

WORKS TO CURTILAGE LISTED WALLS

NATIONAL SPORTS CENTRE,
BISHAM ABBEY, MARLOW ROAD,
BISHAM, BERKSHIRE

HISTORIC BUILDING APPRAISAL

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

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HISTORIC BUILDING APPRAISAL

Authors: Lee Prosser PhD Tansy Collins BSc	
NGR: SU 8480 8480	Report No.3461
District: Berkshire	Site Code: n/a
Approved: Claire Halpin MIFA	Project No. 3760
Signed:	Date: January 2010

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Archaeological Solutions Ltd, 98 - 100 Fore Street, Hertford, SG14 1AB.
Tel: 01992 558170 Fax: 01992 553359 E-mail: info@ascontracts.co.uk Web:
www.archaeologicalsolutions.co.uk
Registered Number: 4702122

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OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

Project details			
Project name	<i>Works to curtilage Listed walls, National Sports Centre, Bisham Abbey, Marlow Road, Bisham, Berkshire. Historic Building Appraisal</i>		
Project description			
<i>In January 2010 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an historic building appraisal at Bisham Abbey in advance of proposals to remove two nib walls as part of a planning application to construct a hydrotherapy pool extension adjacent to the English Institute of Sport building.</i>			
<i>The former monastic precinct at Bisham is still traceable in outline within its square, formerly moated, enclosure, now protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM No. 19021). The site preserves a number of important buildings and fragments related to the monastery, associated secular buildings and elements of its subsequent development.</i>			
<i>A retaining wall lying adjacent to the appraisal structures was probably constructed on the foundations and lower courses of a 16th century precursor, which was raised in the 18th century to create an enclosed kitchen garden. The latter recorded on 19th century maps. Technical analysis suggests that the nib walls are contemporary with this period and probably relate to a doorway leading from the former shrubbery to the kitchen garden. The walls are, however, constructed of reused medieval masonry, including clunch, Reigate stone and flint.</i>			
Project dates (fieldwork)	11 th January 2010		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	Y	Future work (Y/N/?)	?
P. number	P3760	Site code	n/a
Type of project	<i>Historic building appraisal</i>		
Site status	<i>Scheduled Ancient Monument, Grade I Listed</i>		
Current land use	<i>National Sports Centre, grassland</i>		
Planned development	<i>Extension to sports clinic building, including removal of two nib walls.</i>		
Main features (+dates)	<i>18th century nib walls</i>		
Significant finds (+dates)	-		
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish	<i>Berkshire</i>	<i>Windsor and Maidenhead</i>	<i>Bisham</i>
HER/ SMR for area	<i>Berkshire SMR</i>		
Post code (if known)	<i>SL7 1RT</i>		
Area of site	<i>c. 5000m²</i>		
NGR	<i>SU 8480 8480</i>		
Height AOD (max/ min)	<i>c.28 – 29m AOD</i>		
Project creators			
Brief issued by	<i>Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead</i>		
Project supervisor/s (PO)	<i>Collins, T.</i>		
Funded by	<i>Turner & Townsend Project Management on behalf of Sport England</i>		
Full title	<i>Works to Curtilage Listed Wall, National Sports Centre, Bisham, Marlow Road, Bisham, Berkshire. Historical Building Appraisal</i>		
Authors	<i>Collins, T. Prosser, L.</i>		
Report no.	3461		
Date (of report)	<i>January 2010</i>		

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BISHAM, BERKSHIRE

HISTORIC BUILDING APPRAISAL

SUMMARY

In January 2010 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an historic building appraisal at Bisham Abbey in advance of proposals to remove two nib walls as part of a planning application to construct a hydrotherapy pool extension adjacent to the English Institute of Sport building.

The former monastic precinct at Bisham is still traceable in outline within its square, formerly moated, enclosure, now protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM No. 19021). The site preserves a number of important buildings and fragments related to the monastery, associated secular buildings and elements of its subsequent development.

A retaining wall lying adjacent to the appraisal structures was probably constructed on the foundations and lower courses of a 16th century precursor, which was raised in the 18th century to create an enclosed kitchen garden. The latter is recorded on 19th century maps. Technical analysis suggest that the nib walls are contemporary with this period and probably relate to a doorway leading from the former shrubbery, to the kitchen garden. The walls are, however, constructed of reused medieval masonry, including clunch, Reigate stone and flint.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In January 2010, Archaeological Solutions Ltd conducted an historic building appraisal at the National Sports Centre, Bisham Abbey, Marlow Road, Bisham, Berkshire (NGR SU 848 848). The appraisal was undertaken at the request of the client in support of the submission / determination of proposals for planning / listed building consent and scheduled ancient monument consent for alterations to the properties (RBWM Planning Ref. 09/02576 – works to the curtilage-listed wall in conjunction with the proposed hydrotherapy pool extension). The project was commissioned by Turner & Townsend Project Management on behalf of Sport England.

1.2 The appraisal was conducted in accordance with a specification prepared by AS (dated 22nd December 2009). A technical analysis of the existing historic structures were produced through description and photography, paying particular attention to areas of surviving historic fabric in order to inform planning and conservation decisions and the subsequent management of the structure.

1.3 The historic building appraisal followed the procedures set out in English Heritage's '*Understanding historic buildings: a guide to good recording*

practice' (2006), and it also conformed to the Institute for Archaeologists' *'Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures'* (IFA 1999). The level of recording was to Level 2 as defined in the EH document.

2 METHOD OF WORK

2.1 A previous desk-based assessment carried out regarding Bisham Abbey was consulted for context and to augment the report (Prosser, 2001). Historic maps, held at the Berkshire Record Office (BRO), have been reproduced as Figs. 3-6 and are discussed in Section 3.

