

**FORMER ANGLIAN WATER SITE,  
OLDFIELD LANE/CROMWELL ROAD, WISBECH,  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION**

ECB4000

Authors: Laszlo Lichtenstein (fieldwork and report) Peter Thompson MA (background)	
NGR: TF 4570 0903	Report No: 4398
District: Fenland	Site Code: AS 1601
Approved: C Halpin MfA	Project No: 5323
Signed:	Date: 2 <sup>nd</sup> September 2013

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## OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

<b>Project details</b>			
Project name	Former Anglian Water Site, Oldfield Lane/Cromwell Road, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire		
<p>In August 2013 Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out archaeological evaluation on the former Anglian Water Site, Oldfield Lane/Cromwell Road, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire (NGR TF 4570 0903; Figs. 1 &amp; 2). The evaluation was commissioned ahead of the proposed construction of 42 dwellings and ancillary works. The investigation was required as a planning condition attached to planning approval for the development (Fenland Planning Ref. F/YR10/0532/F).</p> <p>In the Roman period there is evidence for settlement mainly in the form of coin hoards and salt producing sites centred on the west and north-west of the town. During medieval times settlement was in the same area as the Roman occupation and had two foci one centred on the church and castle and the other at the older Old Market. The OS maps show that a building in a small enclosure stood on the north-east part of the site.</p> <p>In the event the evaluation revealed no archaeological features or finds. The site has suffered some modern disturbance but not sufficiently substantial to wholly remove archaeological remains, had they been present. Subsoil L1002 (Trench 1) contained three small residual sherds of medieval (13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> C) pottery.</p>			
Project dates (fieldwork)	August 2013		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	N	Future work	N
P. number	5323	Site code	
Type of project	Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation		
Site status			
Current land use	Former Anglian Water Site		
Planned development	Residential development		
Main features (+dates)	None		
Significant finds (+dates)	Three residual sherds of medieval pottery		
<b>Project location</b>			
County/ District/ Parish	Cambridgeshire	Fenland	Wisbech
HER/ SMR for area	Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CCC HER)		
Post code (if known)	-		
Area of site			
Height AOD (max/ min)	Approx. 3m AOD		
<b>Project creators</b>			
Brief issued by	Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (Dan McConnell)		
Project supervisor/s (PO)	Laszlo Lichtenstein		
Funded by	Wisbech Developments Ltd		
Full title	Former Anglian Water Site, Oldfield Lane/Cromwell Road, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation		
Authors	Lichtenstein, L. and Thompson, P		
Report no.	4398		
Date (of report)	September 2013		

# FORMER ANGLIAN WATER SITE, OLDFIELD LANE/CROMWELL ROAD, WISBECH, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION

### SUMMARY

*In August 2013 Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out archaeological evaluation on the former Anglian Water Site, Oldfield Lane/Cromwell Road, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire (NGR TF 4570 0903; Figs. 1 & 2). The evaluation was commissioned ahead of the proposed construction of 42 dwellings and ancillary works. The investigation was required as a planning condition attached to planning approval for the development (Fenland Planning Ref. F/YR10/0532/F).*

*In the Roman period there is evidence for settlement mainly in the form of coin hoards and salt producing sites centred on the west and north-west of the town. During medieval times settlement was in the same area as the Roman occupation and had two foci one centred on the church and castle and the other at the older Old Market. The OS maps show that a building in a small enclosure stood on the north-east part of the site.*

*In the event the evaluation revealed no archaeological features or finds. The site has suffered some modern disturbance but not sufficiently substantial to wholly remove archaeological remains, had they been present. Subsoil L1002 (Trench 1) contained three small residual sherds of medieval (13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> century) pottery.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In August 2013 Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out archaeological evaluation on the former Anglian Water Site, Oldfield Lane/Cromwell Road, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire (NGR TF 4570 0903; Figs. 1 & 2). The work was commissioned by Wisbech Developments Ltd ahead of the proposed construction of 42 dwellings and ancillary works. The investigation was required as a planning condition attached to planning approval for the development (Fenland Planning Ref. F/YR10/0532/F).

