fill a dark greenish grey organic silt. A small trial hole revealed that the deposit continued approximately 1.3m outside the trench to the north-east. Excavation to the east of the culvert revealed a stone surface approximately 1.5m below the present ground surface (31.6mOD). It was briefly cleaned and proved to be of slabby sandstone. It had acted as an impermeable surface which had trapped a quantity of oil or diesel. Excavation of this trench was therefore abandoned without further features being encountered.

Trench D

Trench D, situated in the former garden for Number 7 Brookend Street, was aligned north/south, measuring 5m in length and about 2m in width. It was excavated to a depth of 1.5m (31.24mOD) before water flowed into the trench.

The upper deposit in the trench was a loose, loamy black topsoil approximately 0.50m deep and probably garden soil. The subsoil beneath it was less loamy and was 0.4m deep. Beneath it was a mid brown sandy silt, present to the level at which water flowed into the trench.

Two features were recorded. The first of these was a footing or drain, of rough, unfaced stone, aligned east/west and present in the bottom of the trench – approximately 1.3m (31.44mOD) beneath the modern ground surface. No dating evidence was recovered from this feature, and no surfaces were associated with it, making it seem more likely that it was a drain than a wall. It lay at a slightly lower level than the surface identified in Trench C (31.6mOD) and, if it was indeed a drain, may have been associated with the farm known to have been present on the site until the early 20th century.

Of recent date was a robbed out wall, aligned north-east/south-west. It was about 0.5m wide and its foundation was filled with mortar, brick rubble and slate.

No further features were present in Trench D.

Trench E

Trench E was the north-westernmost to be excavated and was aligned approximately north-north-east/south-south-west. It was 5m long and 2.3m wide and was excavated to a depth of 2.2m (30.9mOD) where it was abandoned as a result of water flowing into the trench.

Beneath the tarmac and aggregate surface of the trench (0.2m) was a layer of topsoil 0.25m thick, clearly used to seal the deposit beneath. This consisted of ash, mortar and other rubble, to a depth of 2m beneath the present ground surface (31.10mOD). Pottery from this deposit dated to the late 19th – 20th centuries and debris recovered from the trench included ornate electric light switches also suggesting a late date for this material. No edges for the feature containing this material were identified and it is possible that rather than being the fill of an ash pit this rubbish was used as levelling material.

Beneath this modern material was a layer of brown silt clay. A sample of this material was removed from the base of the trench and examined. It was found to contain brick, suggesting a post-medieval date, but no pottery was found in the sample examined. Excavation ceased at this point as a result of water flooding into the trench.

Trench F

The final trench to be excavated, Trench F, was aligned north-west/south-east, with the alignment having been changed from that of the original project design to avoid damage to a concrete slab. The trench was 5m long and about 1.7m wide. It was excavated to a total depth of 1.8m (31.3mOD). The surface comprised a layer of tarmac, 0.10m deep, beneath which was a layer of hardcore 0.2m deep. Underneath this was a 0.35m layer of black ash/clinker, possibly a former surface, with a layer of clay beneath from which no pottery was recovered but modern clear glass suggested a recent date. A 0.2m thick layer of red brown clay with considerable building debris, including brick and mortar lay beneath. The last deposit to be encountered was a further brown clay, containing pottery of 18th century or slightly later date.

6.2 Building recording

The original building consisted of a terrace of three buildings with a through passage to the rear of the properties. The main fabric of the row of “two up two down cottages” remains virtually intact despite the many alterations and additions. Constructed in red brick with stone

lintels and steps the building retains many original features within the external fabric (figs. 8 and 9).

The first floor elevation retains four original 12 pane sliding sash windows; whereas the ground floor windows have been removed through the addition of flat roofed, three sided bay windows, projecting into the street (fig. 10).

The original form of the building was best gained through examination and comparison with the building across the road, "The Tea Cosy" (fig. 11) where details such as windows, lintels, steps, doorframes and the decorative coursing below the eaves are repeated and retained, suggesting similar build dates.

All bar one of the internal chimney arrangements have been blocked and removed, possibly as part of a later re-roofing phase of the buildings. Internal examination of the roof structure (fig. 12) showed a late constructed king post roof truss (surprisingly containing single pegged joints, and butted purlins). The trusses and the main tie beam were in remarkably good condition, the manufacture of the trusses being from machine cut timber on the basis of the straightness of the timbers.

The re-roofing of the building probably occurred when it was extended into the yard behind the property, resulting in a wider ground plan from the original terraced plan, this was also evident in the internal roof and the difference in pitch between front and rear of the property when viewed from the side (fig. 13).

The building "No 7" has further been extended, by way of the incorporation of flat roofed and pitched roofed structures to its rear. These buildings both incorporate modern steel beams and glass bricks in thier construction and are later extensions to the shop (which No 7 had been converted into), providing more sales space with accommodation above accessed via the through passage.

The internal features originally associated with the building have been lost due to the alterations of the buildings. The fireplaces have been removed and blocked, the internal room arrangements have been altered, enlarged and unfortunately retain no original features of merit.

