

**Former site of Rounds  
Timber Yard, High Street,  
Tipton, an archaeological  
Watching Brief 2006-  
2007**

Project No. 1488

**Former site of Rounds Timber Yard, High Street, Tipton, an  
archaeological Watching Brief 2006-2007**

By

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For

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## Former site of Rounds Timber Yard, High Street, Tipton, an archaeological Watching Brief 2006-2007

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## SUMMARY

*During November and December 2006 and February 2007, Birmingham Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief at the site of the Former Rounds Timber Yard, High Street, Tipton, West Midlands, centred on NGR 395265, 292273. The work was commissioned by Accord Housing Association Ltd., to satisfy a condition of planning consent. The work consisted of a continuous watching brief during all groundworks and geotechnical works relating to the development.*

*The site was considered to lie within the core of the medieval settlement of Tipton. A possible medieval moated site is thought to have been located in close proximity. The nature of both medieval and post-medieval activity in this area are little understood and a watching brief at the site allowed for the potential for material remains of these periods to contribute to the understanding of its historical development.*

*Insubstantial linear gullies appeared to form the earliest features on the site possibly dating to between the late 17<sup>th</sup>- mid 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and were overlain by substantial quantities of industrial waste material representing intensive activity in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Brick built cellaring was recorded together with a number of brick-lined shafts or wells and evidence for industrial activity, including ironworking, in the form of working surfaces, waste material, possible hammer bases and grinding stones.*

## **FORMER ROUNDS TIMBER YARD, HIGH ST. TIPTON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF, 2006.**

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

Birmingham Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief at the former site of Rounds Timber Yard, High Street, Tipton, West Midlands between November 2006 and February 2007, during groundworks associated with a proposed residential development. The work was commissioned by Accord Housing Association Ltd., to satisfy a condition of planning consent (Planning Application Ref. DC/05/45328), as set out by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (Lewis 2006), in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance note 16, *Archaeology and Planning* (DoE 1990). The work conformed to a Written Scheme of Investigation (Appendix 1), agreed in advance with the Sandwell Assistant Borough Archaeologist and conformed to guidelines set out by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 2001).

### **2 LOCATION AND GEOLOGY**

The development area, hereafter referred to as 'the site', is centred on NGR *395265, 292273* (Fig. 1). It is located on land lying at the junction of Sedgley Road West and High Street and bounded to the northwest by Neptune Health Park, (Fig. 2), with the Birmingham Canal lying to the north and east. The site is at a height of 146m above OD, the underlying geology is Carboniferous coal measures (BGS map sheet 167).

### **3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The principle aim of the project was to assess the survival and potential significance of any archaeological features and deposits within the site.

More specific aims were to:

- To determine the extent, character, function and date of any such archaeological remains and deposits
- To provide further information regarding the origins and historical development of the site, particularly in relation to medieval and post-medieval activity.

### **4 METHODOLOGY**

The Sandwell Sites and Monuments Record and historic maps for the area were consulted, in order to provide an informed background to the archaeological watching brief. All groundworks and geotechnical investigations on the site were continuously monitored. Groundworks were temporarily halted where necessary in order to allow archaeological records to be made. Recording was by means of a numerical context sequence and printed pro-forma record sheets, together with scale plans and colour slide and monochrome print photography, as detailed in a WSI approved by Sandwell MBC (Appendix 1).

### **5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

The site is located within the core of the medieval settlement of Tipton Green (Lewis 2006) and close to the location of a possible medieval, moated site at Hall Street to the west (SMR 6262;

Fig. 3) Little is known about the nature and extent of medieval and post-medieval activity in this area of the Borough of Sandwell (Lewis 2006).

The site is located to the south and west of a branch of the Birmingham Canal (Wolverhampton Level), first shown on the 1887 Ordnance Survey Map of the area (SMR 6731), linking with the Birmingham Canal Locks to the north, constructed by Thomas Telford c. 1829 (SMR 356). The area is characterised by industrial development from at least the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including early 19<sup>th</sup> century glassworks (SMR 9463) and a later 19<sup>th</sup> century soap factory (SMR 2838).

The 1887 Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 4) shows groups of apparently substantial and possibly industrial buildings on the site, in the area between the canal, Sedgely Road West and High Street. The central area of the site remains largely free of buildings at this date. It is notable that 'Neptune Forge' is annotated on the map of 1904 (Fig. 5), on the northern side of the canal, to the north of the site.

The historic maps clearly show 'Shafts' and 'Old Shafts', in areas to the north of the site, relating to coal mining, and a group of buildings shown on the 1921 (Fig. 6) Ordnance Survey map, also to the north of the site, is described as 'Furnace Parade'. Further north on Bloomfield Road, is the site of Bloomfield Iron works, an important early ironworking site during the industrial revolution.

Apart from an apparent reduction in buildings covering the southern part of the site from 1904, the cartographic sources between this date and 1955 (Fig. 7) appear to show a relatively unchanged group of structures here, with the central area remaining open. Building forms appear to have reduced in size by 1980 (Fig. 8) in the eastern area of the site, and it is notable that the building complex to the north, which appears to have developed from those existing in 1887, is described as a 'Forge'. The site was also formerly occupied by Rounds Timber Yard.

## **6 RESULTS**

### **6.1 Boreholes**

The excavation of thirteen boreholes was observed as part of the watching brief within an area of 10m by 14m in the central part of the site (Figs. 2 and 9). The boreholes recorded archaeological deposits in the form of industrial inclusions with brick and coal, from the level of the existing ground surface down to a maximum depth of 2.7m below the surface, generally lying over natural yellow sandy clays. Natural laminated coal-like deposits were recorded between 3 and 5m below the existing ground surface. The detailed observations from each borehole can be found in Appendix 2.

### **6.2 Groundworks**

The results are presented in chronological sequence, where this could be determined, together with sub-sections relating to structure types. Numbered trenches referred to in this section relate to the groundworks on the site and are used as reference points for the location of features. Features are illustrated on the site plan (Fig. 9).

The natural subsoil 1000, consisted of a yellow, slightly sandy clay with whitish and mottled orange brown components lower down in the profile. A highly compressed, laminated organic deposit 1007, up to 0.22m thick with a hard coal-like texture was recorded below the clay at depths of between 1m and 5m in the southwestern part of the site, and in places this was

overlain by a pale grey clay (1010). These deposits are likely to represent the natural coal measures of the area and are comparable with deposits recorded in a number of boreholes (Appendix 2). The yellow sandy clay (1000), was overlain by a thin layer of yellow-brown coal-flecked clay (1026), c. 0.10m thick.

### ***Gullies***

In Trench 2, a narrow linear gully 1013, aligned north-south, was revealed cutting the natural subsoil 1000. The gully was approximately 0.80m wide and between 0.22m and 0.45m deep, flat bottomed, with a steep-sided, V-shaped profile in places. The fill of this feature was a homogenous, charcoal flecked, yellowish-grey, sandy clay (1012). The fill 1012 was succeeded by a number of layers: layer 1021, made up of a light grey brown clay-silt with flecks of coal, overlain by layer 1020, a mid grey brown clay-silt, flecked with coal soot and possible hearth midden material, layer 1019 a dark grey silt, and layer 1018 a dark grey silt with frequent coal inclusions.

Further north a short section of a similar north-south aligned gully (1028) was exposed during the excavation of Trench 4. It was recorded over a length of 2.80m. The fill 1027 was a loose mixture of sandy clay silt and contained pot sherds (see below). Where exposed, the gully was around 0.50-0.80m wide and c.0.25m deep. This gully was sealed under a thick layer of re-deposited clay. Features 1013 and 1028 were almost certainly separately revealed portions of a single gully.

Running parallel to 1013 and 1028 but c.10m further east, a second gully of similar dimensions was located at two points along its length. The gullies 1036 and 1054 were of U-shaped profile, between 0.35 and 0.5m wide and 0.25 and 0.49m deep, respectively, and cut the coal-flecked clay 1026. The channel had been deliberately filled with angular fragments of stone with a few fragments of red brick and capped with lintels of shale. There was little evidence of silting in the channel and for the most part the voids between the stones in the fill were still clear. Given their parallel courses it is possible that gullies 1013/1028 and 1036/1054 were contemporary.