1.2 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a brief issued by Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (CCC HET) Dan McConnell 08/03/2013), and a specification compiled by AS (08/05/2013), and approved by CCC HET. The documents *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 14 (Gurney 2003) and the Institute for Archaeologists' (IFA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations* (1994, revised 2008) were used for guidance.

1.3 The aim of the archaeological evaluation was to determine, as far as was possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development. In addition it was hoped to clarify the nature and extent of existing disturbance and intrusions and hence assess the degree of survival of buried deposits and surviving structures of archaeological significance.

### **Planning policy context**

1.4 PPS5 (2010) states those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are heritage assets. The Planning Policy Statement aims to deliver sustainable development by ensuring that policies and decisions that concern the historic environment recognise that heritage assets are a non-renewable resource, take account of the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits of heritage conservation, and recognise that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term. It aims to conserve England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance. It states that opportunities to capture evidence from the historic environment and to contribute to our knowledge and understanding of our past, and to make this publicly available, should be taken, particularly where a heritage asset is to be lost.

## **2 SITE DESCRIPTION (Fig. 2)**

2.1 Wisbech is located on the north-eastern edge of Cambridgeshire and is 50km north of Cambridge and 18km south-west of Kings Lynn. The former Anglian Water site is located to the south-west of Wisbech town centre in the angle between Oldfield Lane and Cromwell Road. The buildings has been demolished some time prior to the investigation commencing.

## **3 THE EVIDENCE**

### **3.1 Topography, Geology & Soils**

3.1.1 Wisbech is situated in the Cambridgeshire Fen, and the site is approximately 3m AOD and located 120m east of the tidal and canalised River Nene. The local soils are un-surveyed due to urbanisation, but the site is in an area of marine alluvium of the Agney association. The underlying geology is Ampthill and Kimmeridge Clay.

## 3.2 Archaeological & Historical Background

3.2.1 In the prehistoric period the Cambridgeshire was effectively connected to the sea by a funnel opening out from the fenland at Wisbech and there were periodic inundations. The last one occurred during the Iron Age and so any surviving prehistoric remains are largely buried beneath extensive peat and silt deposits Hall 2000, 16; Cambridgeshire Extensive Urban Survey 2012). Prehistoric boats were apparently found during the deepening of Wisbech river in 1635 (CHER 033880). In 1847 a fragmentary early Iron bronze scabbard was acquired by an antiquarian, which was believed to have been found in Wisbech at an unspecified location east of the site (CHER 04008).

3.2.2 For the Roman period there is quite extensive evidence for Roman activity within Wisbech, with the densest concentrations of Roman remains recovered to the west and north-west of the town (Cambridgeshire Extensive Urban Survey 2012). It is from this area that a number of buried Roman coin hoards and other finds have been recovered (CHER 03882, 03890, 03910, 03884). In 1930 a Roman cup was found 230m to the north of the site at the LNER goods yard (CHER 03889). Two Roman coins, including one of Hadrian, were 370m to the north during an archaeological evaluation at South Brink (CHER 45705). There is also evidence for salt production in the Roman period, although no known sites are closer than approximately 1km of the site (CHER 03912, 04492, 08182).

3.2.3 Anglo-Saxon activity in Wisbech is also poorly understood. The Domesday Book records that in 1066 the silt isle on which Wisbech sits supported around 50 households and was owned by the abbey of Ely. The abbey was responsible for the construction of the two sea defences on either side of the estuary, built in order to protect the fertile farmland. Like the Roman settlement, it would seem that that the Anglo-Saxon settlement is to be found in the north and west of the current town. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, this area was referred to as the Old Market, suggesting an older focus of settlement (Cambridgeshire Extensive Urban Survey 2012). Two Saxon brooches found at Wisbech Corn Exchange indicate the presence of at least one inhumation there (CHER 04012).