2.1 The site was visited on 11th January 2010 in order to undertake the appraisal and photography (Fig. 2). The photographic recording was carried out using a Canon 1000D (10 megapixels), digital camera with a scale. A pictorial index of the digital photography and selected colour plates are included below together with locations marked on architects drawings provided by the client (Fig. 7).

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

3.1 Bisham Abbey and the small adjoining village occupy the level flood-plain of the river Thames on the Buckinghamshire/Berkshire border. Despite the proximity of the major centre of Maidenhead some 3.5km to the south-east and the town of Marlow just 1.5km to the north, the presence of a forested ridge rising to the south and the preservation of the river meadows on the north side of the river have maintained the natural beauty of the valley in its rural setting. Nonetheless, Bisham has grown rapidly in recent years, with residential conversion of former out-houses within the monastic precinct, the in-filling of village properties and the complete redevelopment of the mills and nearby Temple.

3.2 Cartographic sources reproduced as Figs. 3-6 show the evolution of the site since the early 17th century. The estate map of 1609 (Fig. 3) depicts the house within the confines of a walled, moated and possibly landscaped garden surrounded by out-buildings and a large walled orchard to the east. By 1839 (Fig. 4) the orchard had been reduced in size to create an enclosed kitchen garden, shrubbery and timber yard. The OS map of 1880 (Fig. 5) shows the site in much greater detail with a sinuous path visible through the shrubbery and leading through a gate into the kitchen garden, which survives as a blocked doorway in the existing fabric, noted below. The two nib walls flanking this aperture are not visible on any of the historic maps, likely due to their small scale and the density of the surrounding vegetation. Little alteration appears to have taken place in the next 20 years and the layout shown on the 1899 OS map (Fig. 6) is substantially similar to that seen at the earlier date.

3.3 The original grounds have been subsumed within an extensive sports complex with associated facilities including hard and grassed courts and pitches, accommodation blocks and access roads (Figs. 1-2). In the western part of the site, the surviving medieval buildings are Grade I Listed and used for administration. To the south of the main house, several other historic buildings survive, including a 15th century dovecote with former barns and contemporary agricultural buildings.

4 THE APPRAISAL STRUCTURES

4.1 The two structures under consideration lie immediately east of the English Institute of Sport building and comprise two short projecting nib walls, 2.66 m in length and 0.37 m in width, projecting from, and rising to the 3.5 m height of the boundary wall defining the raised hockey ground adjoining. The retaining wall is constructed entirely of brick, while the two nib walls are a mixture of squared and roughly dressed clunch blocks with flint, brick and other stone in variable quantities. Much of the entire area is densely blanketed in vines and vegetation, but some manual removal was possible to expose areas of wall. This was considered sufficient to deduce the date and phasing of the structures. The north wall is referred to as Nib Wall 1 and the south wall as Nib Wall 2 in the descriptions below. These are shown on Fig. 7.

4.2 The retaining wall, though not part of the scope provides important contextual information (Plate 1). This is constructed in two distinct phases, the lower portion rising to approximately 0.65m height in unevenly laid bricks in a variable header bond; the bricks measuring 9¼" x 5½" x 2¼" (235mm x 140mm x 57mm). These long, flat bricks are characteristic of a Tudor or early 17th century fabric. Above this, to full height, the wall has been raised in substantial brickwork comprising an orange fabric containing a few flint inclusions, with some creasing and occasional vitrification. On the stretchers, this is marked with a diagonal kiss mark pattern. They measure 8½" x 2¾" x 4" (216mm x 70mm x 102mm). The fabric, size and diagonal vitrification, which indicate the manner in which the bricks were fired suggest an 18th or early 19th century date. It is pointed with a mixture of cementitious, lime-based mortar with scored joints, though where localised erosion has occurred, an earlier buff-coloured mortar with fine flint fragments can also be seen.

4.3 A former doorway pierces the retaining wall between the two nib walls. This is clearly of the same phase as the upper 18th century walling, breaking through the earlier courses at the base. It has chamfered jambs and is blocked with 20th century and older, reused bricks. The head of the doorway is not visible beneath vegetation.

4.4 Nib Wall 1 is nowhere bonded into the retaining rear wall, and in places a 50 mm gap exists between the two, widening at higher level (Plate 2). This allows the external face of the rear wall to be seen where it extends behind the end of the nib wall. The scoring of the brickwork joints in this area suggest that the nib wall must post-date or be contemporary with its construction. The nib wall is mostly visible on its north face (Plate 3); the south was covered with impenetrable vegetation and only a short section at the base could be examined. However, it is mostly construction of squared, roughly dressed clunch blocks, which are evenly coursed at the base to approximately 0.65 m. Above this, the coursing is less coherent, with apparent reconstruction or patching in brick, flint blocks and some cement, though on both ends, the wall is properly quoined and finished. Adjoining the retaining wall, this is in the form of clunch blocks, but at its opposite, outer end, in brick of the same fabric as the wall. Of minor note is the presence of a single small block of Reigate stone.

4.5 Nib Wall 2 is similarly not bonded to the retaining wall but built and quoined in the same manner. The north face is partially exposed and comprises roughly tooled and occasionally squared blocks of clunch, interspersed with other stone types in small quantities (Plate 4). Much less brick repair has been needed so that the

coursing is more coherent. The lower portion has been repaired with flint and cement but the remaining areas retain buff-coloured flinty mortar as seen on the retaining wall. The south face is heavily obscured but apparently comprises clunch and large flint blocks, which are roughly tooled.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 The retaining wall to the Hockey Ground clearly has a Tudor origin. The lowest fourteen or so courses were preserved when the kitchen garden wall was built in the 18th century. Much of this brickwork has a calcified patina which prevents a close examination and may suggest that the fabric was originally buried and only exposed when the wall was raised or rebuilt.