Near the northeast end of Trench 6 a further possible gully 1031 was recorded, measuring 0.3m deep and 0.6m wide, orientated northwest to southeast. The fill (1030) was of grey-brown, clayey, organic silt containing charcoal, coal, lime mortar, small fragments of red brick and tile and pot sherds.

### ***Industrial remains***

A number of partially surviving industrial features were recorded in the southern and southwestern areas of the site, which appear to relate to ironworking. Near the southern boundary a horizontal mass of iron 1049 was partially revealed. The deposit was 1.75m wide by 0.33m thick and at least 4m long (its westward extent was not fully revealed). The material appeared to be laminated and its surface was level and even. Whether it had accumulated on a floor is uncertain since for the purposes of the groundwork, it was not necessary to remove the deposit.

In the southwest area of the site, a pair of parallel brick foundations (1052) were recorded. These were 1m apart, 1.50m long by 0.45m thick by 0.80m deep and cut into the natural subsoil 1000. The foundations were underpinned by horizontal wooden sleepers aligned with the masonry. Upright iron rods, 45mm square in cross-section, were secured in holes through the thickness of each sleeper and ran up through the masonry, near each end. These rods extended above the surface of the masonry and the projecting ends were bent at random



angles (Plate 1). It seems possible that this arrangement represented the foundation for heavy machinery. The sleepers may have been intended to counteract the effect of vibration whilst a possible use of the iron rods would be to secure the machinery on the foundations.

To the northeast a partial brick floor surface was also recorded (1041). This surface was constructed over deposits of iron slag and brick rubble and was overlain with thin, alternating layers of coal dust and laminated ferrous material. Remnants of brick foundations were also recorded apparently in association with the surface. Three substantial timber sleepers with attached square sectioned iron rods (comparable with those in the foundations 1052) were also recorded here during the groundworks. The largest was 2.33m long by 0.33m wide by 0.23m thick.

Several rectangular cast iron plates, c.20-25mm thick were also uncovered during machining from the southwest quarter of the site. Most were broken and one was embedded in a mass of fused clay, coal dust etc. The largest measured 0.92m by 0.80m by 0.02m but most were smaller, the majority being 0.30m wide and about 0.62m long. Plates of this type may have been used to protect the floors of industrial buildings. A pair of tongs, probably forging tongs (Plate 2) came from the industrial overburden (1023) in this same area as did at least one of two large, cylindrical stone objects, which may have been used for industrial grinding (Plates 3, 4, and 5; see below).

An industrial floor (1047) was recorded in the southeastern part of the site and consisted of closely set, large, rough-hewn stones cut to an even surface and set on a bed of sand. The thickness of the stone paving was c. 0.30m. The stones had been subject to intense heat, which had penetrated downward sufficiently to discolour the sand beneath. The surface of the floor lay about 0.80m below the current ground level and was overlain with an accumulation of ash, coal dust and iron-rich detritus.

Over the majority of the excavated area an accumulation of industrial refuse (1025) 0.30m-1.90m thick was recorded sealing the industrial features (Plate 6). This consisted mainly of sandy silt with coal dust, ash and demolition rubble of brick and lime mortar. In most of the recording a single context number was used to describe all of these deposits though it was clear that they had accumulated over a period of time during the later 19th century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and were not the result of a single depositional event. Much of the detritus included in the overburden 1025 appeared to have been the result of iron working activity, including fused masses of sand, burnt clay, coal dust and iron, along with artefacts seemingly related to iron working (Macey-Bracken below).

### ***Brick shafts***

Five brick-lined shafts, were recorded on the site. Over the area of Trench 1, four deep, brick-lined shafts, each about 1m in diameter were encountered (1046 A-D; Fig. 9). The shafts were filled with water at the level of the water table and had been back-filled with brick rubble, scraps of timber, rags, metal etc, some of which looked fairly recent. These shafts were presumably wells that had supplied water for industrial consumption.

A water- filled, brick lined shaft 1008 was located c. 17m east of the group of industrial features associated with large structural wooden sleepers (1041 and 1052). The shaft was set in a circular construction trench filled with re-deposited light grey clay. The structure was D-shaped in plan (Plate 7) and measured internally 0.51m by 0.49m. The curved side was of a single thickness of stretcher-laid bricks bonded with lime mortar. The straight side was defined by a log of 0.15m diameter, set horizontally across the ends of the brickwork and a partly overlain by a stone slab.

The level of water in the shaft was 0.63m below the present surface of the masonry. Probing below the surface of the water with a rod indicated a depth of at least 2m; the rod hit solid material at that level. The straight side beneath the split log was also probed and appeared to be of material that was harder than wood. As found, the top surfaces of all of the bricks bore traces of lime mortar. This indicates that further courses existed originally, above the level at which the feature was recorded. A short stretch of a brick wall (1068) aligned northeast-southwest was recorded adjacent to the feature (Plate 7).

### ***Buildings***

A number of brick structures were recorded on the site during the watching brief. The majority of the masonry consisted of red and very occasional yellow brick, bonded with coal flecked lime mortar. The bricks were of a regular size and had fairly sharp arrises suggesting that they were machine-cut.

In the north corner of the site, the remains of three structures were visible. A brick wall 1059, aligned southwest to northeast, consisted of two surviving standing courses and a foundation of three courses. To the east of this wall a single course of bricks 1060, appeared to represent the remains of associated brick paving. A further wall was recorded to the east (1061) which appeared to represent the west corner of a cellar.

The best preserved structure on the site was a cellar 1024, lying approximately 5m from the middle of the northeast boundary (Figs. 9 and 10; Plate 8). The masonry was of red brick bonded with coal-flecked lime mortar. The building consisted of a brick floored room (1003) measuring internally 4.35m by 3.55m, with a much smaller, seemingly contemporary vault (1004) projecting from the southwest corner. The latter structure was backfilled with redeposited clay (1006) and a single sherd of pot was recovered from this (see below).

There was sufficient survival of masonry above the springing, on either side of cellar 1024 to indicate that it took the form of a barrel vault. There was a wide opening, presumably the entrance, in the middle of the southwest wall of the larger chamber. Near the middle of the opposite wall was a small (0.52m wide) opening with its sill at 1.03m above the original brick floor. The cellar was modified by the addition of an internal abutting structure (1005) in the southeast corner. This structure was made up of red brick bonded with lime mortar and must have been added not long after the completion of the original structure. Further modification consisted of the blocking of the opening in the southwest wall and of the opening into the smaller room. Thereafter the internal wall faces (including the blocking masonry), and the brick floor were plastered over with a coat of cement. At a still later stage the narrow opening in the northeast wall was blocked with dry-laid brickwork. The structures were backfilled with rubble.

Further south, the remains of the stone footings of an above-ground structure (1043) were located (Fig. 9). These footings were of one course of rough hewn stone slabs and bricks with a maximum height of 0.15m and overlay a pair of box drains (1044 A and 1044 B), with lintels and floors of stone slabs. The drains and footings were probably built at the same time. On the evidence of bricks incorporated in the rubble masonry of the footings and the type of bonding mortar employed (similar to that in the vaults 1003 and 1004) these remains were probably of late 19<sup>th</sup> century date.

The footings 1043 were cut to the southwest by the construction trench of a large brick lined cellar (1053). Only parts of the lowest courses of the walls of this cellar survived, the entire structure having been truncated. To the west and northwest the same cellar had been truncated by the foundation trench of a very substantial modern concrete pile-base.

To the southwest, at a right angle to the road frontage, the remains of further cellar (1045) were recorded. The walls of this structure were of red brick bonded with lime mortar, faced internally and re-pointed with cement mortar. The masonry survived to 2.30m high and appeared to represent the walls of a cellar that was 3.75m wide. The remains of a vaulted ceiling, sprang from the southwest corner but there was no vaulting in the bay to the northeast. A further wall (1057) of similar thickness and comparable alignment was recorded extending towards the road frontage, and may have been contemporary with the cellar. Wall 1057 appeared to have been truncated by well shaft 1046B. Further to the west the remains of another below ground structure (1051) were located. The chamber was approximately 1.30m wide and 14 courses of brickwork survived.