Access to certain parts of the building was denied by locked doors encountered once boarded up entrances were removed and therefore these areas could not be assessed (Fig. 6).

7. Discussion

The reconstruction of the Bishop of Hereford's rent roll shows the burgage plots and occupation along the frontage of Brookend Street in the 13th century. The medieval population peaked at the end of the 13th century, leading to the occupation of less suitable areas, but Morris (1973) and Druce (1980) perpetuate the idea stated in Fosbroke's *Wye Tour* that settlement commenced in this part of the town.

Problems with flooding may have been encountered from an early date and it is possible that the dump of iron working debris, containing pottery dated to the middle of the 13th century

into the 14th century had been imported to level up the ground. The possibility that this material could have been imported from further afield is suggested by the discovery of a single sherd of Roman pottery, of Severn Valley type, also found in context 104. Unstratified Roman pottery has previously been found in excavations near St Mary's church. Further investigation of these deposits was hampered by the flow of water into the trench and it is also possible that iron working took place in the immediate area. The proximity of Ross to the Forest of Dean, a well known source of iron ore, and of the charcoal used in processing it, means that iron working would undoubtedly have taken place in the town.

A sample taken at the north-western end of the trench showed that similar deposits continued to some depth, containing more charcoal as well as slag. No features connected with this process were seen. In addition there was no evidence that the material had been compacted, as might have been expected if it had been used as a surface.

The site itself was farmyard until the construction of the garage in the early 20th century. The stone surface in Trench C seems likely to have been part of the farmyard along with the culvert used for drainage.

8. Conclusions

Although the excavation was hampered by the flow of ground water into the trenches the presence of an archaeological horizon was established in Trench B at a depth of 32.10mOD. In Trench D a layer of undisturbed sandy silt, possibly a natural silting horizon was present. A feature running east/west across the trench may have been a wall. If this was the case then no surfaces were associated with it and it may in fact have been a drain.

In the remaining areas the rapidity with which water flowed into the trenches and lack of anywhere to pump water to meant that it was not possible to establish the presence or absence of archaeological deposits.

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Appendix 1. Site Archive

The site archive, consisting of the paper record from the site, including the photographs, and the finds, is stored at Hereford Museum; accession number HFD MG 2007-13.

Appendix 2: A note on the pottery from Brookend Street, Ross on Wye**K. H. Crooks**

Pottery of later medieval and early post-medieval date was recovered from two of the excavation trenches (B and D). A total of six sherds of pottery of this date were recovered. Pottery of later date, specifically from Trench E, was sampled but the majority of this material was not retained. In addition a single abraded sherd of a Severn Valley type fabric, of Roman date was recovered from a sample taken from Trench B (context 104)

The pottery was washed and examined macroscopically and microscopically and sorted according to Vince's classification (Vince 1985, 1991 and 2002).

Table 1: Summary of the pottery from Brookend Street, Ross on Wye

Cont	Fabric	Wt (g)	Date	Form	Decoration/Comment
103	A7D	29.3	17	Bowl/jar	Internal brown glaze. Base. Local redware
103	A4	4.9	13/14	Jug/trip	Ext clear/olive glaze
103	B4	6.6	14-17	?	Ext reddish slip and clear green speckled glaze
104	A7B	19.3	13-15		Splash external olive glaze. Base shows evidence of stacking in the kiln
104	Brill?	6.6	13-14	Jug?	External clear green speckled glaze
104	S.V.	7.3	Roman	Tankard?	External turned groove. Abraded
TDU	*	30.6	Post-med?	Conical bowl?	Internal dark green glaze. Orange micaceous fabric - few obvious inclusions

*Unknown – hard fired, exterior oxidised orange, interior reduced and grey. Fabric contains flecks of mica, sandstone and few other obvious inclusions. The inclusions suggest that it was local. The form was probably a conical bowl suggesting a post-medieval date, though the dark green glaze appeared earlier.

The medieval pottery from the site was generally similar to that found in Hereford in the 13th to 14th centuries. The sherd of Severn Valley type ware could have been imported with levelling material derived from Roman metal working waste during the medieval period or later.

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Appendix 3: Assessment of the Iron Working Residues

Two samples of deposits containing iron working debris - contexts 104 and 106 were recovered from the site at Brookend Street in Ross. A subsample from each of these was washed and sieved (mesh sizes 2 millimetres and 250 microns). A small amount of the resulting material was quickly scanned, using a magnet in the case of the finer residues, and assessed for metal working by-products. At the same time the charred remains were scanned for the presence of seeds.

Sample 104 (2mm)

The sample contained frequent iron slag including smithing slag lumps and also runs or prills. As by-products of smelting and smithing can be almost identical it was not possible to ascertain which of these processes had taken place.

Microslag (anvil debris) was also found, though in small to moderate amounts. This consisted of flake and spheroidal hammerscale, both 'dull' and 'shiny'. The degree of 'gloss' reflects the heat at which the process was carried out. The presence of spheroidal hammerscale implies a later stage in the smithing process.