3.2.4 In the medieval period, the construction of the church, castle and new marketplace shifted the focus of settlement away from the north bank of the river, although the Old Market continued to be occupied. The settlement remained focused around the two cores, the Old Market and the castle, but the town did not stretch much beyond these areas probably due to flooding, despite the sea defences (Cambridgeshire Extensive Urban Survey 2012). The Church of Saints Peter and Paul dates from the later 12<sup>th</sup> century, but was extensively rebuilt in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries with two naves and two chancels (CHER CB14828). The castle was originally built by William I following his defeat of Hereward the Wake and was subsequently developed by the Bishop of Ely and John Thurloe, Secretary of State to Oliver Cromwell. The site is now a Regency villa built in 1816 (CHER 01926, 01926a; Taylor 2000, 33). Finds from the Market Street area

include a medieval crypt or undercroft (CHER 10493) and broken grave stones (CHER 10489). Other medieval sites include the 12<sup>th</sup> century St John's Hospital, Wisbech (CHER 03870) and a moated site at Barton Manor (CHER 05570).

3.2.5 The main expansion of the town took place in the post-medieval period, when the population rose rapidly. The widespread drainage of the fens, coupled with mechanical means of pumping water off the lands, created wide swathes of very fertile agricultural land that could be used for crops. In addition, there were deliberate attempts to free up the flow of the river through the town and improve access to Wisbech's growing port (Cambridgeshire Extensive Urban Survey 2012).

3.2.6 As trade grew the town prospered, and the construction of extensive and elaborate Georgian and Regency properties are a reflection of this. The boom also created a need to house the growing number of labourers that served the port and the town, and there are several references to a lack of such housing in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The areas to the east of the town were always regarded as the poorer areas, so it is unsurprising that this is the direction in which the early modern town expanded from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, probably reaching its zenith by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Wisbech had three railway branch lines. The first to reach the town was the St Ives to March line in 1847, and the original station was a terminus at the present South Brink sidings before the line was extended to Watlington (CHER MCB 19612). The line was last used in 2000 for transporting goods. Now at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Wisbech is still economically recovering from decline that set in particularly to its port and trade (Cambridgeshire Extensive Urban Survey 2012).

### **3.3 Cartographic information**

3.3.1 The 1842 Tithe map shows the site covers parts of three fields bordering Oldfield Lane (Fig. 3). There was no Tithe Apportionment available. The 1886 first edition OS map shows there are north-west to south-east aligned field boundaries crossing or abutting the site, plus one roadside ditch bordering the site. The boundaries mainly comprise waterfilled ditches and one crossing the middle of the site is tree lined (Fig. 4). There is a house or building in a small enclosure located on the north-east corner of the site, just to the west of Oldfield Lane. The railway station is located to the east of the site. The 1903 OS map shows that the house and enclosure on the site has gone and there is a Timber Yard marked to the north of the site (Fig. 5). The unditched field boundary crossing the site is gone. The 1927 OS map shows the Timber Yard has gone and the site now comprises orchard with a track running across from Oldfield Lane to meet two buildings located beside the Nene (Fig. 6). The 1937 OS map shows that Cromwell Road has now been constructed forming the western boundary to the site (Fig. 7). The site is still orchard, and contains the same ditched field boundary and track, and new buildings have appeared fronting the east side of Oldfield Lane.



## METHODOLOGY

4.1 Five trial trenches were excavated (Fig.2). The individual trenches varied in length; all measured in 1.80m width.

4.2 Undifferentiated overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a wide toothless ditching bucket. Thereafter, all further investigation was undertaken by hand. Exposed surfaces were cleaned as appropriate and examined for archaeological features and finds. Deposits were recorded using *pro forma* recording sheets, drawn to scale and photographed.