5.2 The two nib walls have very even, dressed clunchwork block courses at their bases which could be interpreted as a medieval survival, such is the skill and care of their construction. However there is little to suggest that these walls are part of any pre-existing building, as well-laid clunch quoining defines their eastern, abutting ends, behind which the 18th century brick joints are scored and could not have been finished in this manner with the nib walls *in situ*. The brick quoins at the opposite ends are also very neatly done, and together they seem to suggest that the walls were constructed at the same time or slightly later than the adjoining kitchen garden wall.

5.3 Their location flanking a former doorway can not be a coincidence. The shrubbery noted in the early 19th century has a sinuous path which suggests that this area functioned as a modest wilderness, appreciated for its picturesque value with ornamental plants. The construction of the nib walls in old stonework might therefore reflect some kind of ornamental terminus to the shrubbery, possibly once roofed as an alcove with a garden seat. They have no logical structural function, as buttresses for example. Much of the brick intervention seen on the north face might be refacing of the soft, easily abraded clunch with any material to hand, which has obscured the original neatness of the construction.

5.4 For the purposes of planning and Scheduled Monument Consent, consideration should be given to the fact that further recording may be required after stripping of vegetation, and that the masonry may incorporate elements such as mouldings or sculptural remnants of historic value.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Solutions would like to thank Turner & Townsend Project Management for commissioning the appraisal on behalf of Sport England (in particular Mr Martyn Hopwood for his assistance).

AS would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Mr Alan Wilkinson of A:kitekts Ltd.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Prosser, L. 2001. *The National Sports Centre, Bisham Abbey, Berkshire: an archaeological desk-based assessment.* Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust
Unpublished report No.920

Websites

English Heritage's Images of England;

<http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk>

APPENDIX 1 HISTORIC SOURCES

Cartographic sources

Date	Title	Scale	Location
1609	Map of Bisham Manor	Not to scale	BRO
1839	Tithe map of Bisham	Not to scale	BRO
1880	Ordnance Survey map, Berks Sheet XXIII.8	25" to 1 mile	BRO
1899	Ordnance Survey map, Berks Sheet XXVIII.5	25" to 1 mile	BRO

APPENDIX 2

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD SUMMARY SHEET

Site name and address:	Works to Curtilage Listed Wall, National Sports Centre, Bisham, Marlow Road, Bisham, Berkshire. Historical Building Appraisal
County: Berkshire	District: Windsor and Maidenhead
Village/Town: Bisham	Parish:
Planning application reference:	09/02576
Client name/address/tel:	Turner & Townsend Project Management (on behalf of Sport England)
Nature of application:	Hydrotherapy pool extension
Present land use:	National sports centre
Size of application area: 5000m ²	Size of area investigated
NGR (8 figures):	SU 8480 8480
Site Code:	n/a
Site director/Organization:	Archaeological Solutions Ltd
Type of work:	Historic Building Appraisal
Date of work:	January 2010
Location of finds/Curating museum:	N/A
Related SMR Nos:	Periods represented: -
Relevant previous summaries/reports: -	
Summary of fieldwork results:	<p><i>In January 2010 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out a historic building appraisal at Bisham Abbey in advance of proposals to remove two nib walls as part of a planning application to construct a hydrotherapy pool extension adjacent to the English Institute of Sport building.</i></p> <p><i>The former monastic precinct at Bisham is still traceable in outline within its square, formerly moated, enclosure, now protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM No. 19021). The site preserves a number of important buildings and fragments related to the monastery, associated secular buildings and elements of its subsequent development.</i></p> <p><i>A retaining wall lying adjacent to the appraisal structures was probably constructed on the foundations and lower courses of a 16th century precursor, which was raised in the 18th century to create an enclosed kitchen garden. The latter recorded on 19th century maps. Technical analysis suggest that the nib walls are contemporary with this period and probably relate to a doorway leading from the former shrubbery to the kitchen garden. The walls are, however, constructed of reused medieval masonry, including clunch, Reigate stone and flint.</i></p>
Author of summary: T Collins	Date of Summary: 14.01.2010

PLATES



Plate 1 Obscured view of the retaining wall showing blocked doorway (indicated), taken from the west (DP 04)



Plate 2 Detail of stone quoining on Nib Wall 1 at the junction with the retaining wall, taken from the north (DP 08)



Plate 3 North face of Nib Wall 1, taken from the north (DP 07)



Plate 4 North face of Nib Wall 2, taken from the north (DP 11)

PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



DP 1

View of Nib Wall 1, taken from north-west



DP 2

South face of Nib Wall 1, taken from the south



DP 3

South face of Nib Wall 1 at junction with the retaining wall, taken from the south-west



DP 4

Obscured view of the retaining wall showing blocked doorway (indicated), taken from the west



DP 5

View of Nib Wall 2, taken from the north-west



DP 6

South face of Nib Wall 2, taken from the south



DP 7

North face of Nib Wall 1, taken from the north



DP 8

Detail of stone quoining on Nib Wall 1 at the junction with the retaining wall, taken from the north