A number of dis-used sewers were located in the southern part of the site (1048, 1050, 1062, and 1058). These had walls of two brick thickness and vaulted roofs. The original masonry was of red brick bonded with lime mortar and in each case the channel was approximately 0.62m wide. There was some use of cement mortar in the masonry of 1050 but whether this was structural or re-pointing was not established.

In the eastern area of the site, the remains of the northwest wall of a possibly later structure (1042) were located. This wall, surviving to a length of 3.41m and 22 courses high, was of red brick laid in stretcher bond. It was only one brick thick and was bonded and internally rendered with cement mortar. The structure had been built onto a layer of demolition rubble (1066), c. 0.45m thick. This is evidence to demonstrate a phase of building post-dating industrial phases on the site. The wall was, in turn, sealed by coal dust and coal slack (1064).

## 7 FINDS

*Pottery and other finds by Erica Macey-Bracken with pottery identification by Stephanie Rátkai*

Ten sherds of post-medieval pottery, a pair of metal tongs, three fragments of tile, two fragments of glass and a piece of clay pipe bowl were recovered from the site. The finds were cleaned and examined macroscopically for the purposes of this report.

The earliest pottery recovered from the site was two sherds of late 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century coarseware (gully fill 1027) and a sherd of blackware (gully fill 1030). Two sherds of 18<sup>th</sup> century green-glazed creamware (gully fill 1030) in a cauliflower design were also recovered. These sherds were probably from a jug or sauce boat, and date to between the 1750s – 60s. The remainder of the pottery was of later 18<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> century date, and included a sherd of industrial slipware (cellar backfill 1006), another sherd of coarseware (layer 1018), as well as two sherds of painted ware dating to the 1830s – 40s (unstratified).

A pair of near-complete forging tongs was also recovered from the site (layer 1023; Plate 2). These tongs, 780mm in length, were very well-preserved, although they had seized around the bolt that joins the two arms of the tongs.

Two fragments of glass were also recovered from context 1030. One of these fragments was from a dark green bottle, whilst the other is a fragment of clear blue window glass. The remainder of the finds from the site were undatable due to their small size and lack of diagnostic features. The three fragments of tile recovered from the site (gully fill 1012) are made from a fine sandy orange clay, and given the site history and the amount of overburden on the site, are likely to be of post-medieval date. The fragment of clay pipe bowl (1020) is too small to be compared with examples of known date.

*Stone objects by Andrew Gittins*

Two stone 'cylinders' were recorded on the site, both in secondary contexts. These substantial objects, made of solid stone could only be moved by mechanical excavator and were not, therefore, retained. The stones were wrought from a very hard, reddish stone, possibly Old Red Sandstone. The first smaller cylinder (Plates 3 and 4) measured 0.52m diameter by 0.33m thick and was perforated by a 0.09m, square section hole through its centre. One of the flat faces was hammer or chisel dressed to an even surface. The opposite face was slightly less even and had a single diametric furrow with rather irregular edges, averaging about 50mm wide and 5mm deep. The central perforation was blocked at this face by a domed mass of rusted iron. The circumference of the cylinder was smoothly dressed or else had been smoothed by usage.

The second, larger, stone cylinder (Plate 5) was similar but 0.59m in diameter and 0.30m thick. Part of it was obscured by a fused mass of clay, coal, and iron that adhered to the sides and one of the flats. These objects may have been grindstones. The central, square sectioned perforations capped with iron on one side suggest attachment to a drive shaft perhaps.

## **8 DISCUSSION BY JOHN HALSTED**

In the southwest area of the site a number of industrial structures and features were recorded which appear to relate to ironworking, including burnt floor surfaces, industrial grind stones, iron tongs, iron slag and coal waste. Certain structural elements, including wooden 'sleepers' with attached iron fittings may also represent hammer bases, using precedents from Ironbridge Archaeology's excavations at Wednesbury Forge (Belford and Mitchell 2006). A number of cylindrical grind stones were also recorded in recent excavations at the Wednesbury Forge (*ibid.*), where they have been recorded in secondary contexts such as the foundations for railway lines. These are comparable to the two stones found at the former Rounds Timber Yard. Several possible wells or shafts on the site at Rounds Timber Yard were also presumably related to the industrial processes here.

It seems likely that the activity relates to the Neptune Forge, first annotated on the 1904 OS map, and noted immediately to the north of the site area as late as 1980. The site of the watching brief appears to be located in a relatively open area, towards the southern extent of a group of industrial buildings, with smaller buildings arranged around this open area.

The cellaring and brick structures apparent in the eastern and northeastern areas of the site also appear to relate to industrial buildings, situated close to the canal and appearing to form part of the forge complex to the north, as recorded on the historic mapping between 1887 and 1955. A substantial building was depicted on the 1887 map in the southwest area of the site, subsequently split into a smaller group of buildings in this area, present until the 1980s. It seems likely that these structures relate to blade grinding, hammering or other forging activities, suggested by the evidence from the watching brief. The possible hammer bases for instance were located in this area, and may correspond with a building depicted opposite Bell Street on the 1921 OS map. The burnt stone floor surface may also relate to structures adjacent to High Street as shown on the 1904 OS map and subsequent revisions. The watching brief suggests therefore that this area was an integral part of the forge, despite the concentration of large industrial buildings to the north. It may be possible to suggest that this forge functioned in close association with the Bloomfield Road Ironworks site located in close proximity to the northwest, also adjacent to the canal.

The few 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century pot sherds from gully features on the northwest side of the site may represent phases of activity pre-dating the industrial use of the site, or may equally represent early phases of industrial activity here. There was no evidence recorded during the watching brief of medieval occupation on the site.

## 9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was commissioned by Accord Housing Association Ltd and thanks are due to Fiona Fell. Many thanks are also due to Dean Bradbury on site, for his cooperation and assistance throughout the project. Thanks also go to Charlotte Lewis, Assistant Borough Archaeologist, who monitored the project on behalf of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. Elliot Toms of Geo-Environmental provided a plan of the borehole locations. The Watching Brief was maintained by Mark Charles, Kristina Krawiec and Andrew Gittins who also produced the written report. The report was illustrated by Nigel Dodds, and edited by John Halsted who also monitored the project for Birmingham Archaeology.

### 9.1 Cartographic Sources

1891 Ordnance Survey Map  
1904 Ordnance Survey Map  
1921 Ordnance Survey Map  
1955 Ordnance Survey Map  
1980 Ordnance Survey Map  
BGS map sheet 167, Dudley: solid and drift (1975)

## 10 REFERENCES

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*Lewis, C. 2006. Brief for an archaeological watching brief at Former site of Rounds Timber Yard, High Street, Tipton, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council.*