Sample 104 (250mu)

After sorting using a magnet an estimate (by eye only) was carried out, suggesting that approximately 30% of the residue was iron working debris, including highly magnetic slag. It should be noted that slag produced by pre industrial revolution iron working techniques can contain as much as 50% iron. Both flake and spheroidal hammerscale – dull and shiny – were found in the sample, in moderate quantities.

Sample 106 (2mm)

Although iron working residues were found in the sample from deposit 106, these were in considerably lesser quantities than from 104. Together with fragments of runs or prills some highly magnetic slag was present and, in small quantities, flake and spheroidal hammerscale, mainly of the dull rather than glossy variety.

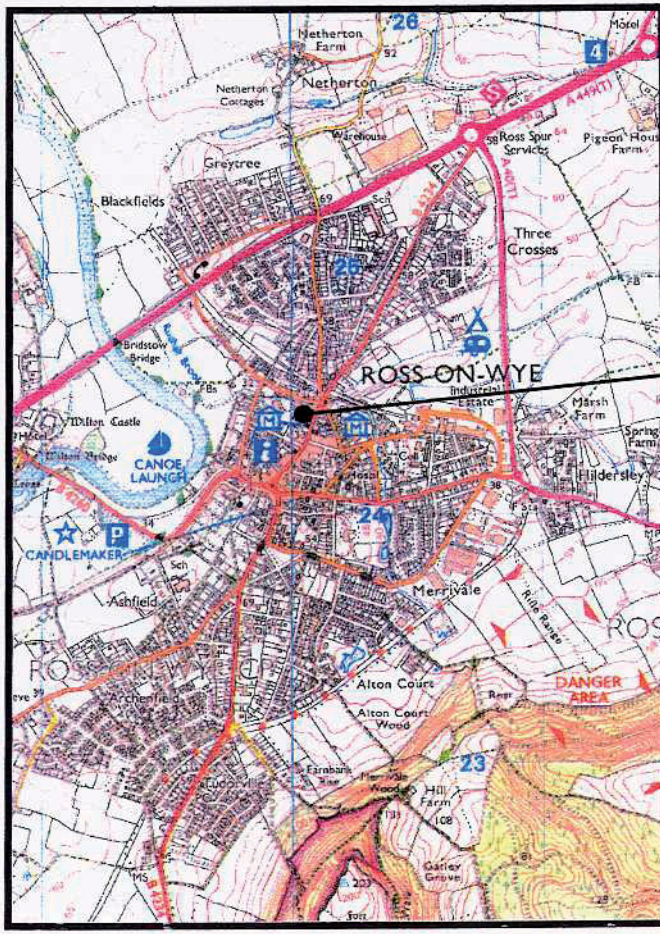
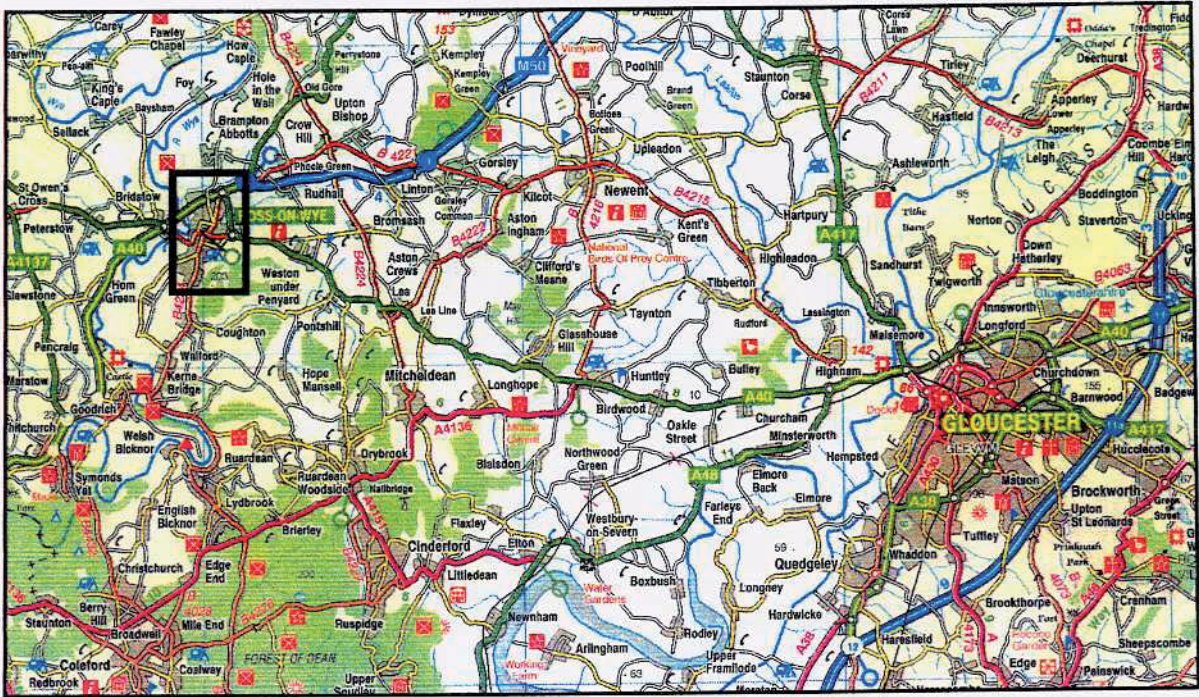
Sample 106 (250mu)

Once again little iron working debris was present in the sample. Flake and spheroidal hammerscale were found.