DP 9

Detail of Nib Wall 1, north face, showing areas of repair, taken from the north



DP 10

Exposed clunch at the base of Nib Wall 1, south face, taken from the south



DP 11

North face of Nib Wall 2, taken from the north



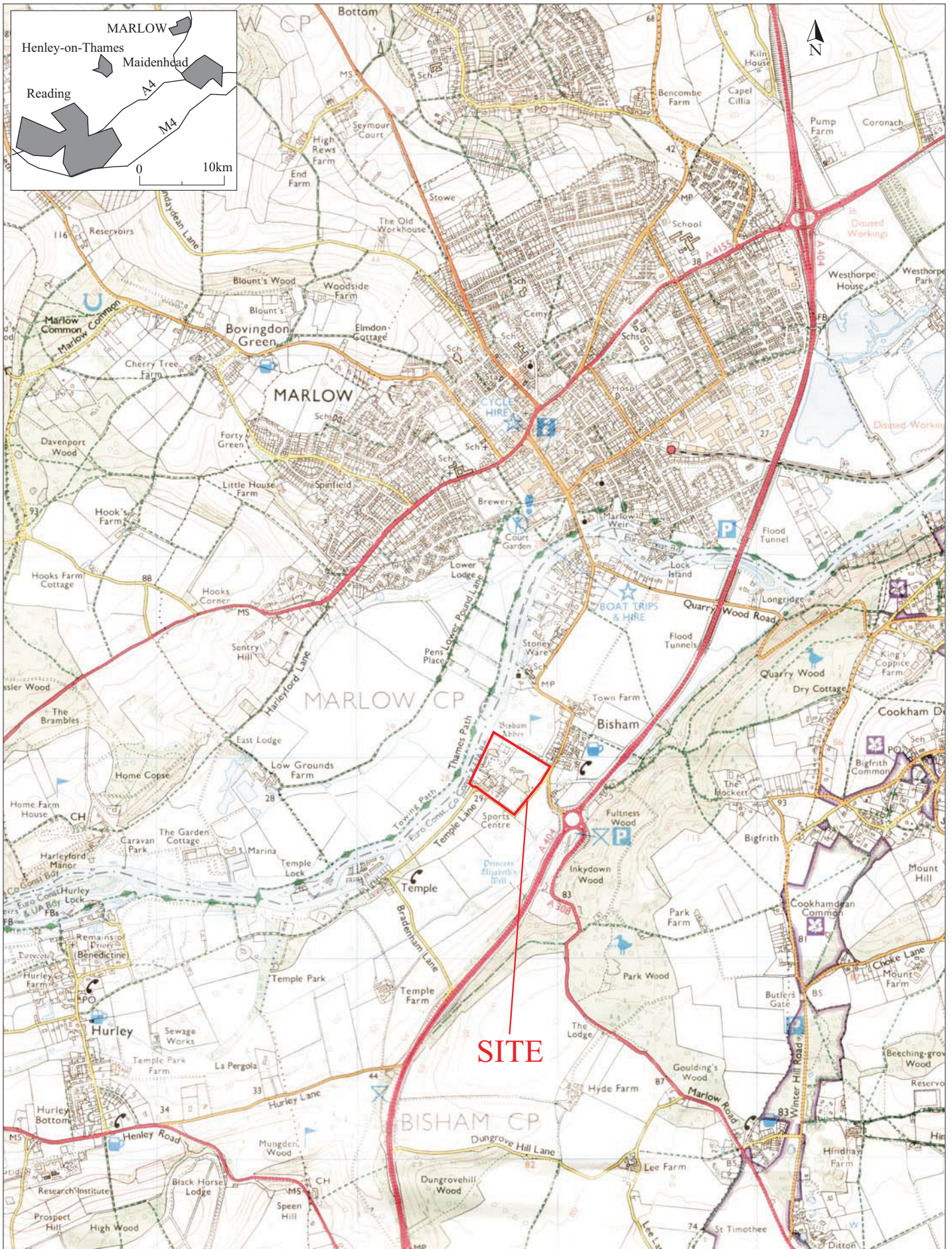
DP 12

Detail of Nib Wall 2, north face, at the junction with the retaining wall, taken from the north-west