## 5 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

Individual trench descriptions are presented below:

### Trench 1 (Fig. 2)

<i>Sample section: Centre, SW facing.</i> <i>0.00 = 3.43m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.28m	L1001	Topsoil. Reddish brown, friable, sandy gravel.
0.28 – 0.33m	L1002	Subsoil. Dark grey brown, hard, silty clay.
0.33 – 0.84m	L1003	Subsoil. Mid grey brown, compact, clayey silt.
0.84m+	L1004	Natural deposits. Light yellowish brown, compact, silty clay.

*Description: No archaeological features or finds were present.*

### Trench 2 (Fig. 2)

<i>Sample section: Centre, SW facing.</i> <i>0.00 = 3.09m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.12m	L1001	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.12 – 0.44m	L1007	Demolition layer.
0.44 – 0.56m	L1003	Subsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.56m+	L1004	Natural deposits. As above Tr.1.

*Description: No archaeological features or finds were present. A service traversed the trench.*

### **Trench 3** (Fig. 2)

<i>Sample section: W end, SW facing.</i> <i>0.00 = 2.62m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.04m	L1001	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.04 – 0.11m	L1007	Demolition layer. As above Tr.2.
0.11 – 0.13m	L1003	Subsoil. As above Tr. 1.
0.13m+	L1004	Natural deposits. As above Tr.1.

*Description: No archaeological features or finds were present. A service traversed the trench.*

### **Trench 4** (Fig. 2)

<i>Sample section: SW end, SE facing.</i> <i>0.00 = 2.65m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.10m	L1001	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.10 – 0.34m	L1006	Made ground.
0.34 – 0.62m	L1003	Subsoil. As above Tr. 1.
0.62m+	L1004	Natural deposits. As above Tr.1.

*Description: No archaeological features or finds were present. A service traversed the trench.*

### **Trench 5** (Fig. 2)

<i>Sample section: SW end, SE facing.</i> <i>0.00 = 2.65m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.08m	L1000	Topsoil. Mid grey, friable, silt.
0.08 – 0.22m	L1008	Made ground. Yellow brown, friable, sand.
0.22 – 0.51m	L1003	Subsoil. As above Tr. 1.
0.51m+	L1004	Natural deposits. As above Tr.1.

*Description: No archaeological features or finds were present. A soakaway was present.*

## **6 CONFIDENCE RATING**

6.1 It is not felt that any factors inhibited the recognition of archaeological features or finds.

## **7 DEPOSIT MODEL**

7.1 Across the site and uppermost was Topsoil, L1001, a reddish brown, friable, sandy gravel (0.08 - 0.28m thick). In the majority of trenches (Trs. 2 – 5) below the topsoil was a demolition layer (L1007) and made ground (L1008). In Trench 1 below L1001 was Subsoil L1002, a dark grey brown, hard, silty clay (0.05m thick). Below Subsoil L1002 was Subsoil L1003, a mid grey brown, compact, clayey silty (up to 0.50m thick). Below Subsoil L1003, the natural L1004, was a light yellowish brown, compact, silty clay. L1004 was between 0.13 - 0.84m below the ground surface).

## **8 DISCUSSION**

8.1 In the Roman period there is evidence for settlement mainly in the form of coin hoards and salt producing sites centred on the west and north-west of the town. During medieval times settlement was in the same area as the Roman occupation and had two foci one centred on the church and castle and the other at the older Old Market. The OS maps show that a building in a small enclosure stood on the north-east part of the site.

8.2 In the event the evaluation revealed no archaeological features or finds. The site has suffered some modern disturbance but not sufficiently substantial to wholly remove archaeological remains, had they been present. Subsoil L1002 (Trench 1) contained three small residual sherds of medieval (13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> century) pottery.

## **DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE**

Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited at the Cambridgeshire County Store. The archive will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross referenced and checked for internal consistency.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Archaeological Solutions would like to thank Wisbech Developments Ltd for funding the project, and Mr Charles Bingley for assistance. AS would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Mr Robin Briscoe of Peter Humphrey Associates.