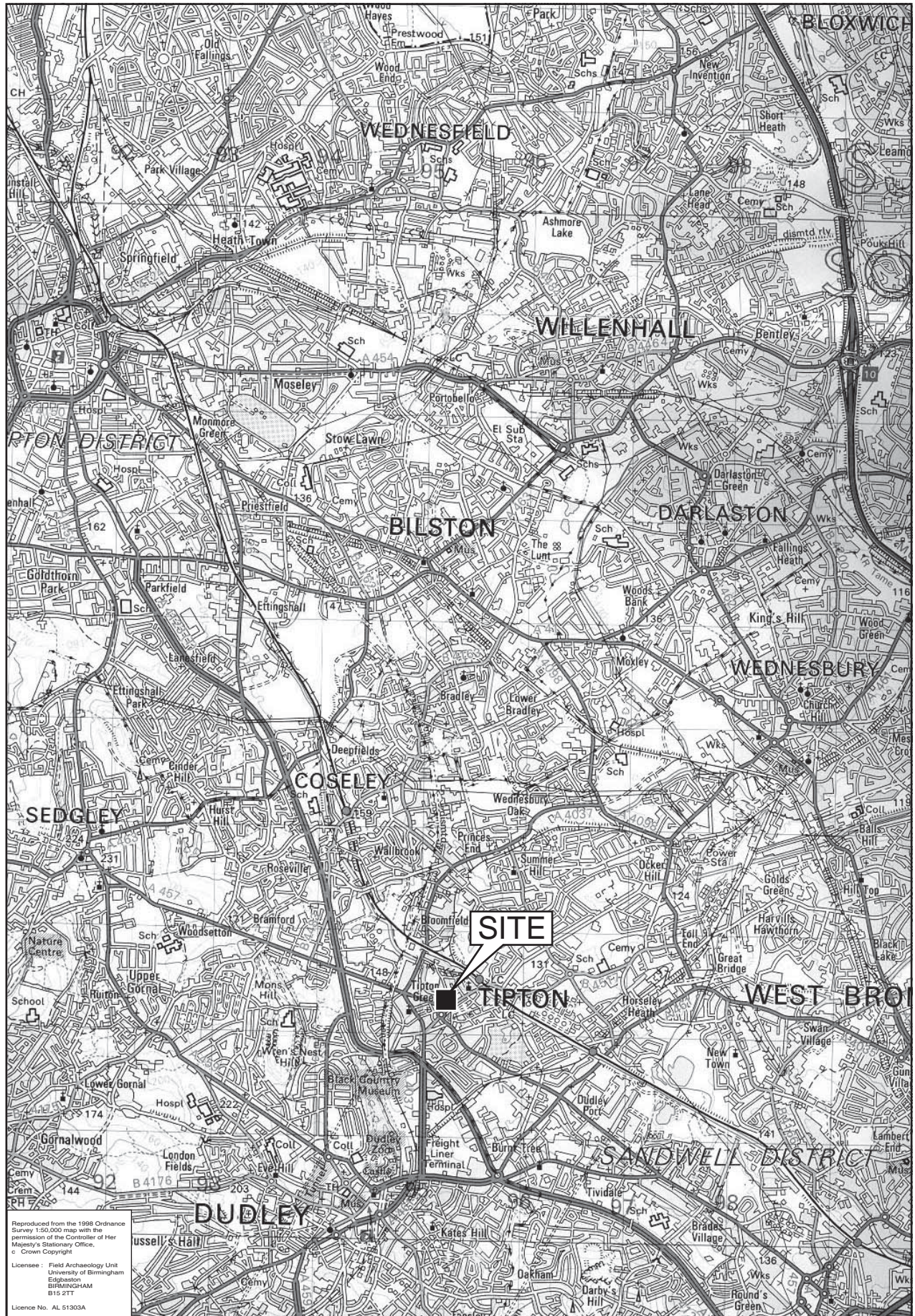


Fig.1





Fig.2



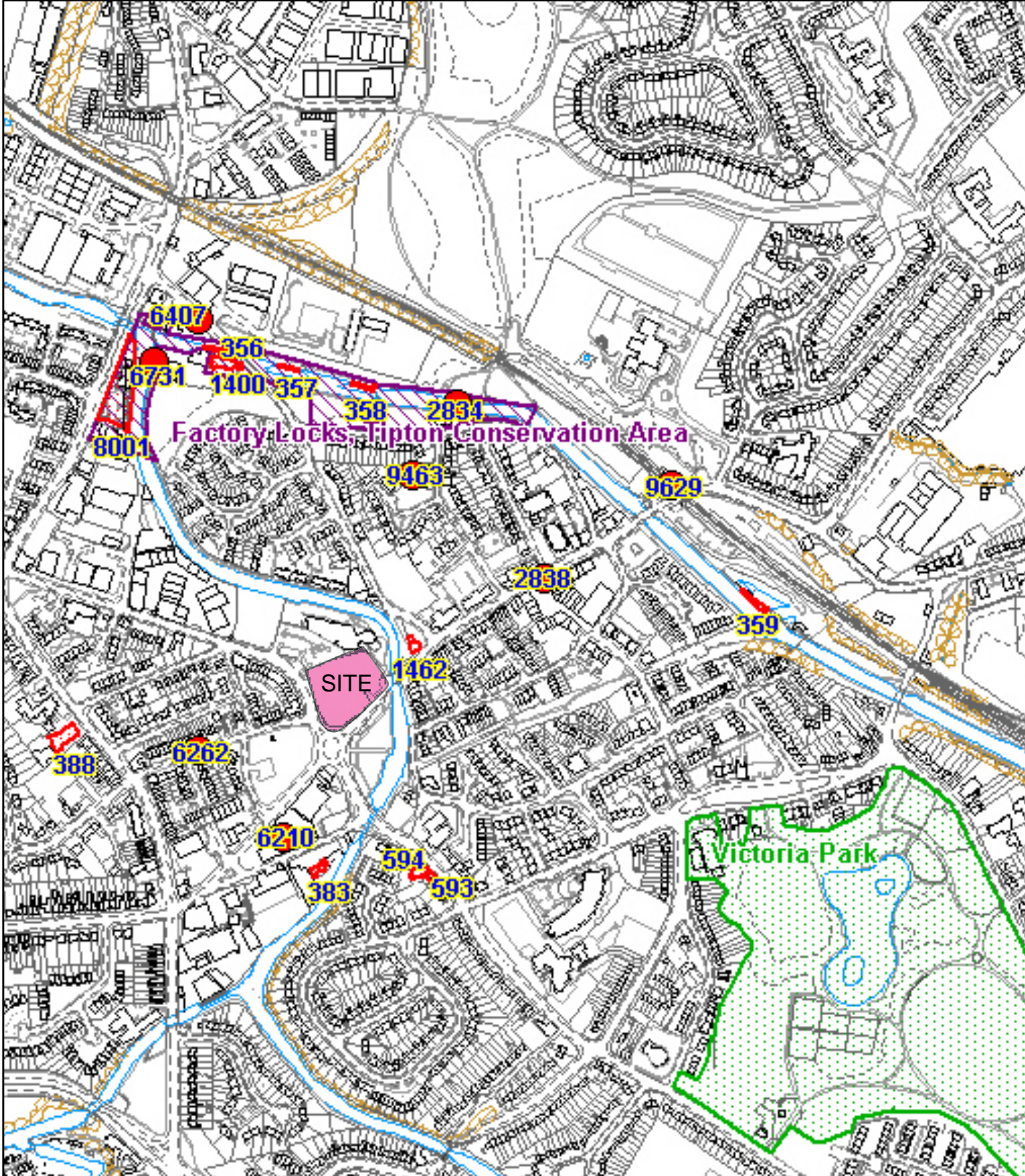


Fig.3



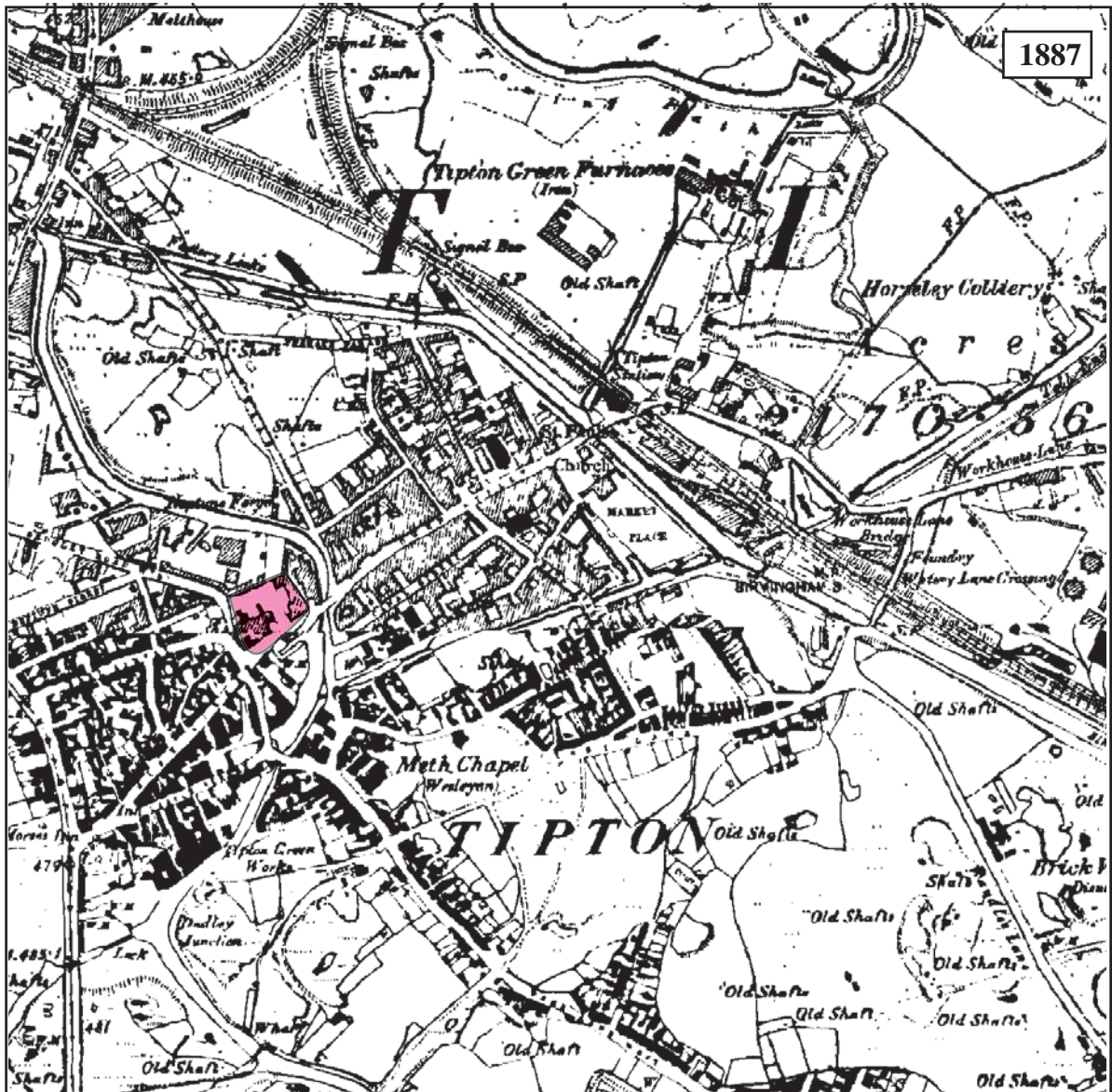


Fig.4

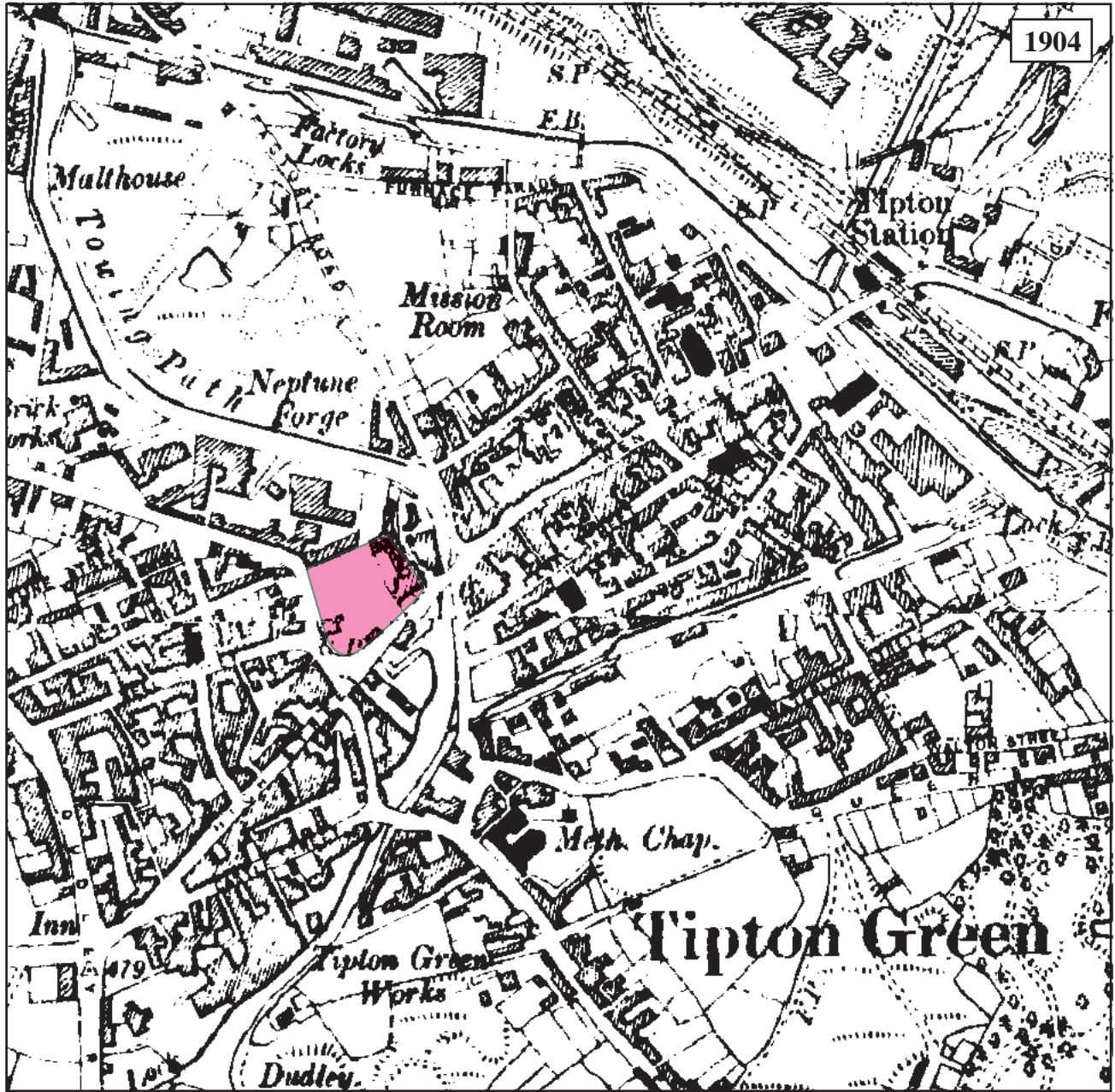


Fig.5



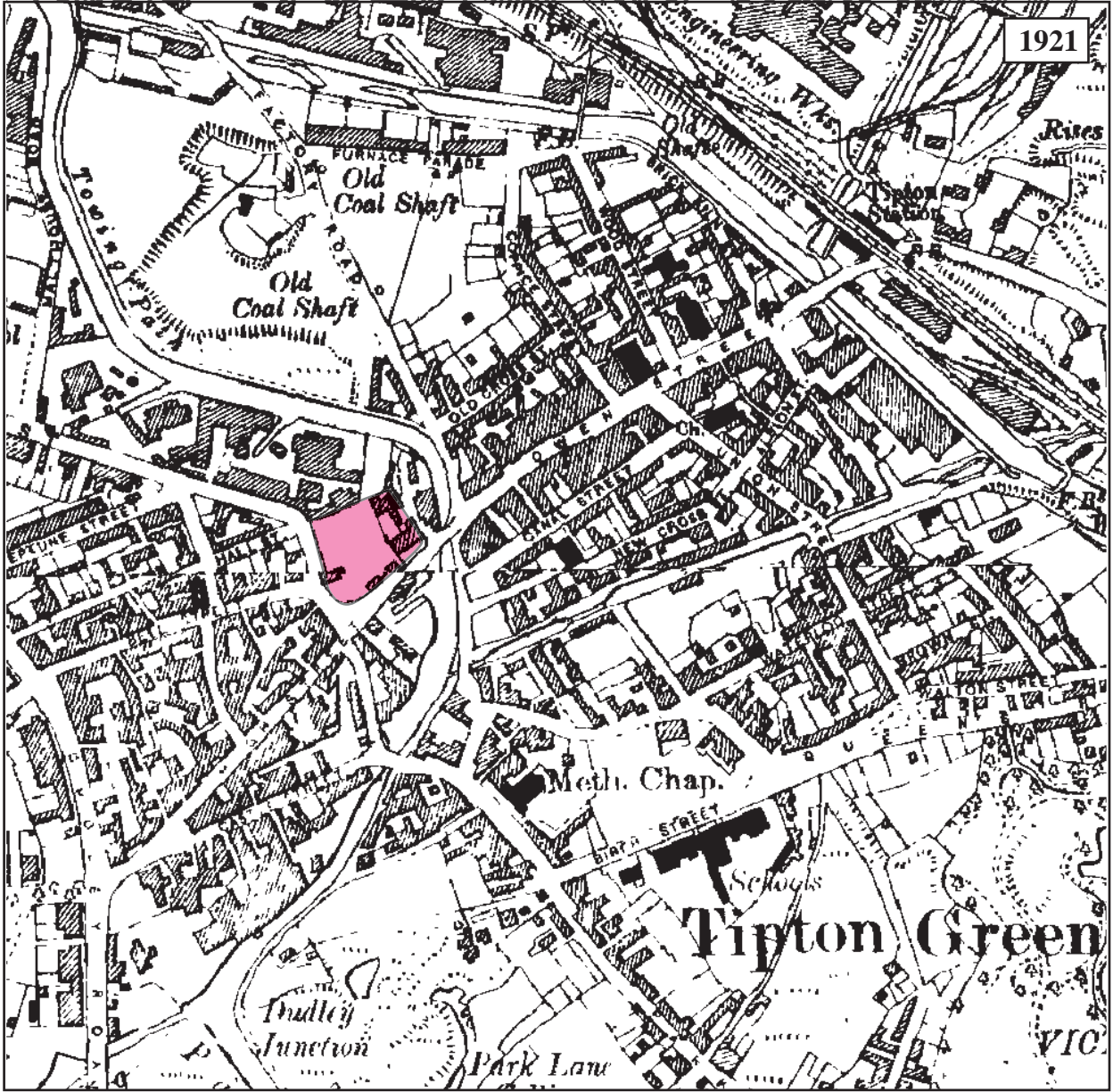


Fig.6

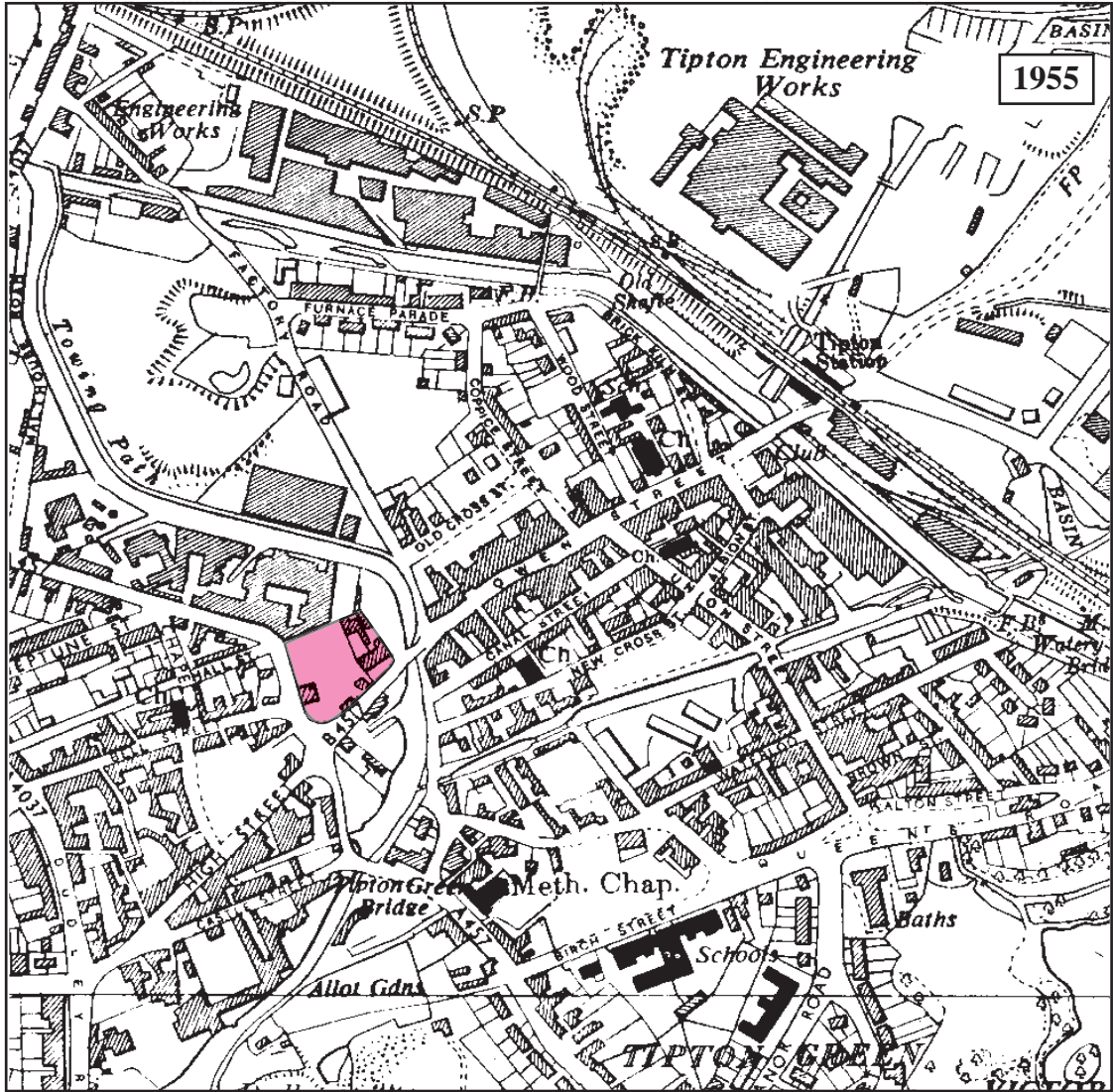


Fig.7

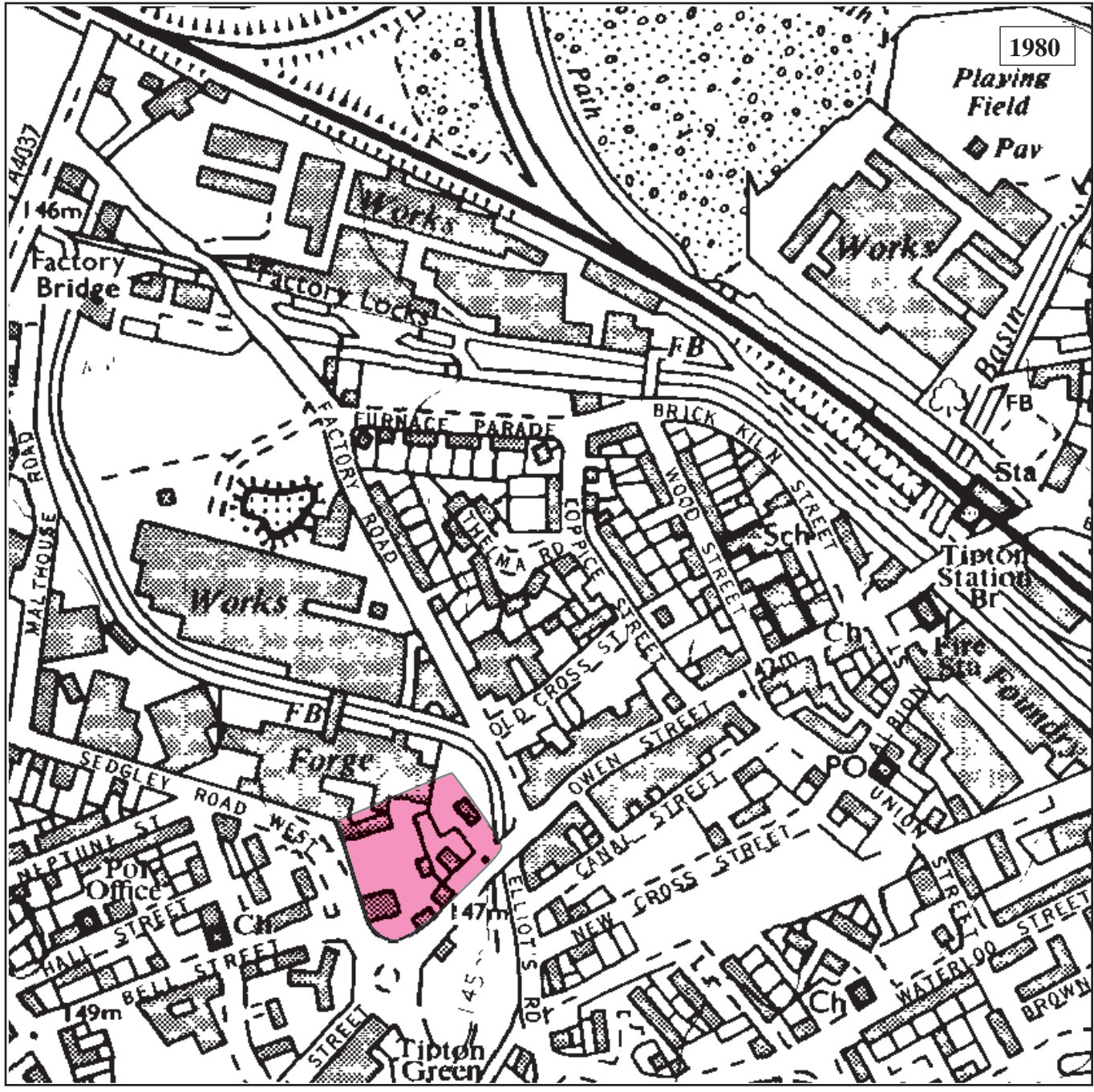


Fig.8



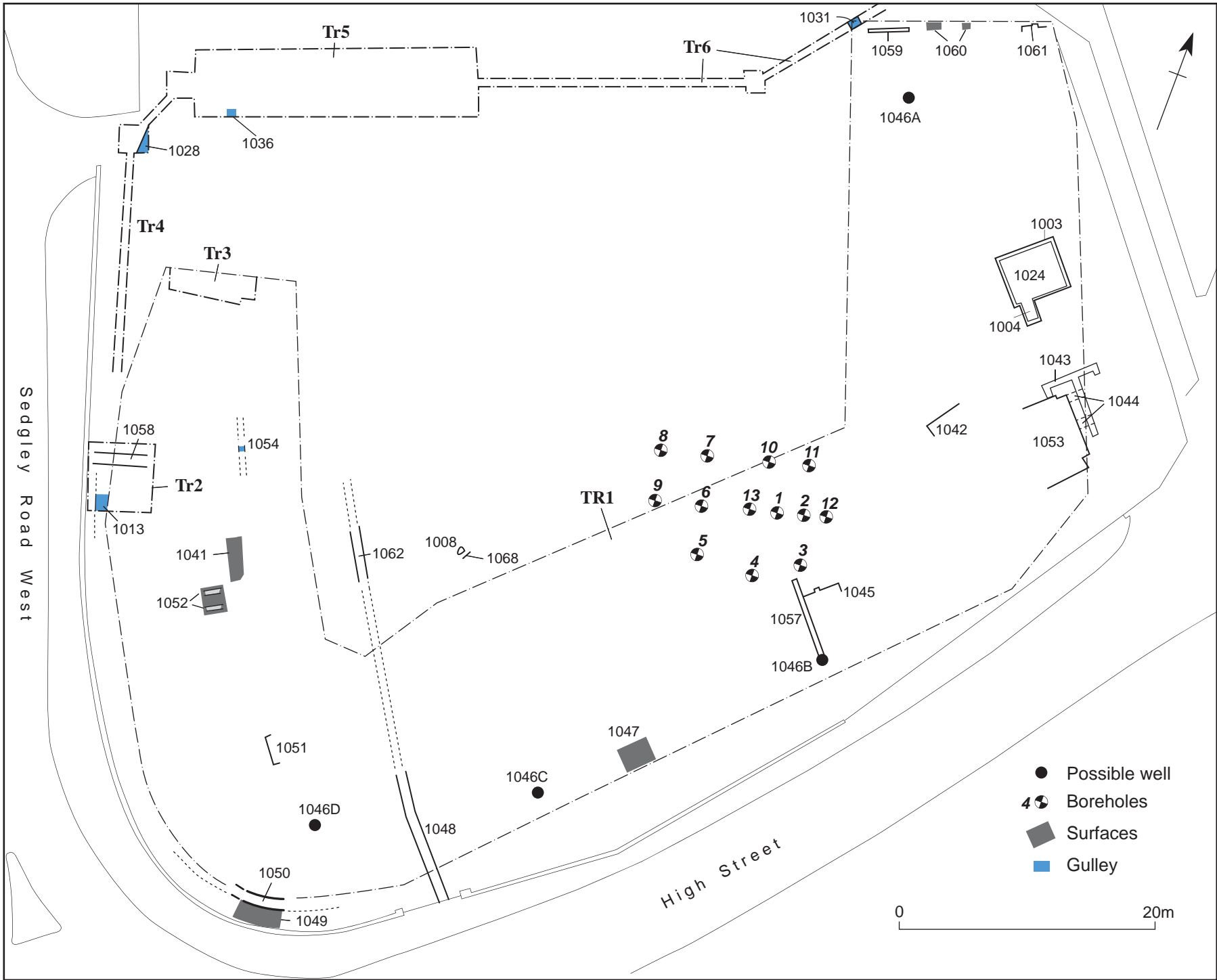


Fig.9

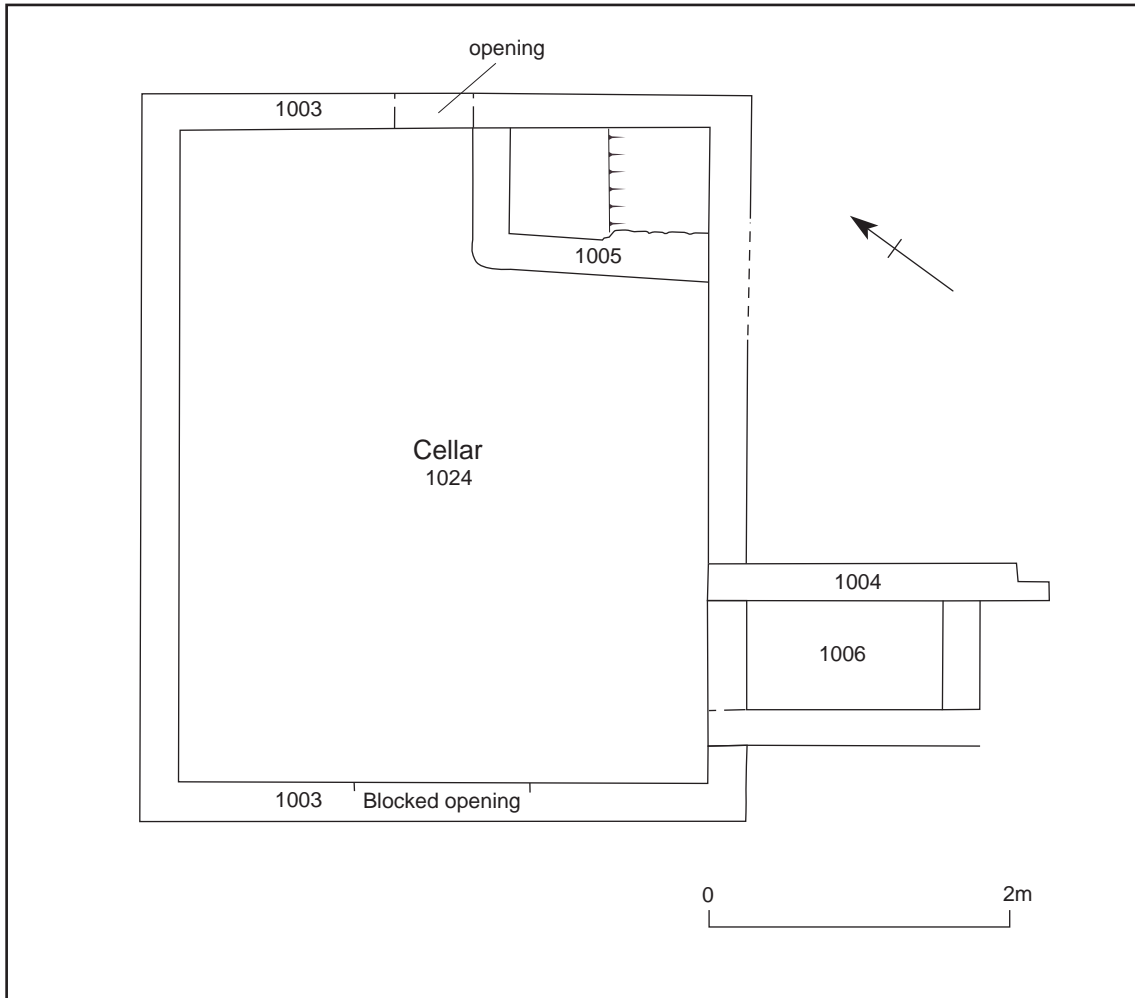


Fig.10





Plate 1



Plate 2



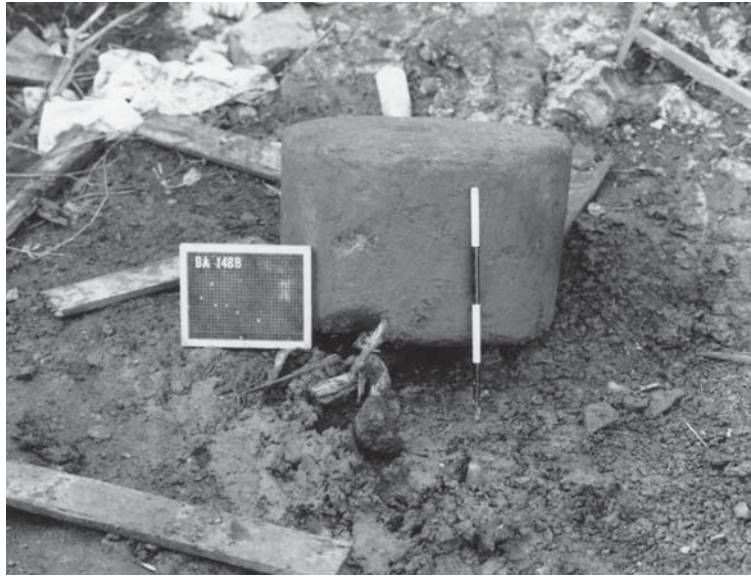


Plate 3



Plate 4



Plate 5



Plate 6





Plate 7



Plate 8

## APPENDIX 1

## WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

### 1.0: PLANNING BACKGROUND

This Written Scheme of Investigation is concerned with requirements for an archaeological watching brief at the site of the former Rounds Timber Yard, High Street, Tipton and is based upon a brief provided by the Assistant Borough Archaeologist at Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (Lewis 2006).

A planning application (DC/05/45328) has been submitted for the redevelopment of the site and an archaeological watching brief is required during groundworks. The watching brief represents a condition of planning consent in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note 16, *Archaeology and Planning* (DoE 1990).

### 2.0: LOCATION

The site is located in the centre of Tipton (NGR 9526 9227) bounded by High Street to the east, Sedgely Road West to the west and parkland to the north. The site is currently parkland and is undeveloped at present.