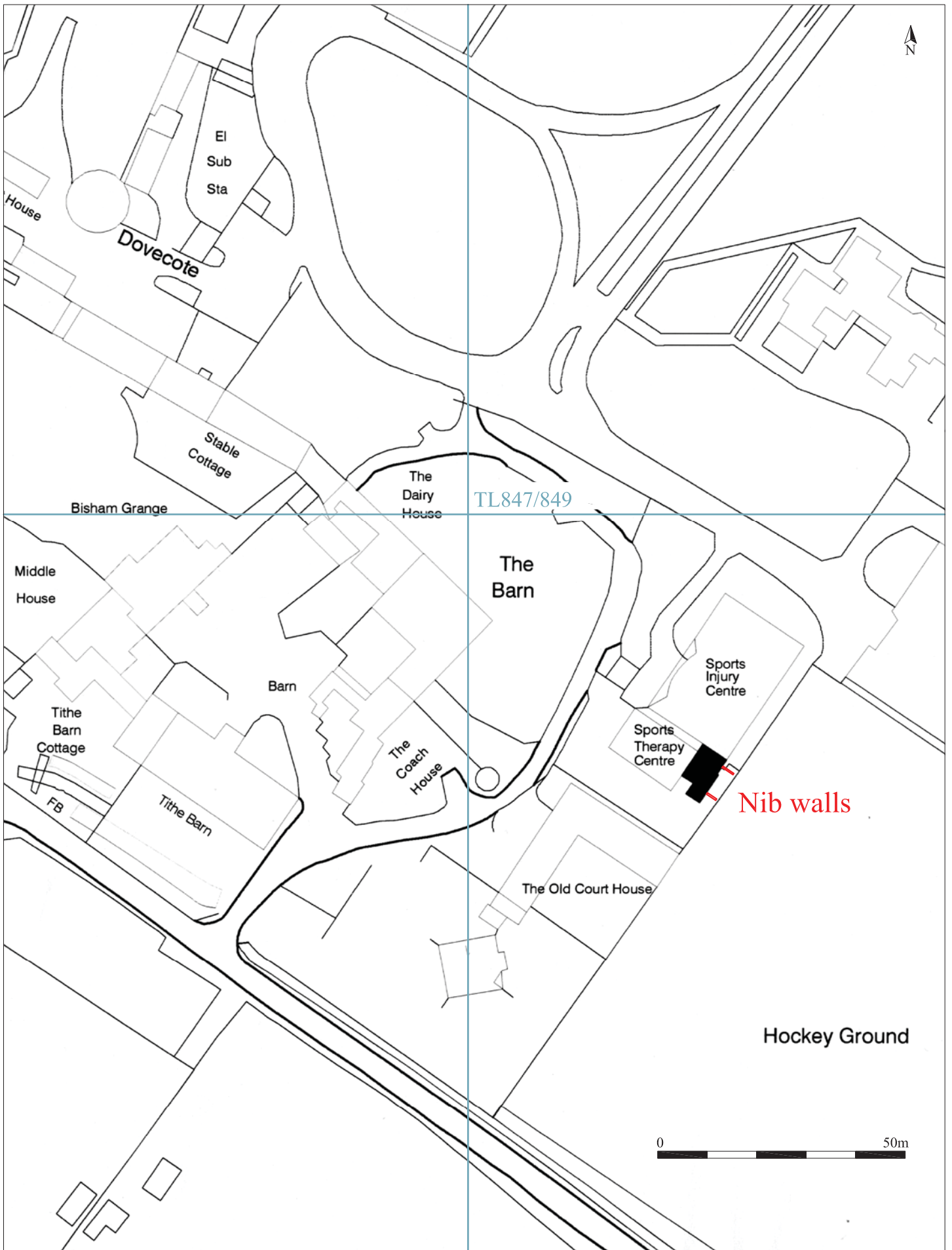
DP 13

Detail of Nib Wall 2, south face, showing clunch and flint blocks, taken from the south

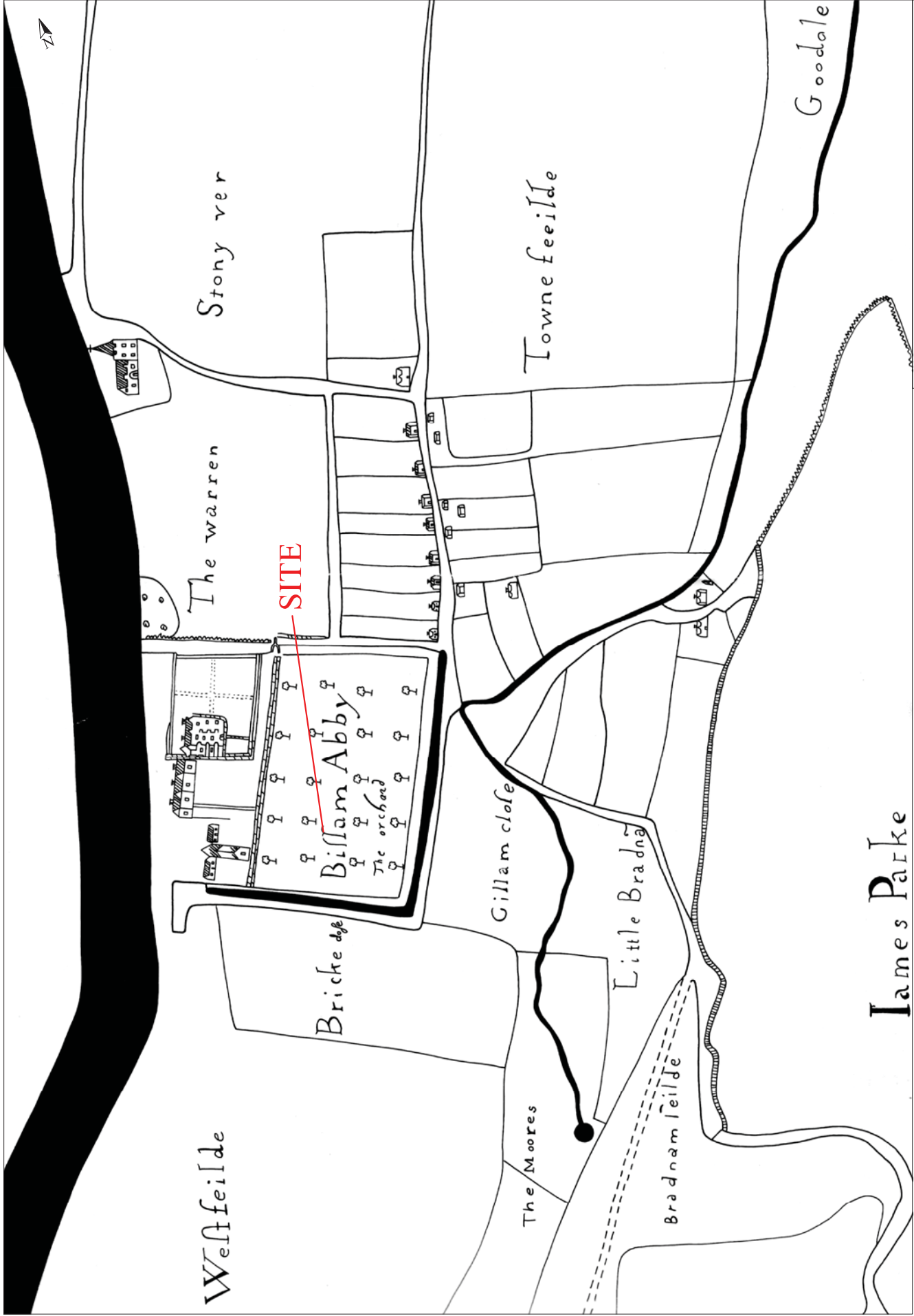


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Fig. 1 Site location plan
 Scale 1:25,000 at A4