Discussion

A single sherd of Roman pottery, somewhat abraded, was recovered from context 104, together with sherds of glazed medieval material, suggesting a date in the 13th to 14th centuries. It is possible therefore that the material on the site was of Roman origin, imported to level up the ground surface during the medieval period, or possibly later.

Very little furnace lining was found. Although this may be coincidental, or a result of the small percentage of the samples assessed, it is also possible that some form of selection took place because of the purpose for which the slag was being used.



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SITE

Site Location Map

Figure 1

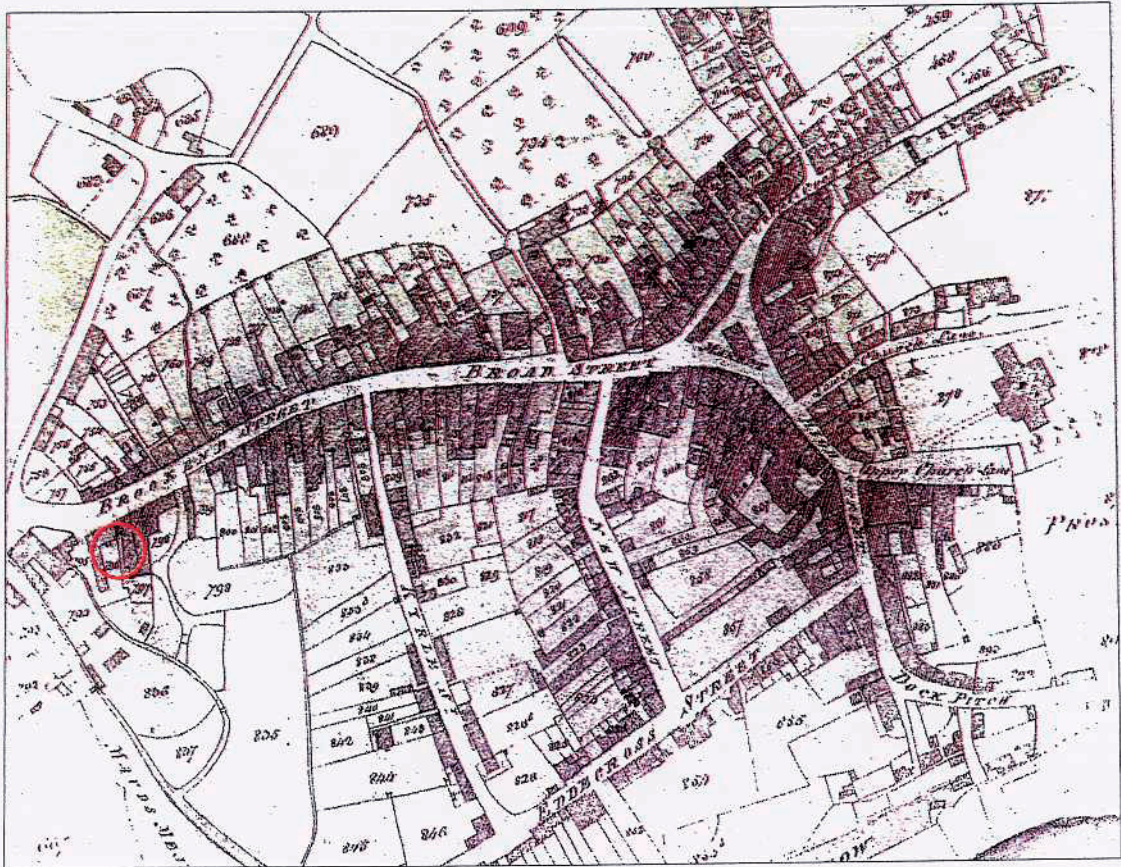


Figure 2. The parish map of 1823 (from Hughes & Hurley, 1999)



Figure 3. The site on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (1888/9)