AS is also pleased to acknowledge the advice and input of Mr Dan McConnell of Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team.

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Soil Survey of England & Wales (SSEW) 1983 *Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales*. SSEW, Harpenden

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Taylor, A. 2000 'Castles' in Kirby, T. & Oosthuizen (eds.) *An Atlas of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire* History Centre for Regional Studies, Anglia Polytechnic University

## **WEB SITES**

[www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk) – Cambridgeshire Extensive Urban Survey - Wisbech

## APPENDIX 1      CARTOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

<b>Figure</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Scale</b>
1	Modern	Site Location	
2	modern	Detailed site location	
3	1842	Tithe map of St Peter's, Wisbech	-
4	1886	First Edition OS map	1:2,500
5	1903	Second Edition OS map	1:10,560
6	1927	OS map	1:10,560
7	1938	OS map	1:10,560

## APPENDIX 2 CONCORDANCE OF FINDS

AS1601 - ECB4000 Wisbech  
 Concordance of finds by  
 feature

Feature	Context	Segment	Trench	Description	Spot Date	Pottery	CBM (g)	A.Bone (g)	Other
1002			TT1	Subsoil	Residual medieval	(3) 15g			Shell - 1g
1003		Test Pit	TT2 TT3	Subsoil	18 <sup>th</sup> – 19 <sup>th</sup> C 18 <sup>th</sup> – 19 <sup>th</sup> C	(3) 33g (1) 17g	7164	718	O. Shell - 58g

## APPENDIX 3 SPECIALIST REPORTS

### The Pottery

by Peter Thompson

The evaluation recovered six sherds weighing 46g recovered from the subsoil and the natural. Trench 1 yielded three sherds of medieval glazed Grimston ware (14g) from Subsoil L1002 indicating a 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries date. Trench 2 yielded two sherds of English stoneware with a further body and base sherd of internally black glazed post-medieval red earthenware (25g). The fabric contained shell and other calcareous material and red grog and was vitrified. The combination of post-medieval sherds would suggest an 18<sup>th</sup> century date.

#### KEY:

GRIMG: Glazed Grimston ware late 12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>

PMBL: Post medieval black glazed earthenware late 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup>

ENGS: English stoneware 18<sup>th</sup>+

Feature	Trench	Type	Quantity	Date	Comment
1002	1	Subsoil	3x14g GRIMG	13 <sup>th</sup> -14 <sup>th</sup>	Abraded, faded green glaze with irons slip pads and trailed lines
1003	2	Subsoil	1x26g PMBL 2x6g ENGS	18 <sup>th</sup> – 19 <sup>th</sup>	PMBL: moderately abraded, vitrified with calcareous inclusions ENGS: moderately abraded