### 3.0: ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site is located within the core area of medieval settlement at Tipton Green, and also lies close to the location of a possible medieval moated site (Lewis 2006). The nature and extent of medieval and post-medieval activity in this area is not fully understood. It is therefore, important to identify any archaeological features present within the site as they may provide valuable information regarding the chronology of the town, the status of inhabitants and the nature of settlement activity here.

### 4.0: SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

- All groundworks and geotechnical works on the site will be observed by a suitably qualified member of Birmingham Archaeology.
- An adequate record of any archaeological deposits will be made should these be encountered and finds will be recovered. These will be recorded according to a numerical context record (see Section B below).
- A rapid map regression will be undertaken at the Local Studies section of Smethwick Library. This will serve to inform the interpretation of any archaeological deposits encountered on the site.
- The Sandwell Borough Archaeologist or Assistant Archaeologist will be informed regarding the commencement of the watching brief and during its progress.

### 5.0: STAFFING

*The project manager will be John Halsted BA, MPhil and the watching brief will be maintained by a suitably qualified site supervisor from Birmingham Archaeology.*

*The following specialists will be consulted where necessary:*

*Stephanie Ratkai-medieval and post-medieval ceramics*

*Dr David Smith-insect faunas*

*Val Fryer-charred and waterlogged plant macrofossils*

*Dr Ben Geary/ Dr James Grieg-pollen.*