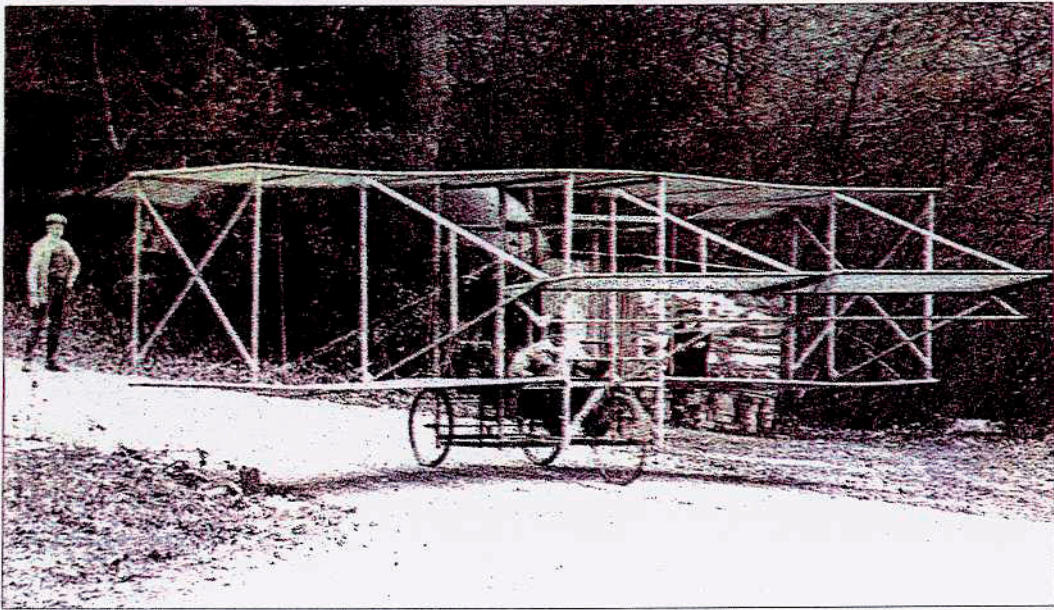


Figure 4. The aeroplane constructed on the site in 1910 (from