### The Ceramic Building Materials

*Andrew Peachey MifA*

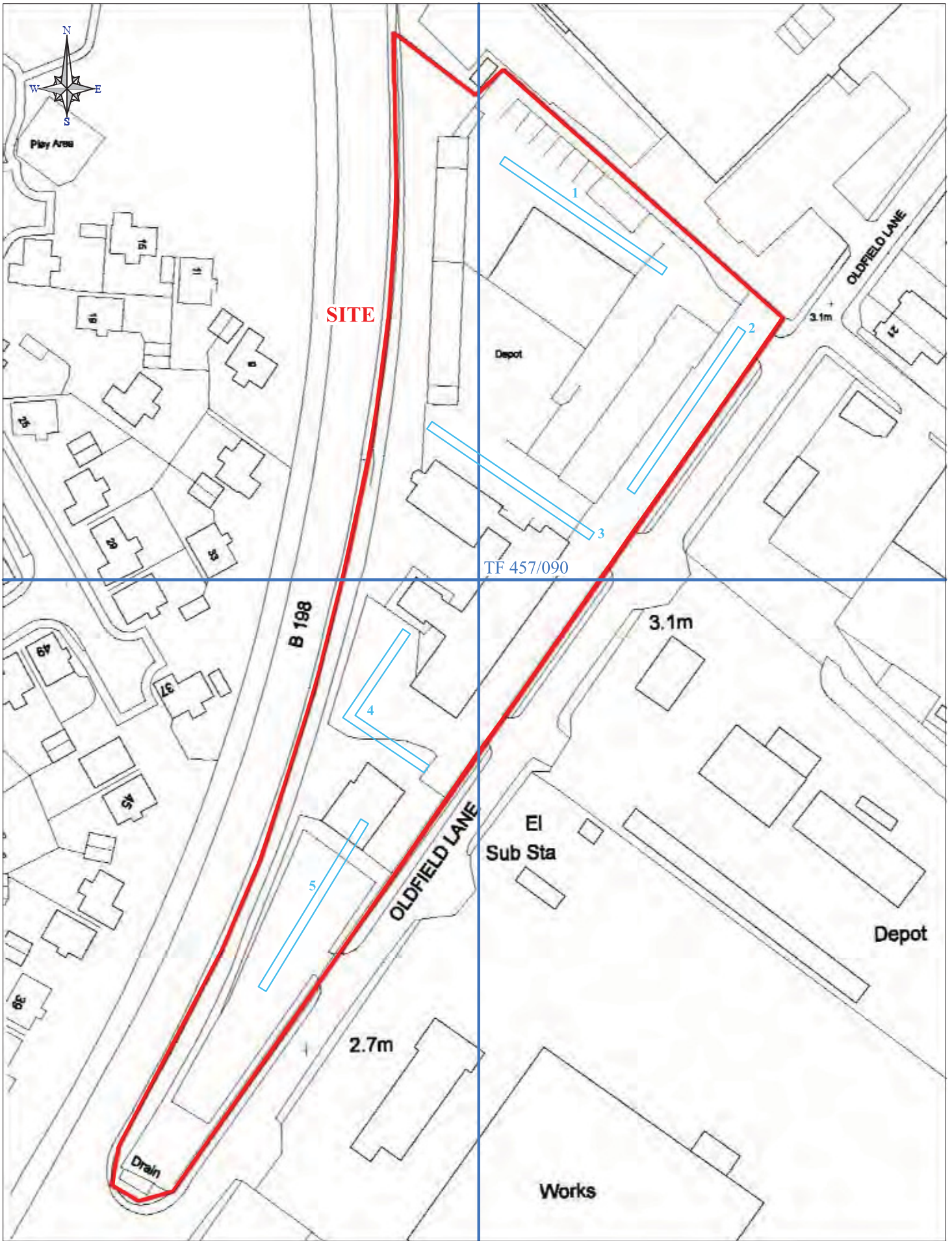
A total of 23 fragments (7164g) of late post-medieval CBM was recovered from Layer L1003 (Trench 3) in a moderately fragmented and lightly abraded condition. The CBM was entirely comprised of 'soft red brick' with partial dimensions of ?x120x65mm, a flat base, slightly creased faces, and regular sharp arrises. These characteristics indicate the brick was manufactured in the 18<sup>th</sup> to late 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.