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

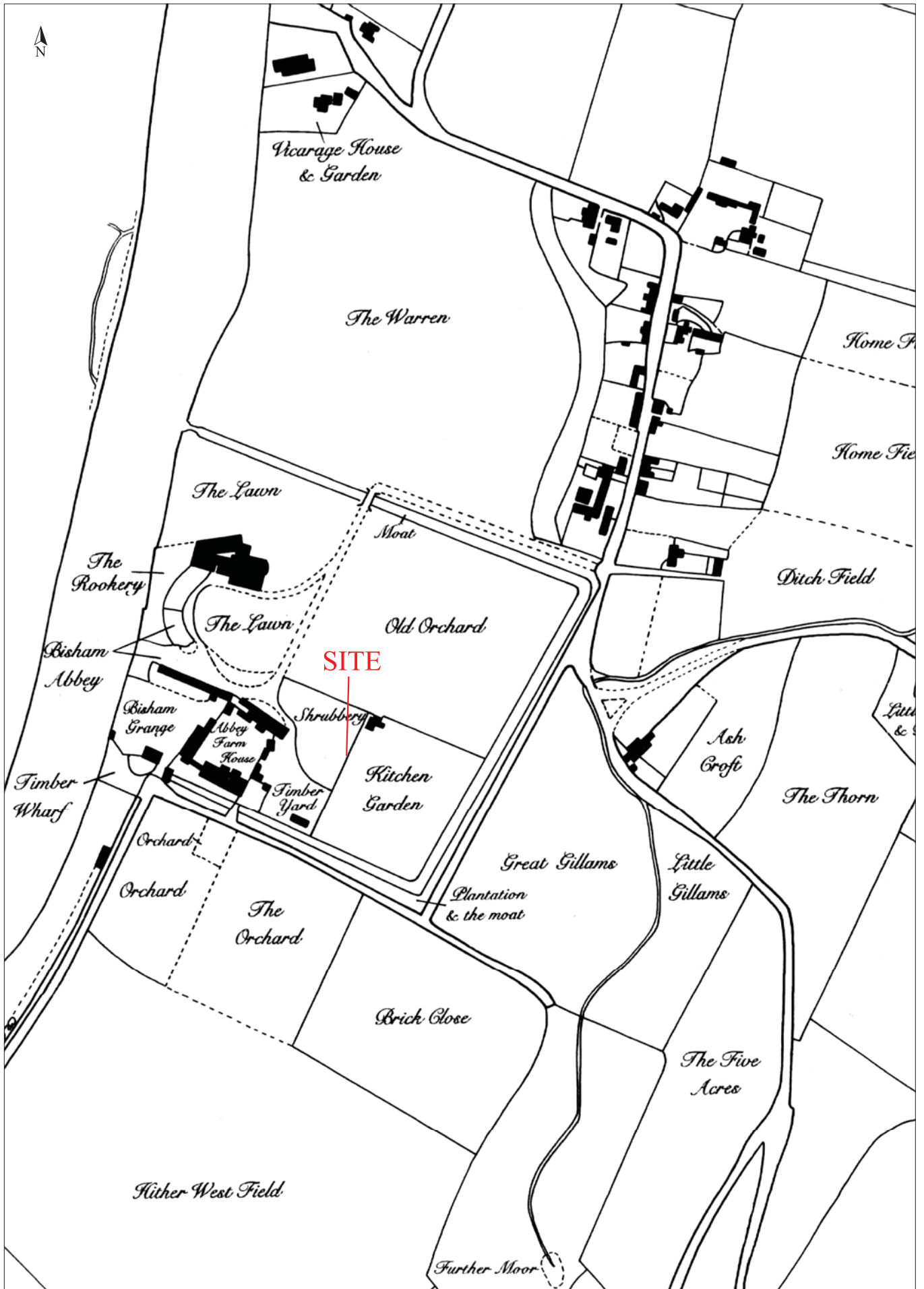


James Parke

Archaeological Solutions Ltd

Fig. 3 Estate map, 1609