Druce 1988 p41)

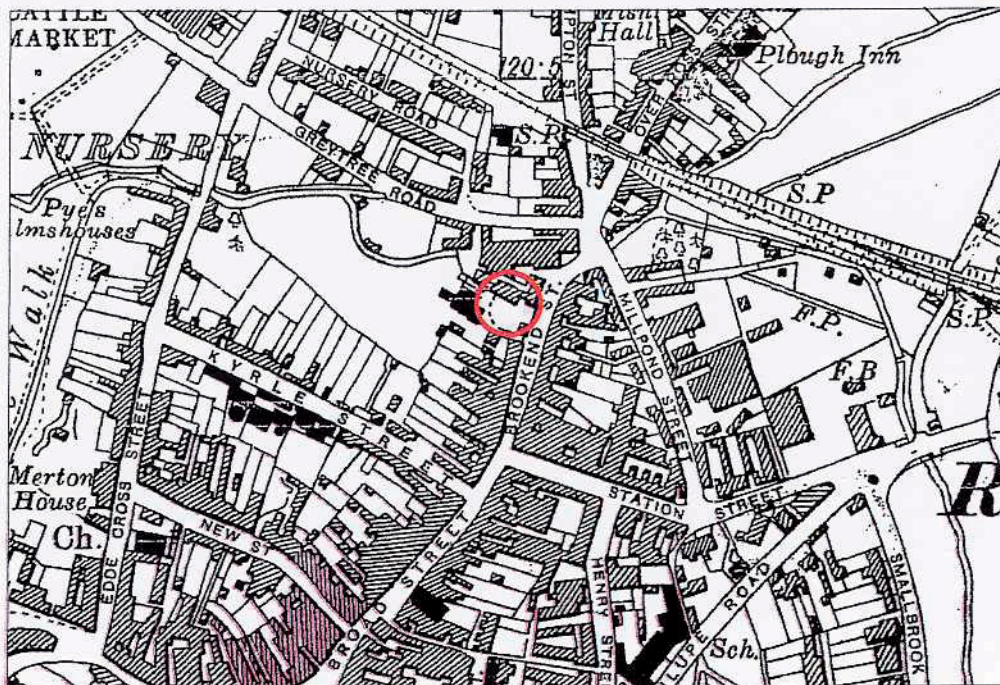
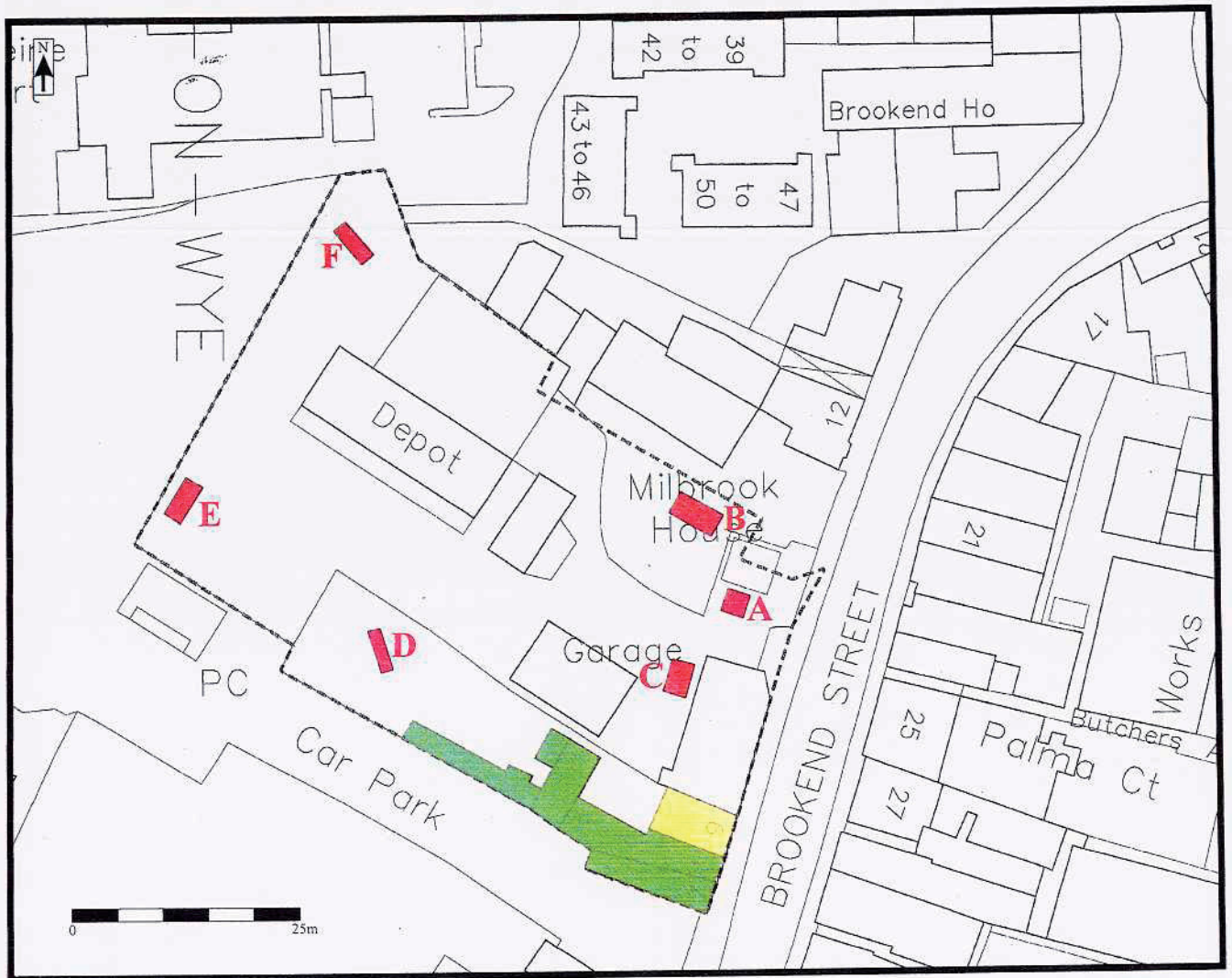