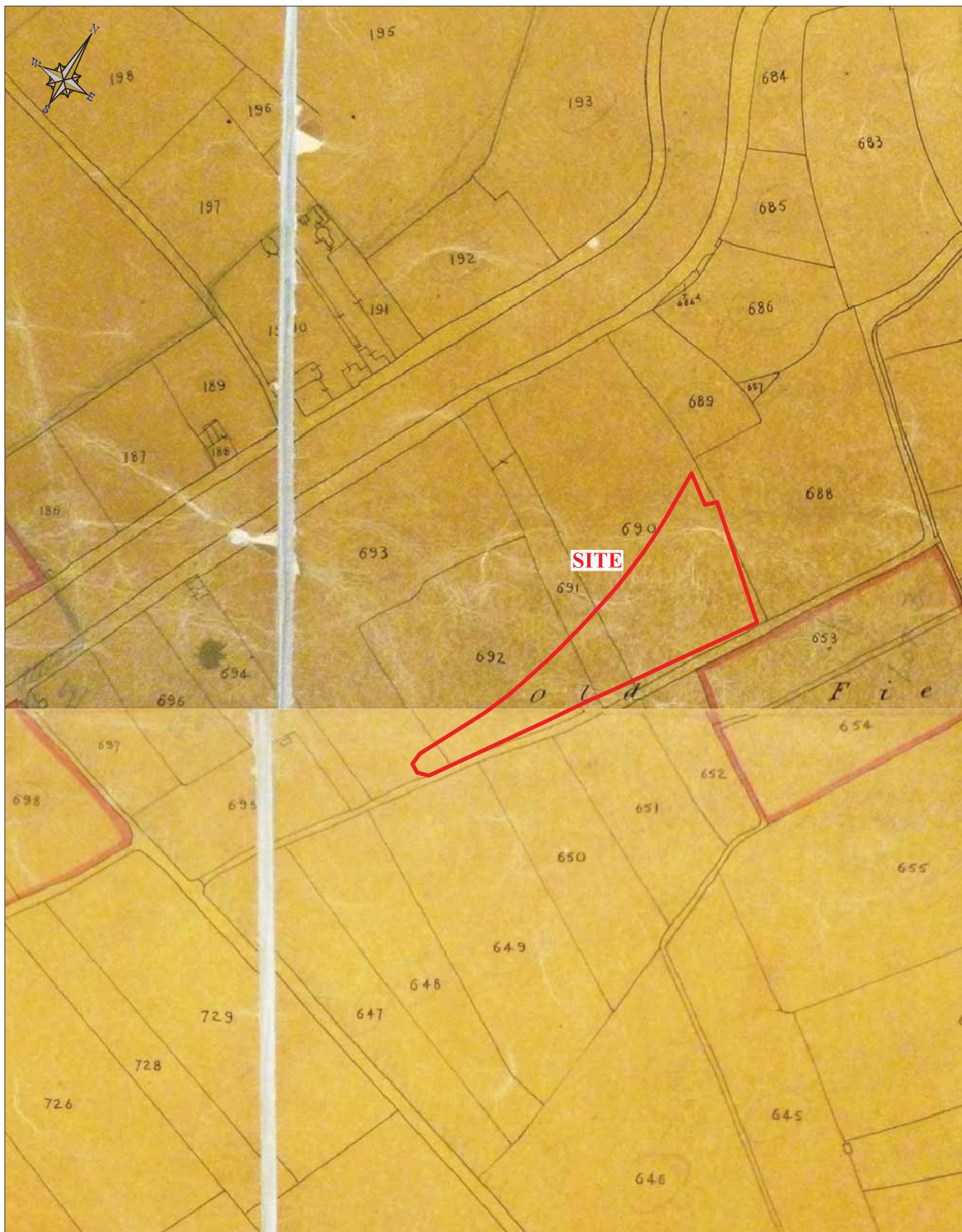
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**Fig. 1 Site location plan**  
 Scale 1:25,000 at A4





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**Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan**  
 Scale 1:1000 at A4