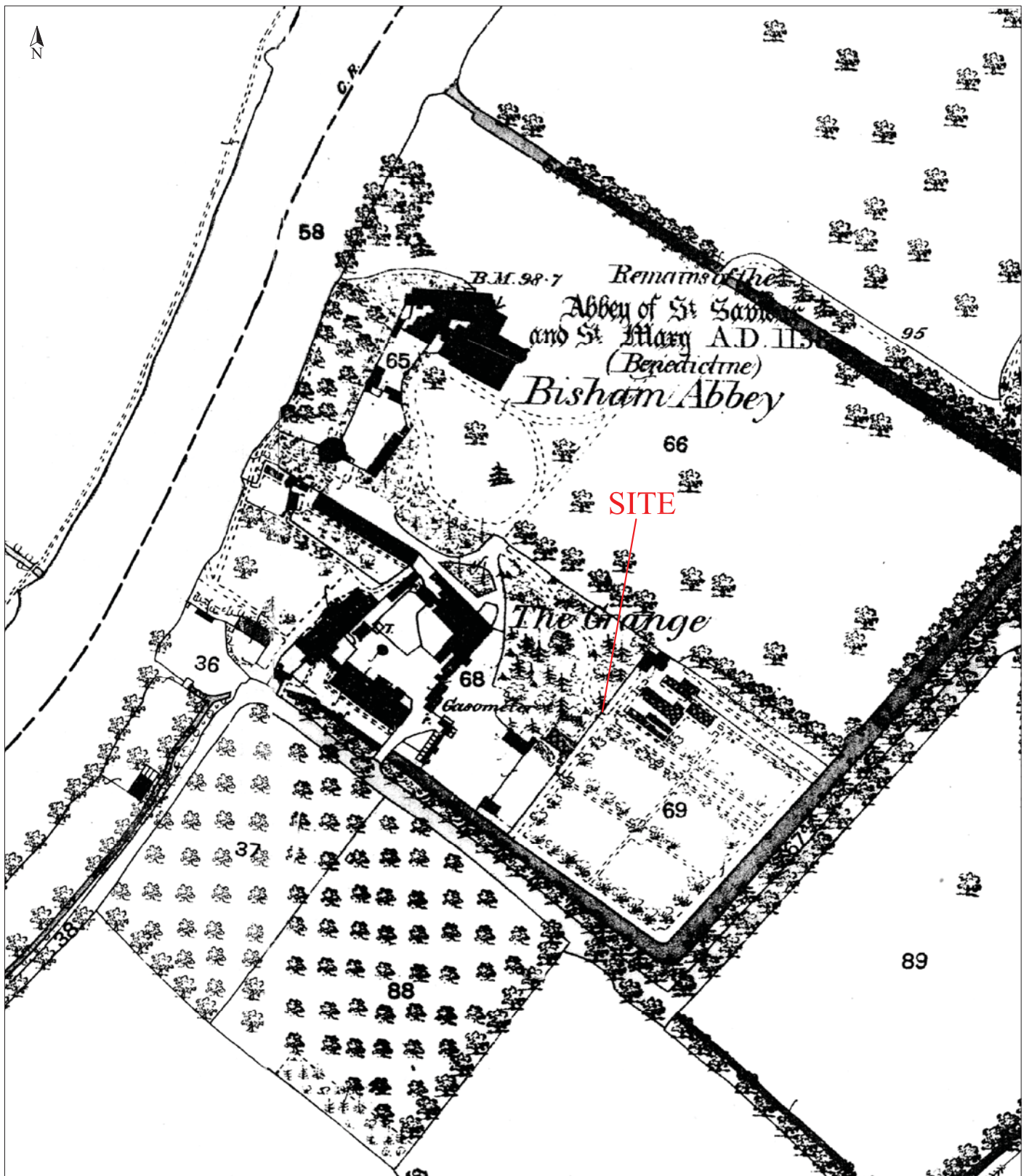
Scale approx 1:5000 at A4



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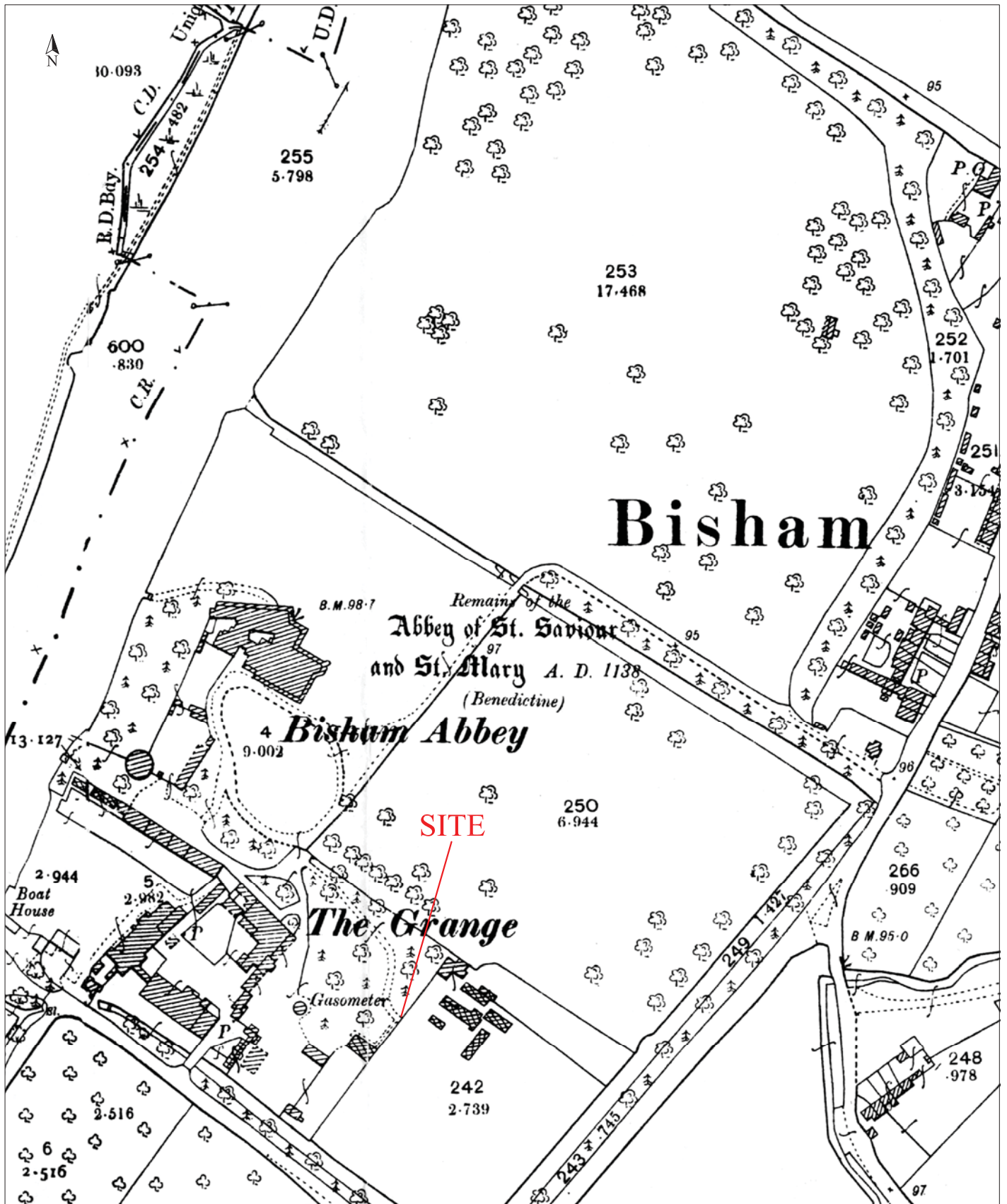
Fig. 4 Bisham tithe map, 1839