Figure 5. The site shown on the 3rd edition Ordnance Survey map of 1929



Trench location map

- Archaeological trial trenches
- Building - Access gained
- Building - Access not gained

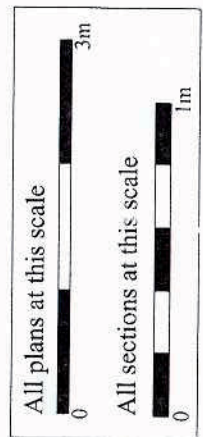
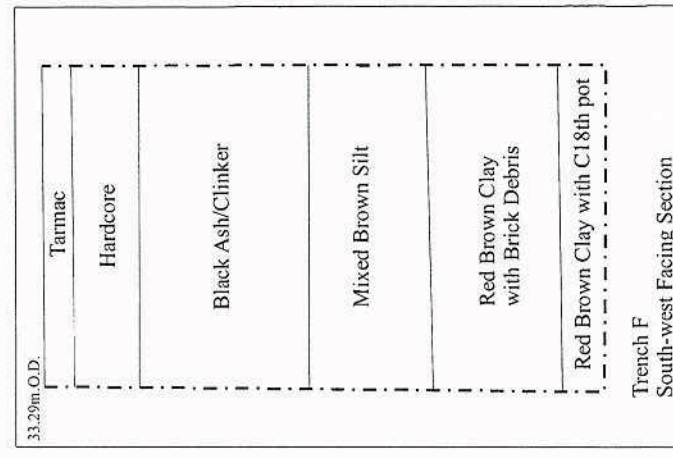
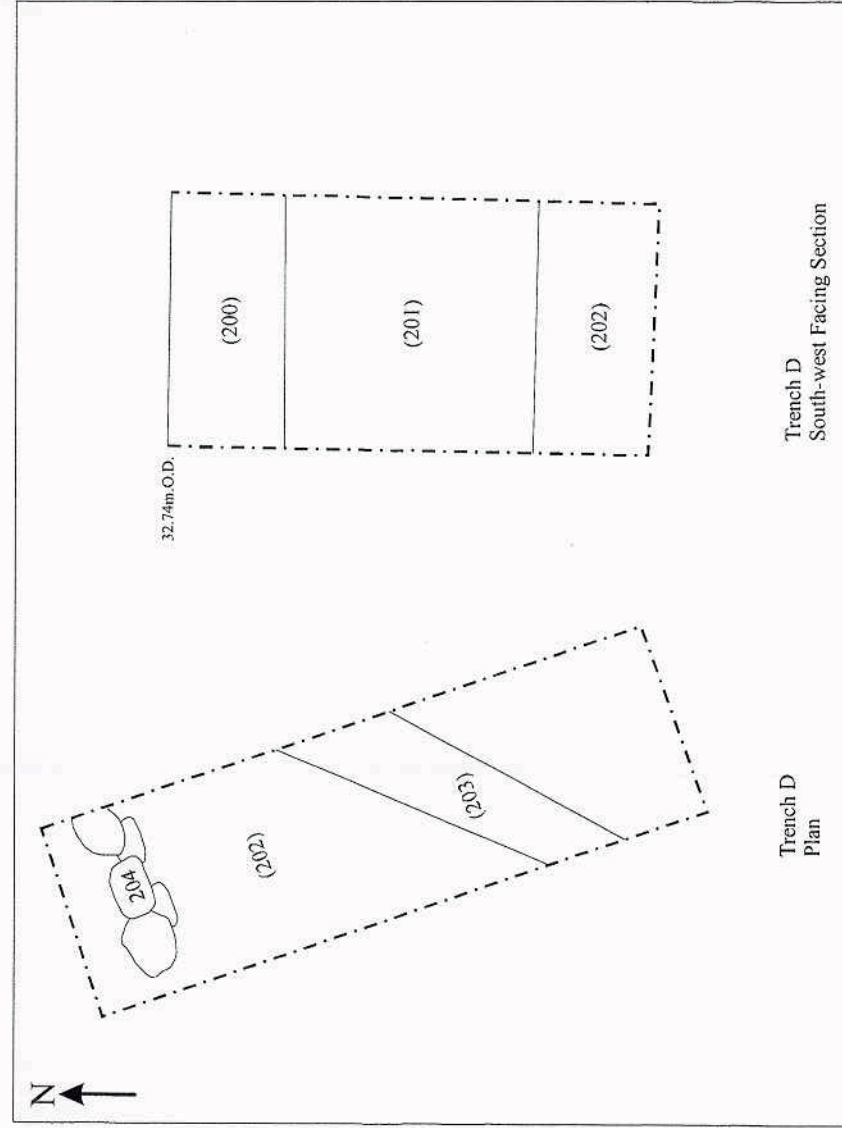
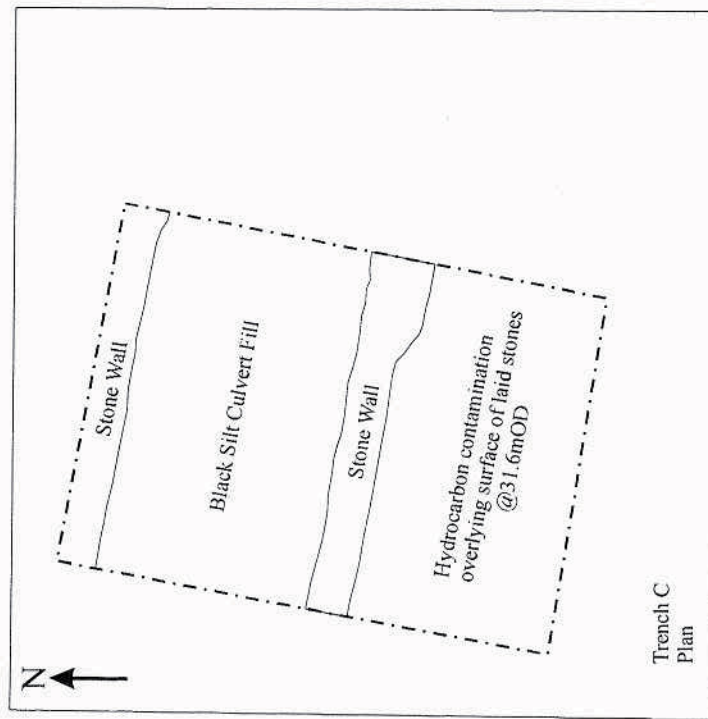
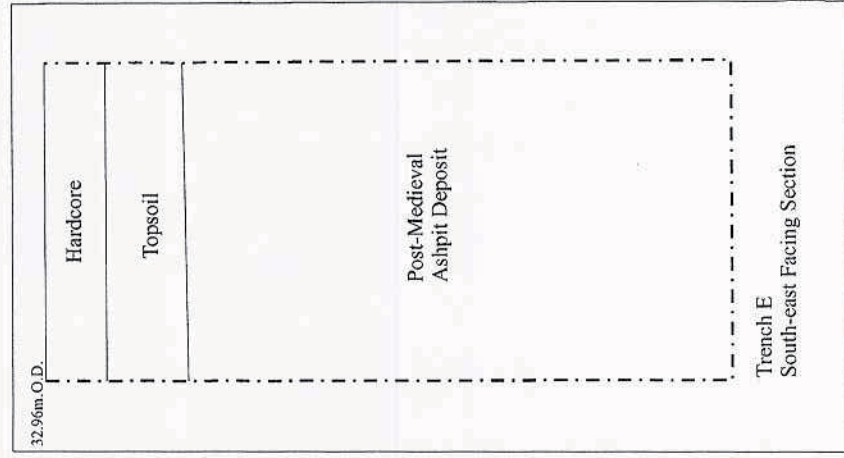