### A: AIMS

The general aims of an archaeological watching brief is to identify and record archaeological features and deposits uncovered during hand-cleaning of excavations in advance of construction or infrastructure projects, and to prepare a brief report summarising the findings.

## **1 B: METHODOLOGY**

An experienced archaeologist will attend site to monitor construction groundworks, as required in the Design Brief.

Groundworks to be observed will include the stripping of topsoil, B-horizon subsoils, and trenches cut into the natural subsoil.

Following the stripping of topsoil the machined surface will be inspected, and sufficient hand-cleaning will be undertaken to facilitate the definition of archaeological, or possible archaeological features and deposits.

Where it is safe to do so, the archaeologist will enter construction trenches for the purpose of undertaking hand-cleaning of the trench sides and base for the better definition of any archaeological features or deposits present. No excavation of archaeological features, other than hand-cleaning, would be undertaken. Where it is unsafe to enter deep trenches archaeological recording will be confined to photography and the completion of pre-printed pro-formas.

Should significant, or potentially significant groups of archaeological features be uncovered the Planning Archaeologist and Archaeological Consultant (if any) will be consulted immediately so that an alternative strategy for more detailed investigation can be devised, in consultation with the developer.

### Human remains

No excavation of human remains would be undertaken until a Home Office Licence was obtained, and the Planning Archaeologist, the local Coroner, the Police, the Archaeological Consultant (if any) consulted.