Scale approx 1:4000 at A4



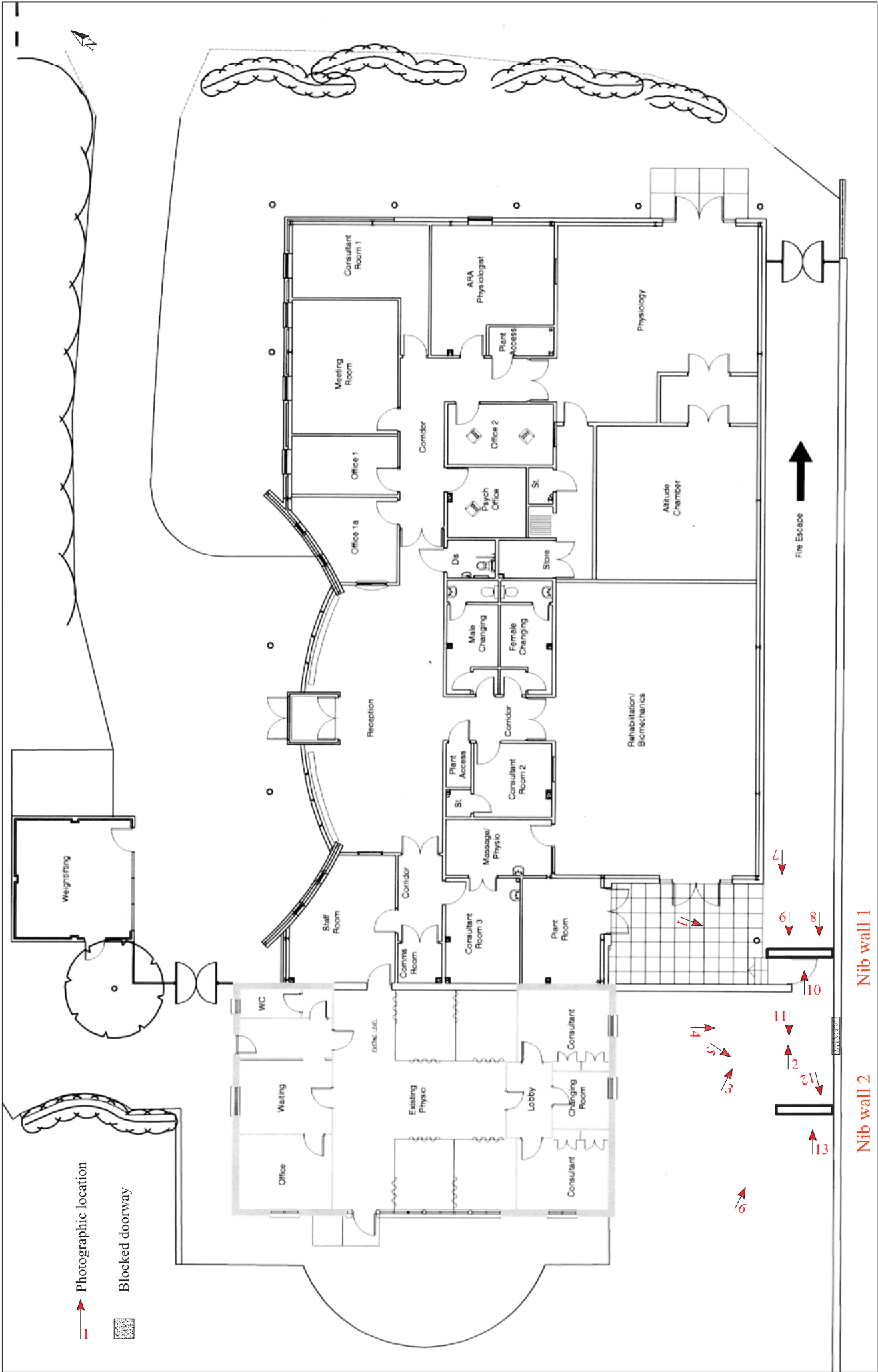
Reproduced from the 1880 Ordnance Survey 25" to 1 mile map with the permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright Archaeological Solutions Ltd Licence number 100036680.

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Fig. 5 1st edition OS map, 1880
 Scale 1:2000 at A4



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 Fig. 6 2nd edition OS map, 1899
 Scale 1:2000 at A4



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Fig. 7 Existing plan of nib walls

Scale 1:200 at A4