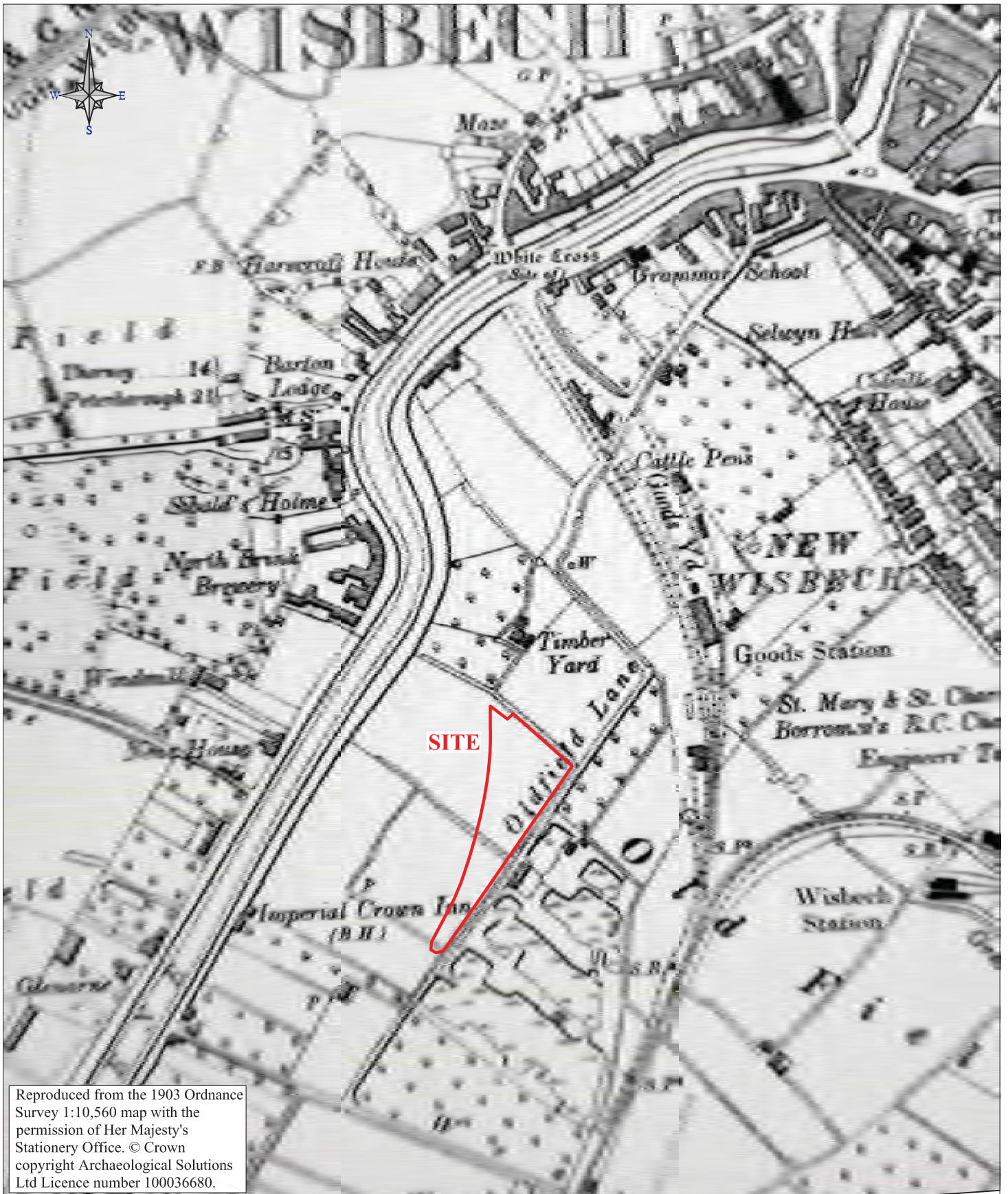


*Archaeological Solutions Ltd*  
**Fig. 3** Tithe map of St Peter's, Wisbech, 1842  
Scale 1:3,000 at A4



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 Fig. 4 First edition OS map, 1886  
 Scale 1:2,500 at A4



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**Fig. 5** Second edition OS map, 1903

Scale 1:5,000 at A4



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 Fig. 6 OS map, 1927  
 Scale 1:5,000 at A4



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Fig. 7 OS map, 1938  
Scale 1:5,000 at A4