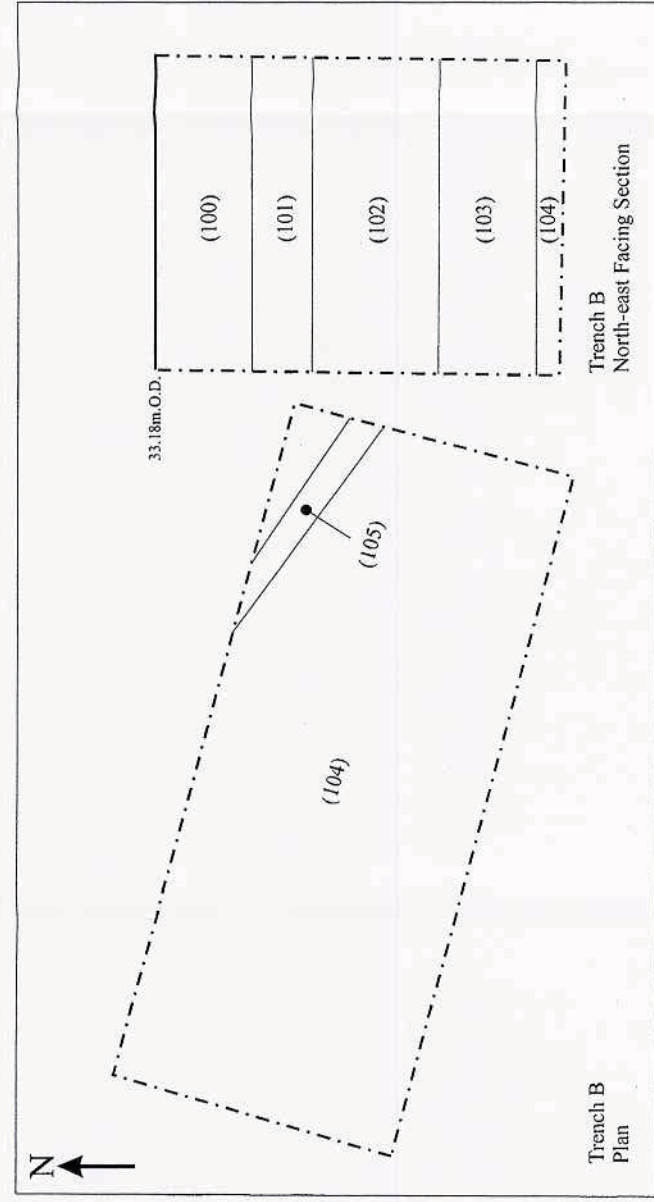
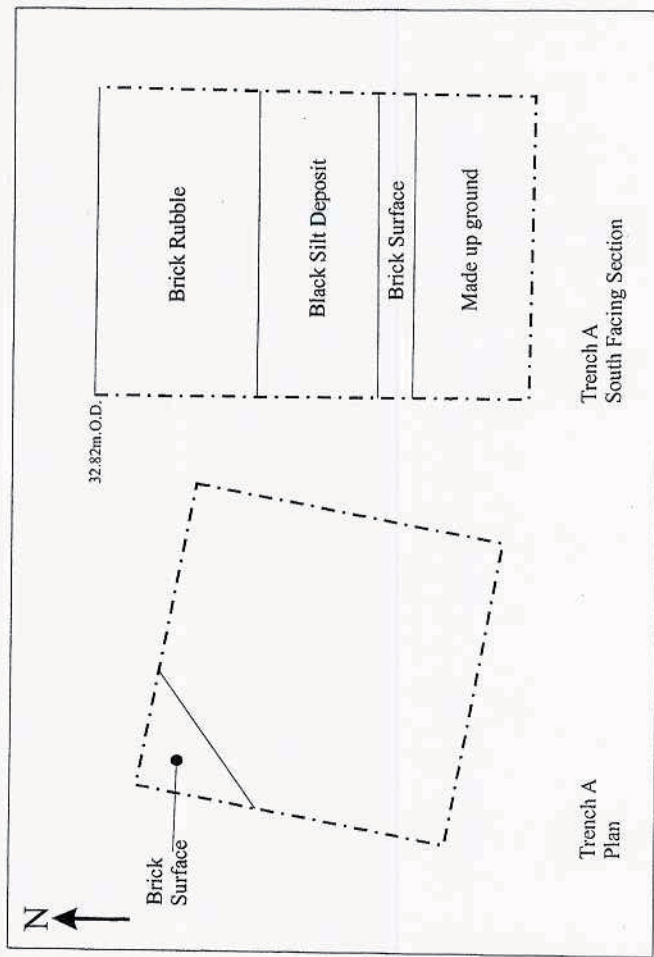


Figure 7



Figure 8. Brookend Street (facing north)



Figure 9. Brookend Street (facing south)



Figure 10. Numbers 9-11 front elevation



Figure 11. 'The Tea Cosy' on opposite side of Brookend Street



Figure 12. Internal roof structure



Figure 13. South facing elevation