### Recording

Recording would be by means of pre-printed pro-formas for contexts and features, supplemented by plans (1:20 and 1:50 as appropriate) and sections (1:10 and 1:20 as appropriate), and 35mm monochrome print and colour slide photography.

### Finds

Finds would be recovered by context would be washed, marked and bagged. Appropriate conservation work would be undertaken. A metal detector would be used as an aid to finds recovery.

### Environmental sampling

All datable features would be sampled objectively for the recovery of charred or waterlogged plant remains, pollen and insect remains.

## **2 C: REPORT FORMAT**

The archaeological watching brief report will comprise:

- Description of the development and archaeological background
- Details of the archaeological results, set within their context.
- Spot-dating of datable finds, and brief finds and environmental reports
- A discussion of the watching brief results.

- Plans showing the locations and extent of the development site subjected to the watching brief, supported by historic map extracts to place the watching brief results in the wider context.
- Simplified feature plans and sections, where applicable.
- A selection of colour photographs, where applicable.

### **3 D: PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

- Birmingham Archaeology is a Registered Archaeological Organisation (RAO) with the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA)
- All Birmingham Archaeology staff will follow the Code of Conduct of the IFA at all times.
- The watching brief will be undertaken in accordance with the standards laid down in the 'Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs' (1999)
- The archaeological watching brief will follow the specific guidelines and requirements laid down in the Design Brief prepared by the relevant Planning Archaeologist, and the particular requirements set down in this document, which will be followed by all project staff. All variations will be agreed in advance with the relevant Planning Archaeologist and Archaeological Consultant (as appropriate).

### **4 E: HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- A Risk Assessment will be undertaken before commencement of the archaeological watching brief.
- Birmingham Archaeology staff will follow the Health and safety guidelines contained in the Birmingham Archaeology Health and Safety Manual. This follows the requirements of the SCAUM Health and Safety Manual, and is approved by the Health and Safety Unit of the University of Birmingham.

### **F: PROGRAMME**

The watching brief programme will follow that of the general contractor undertaking construction groundworks, with regular liaison between Birmingham Archaeology and the general contractor to ensure that regular archaeological attendance is maintained during the groundworks sufficient to ensure that the requirements of the Design Brief are fulfilled.

A suitable time allowance for hand-cleaning and recording of archaeological features and deposits should be made by the developer and their construction groundworkers. The archaeologist undertaking the watching brief will maintain regular liaison with the site manager/foreman to keep disruption of the construction programme to a minimum.

### **G: REFERENCES**

Department of the Environment (DoE) 1990 Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning.

Lewis, C. 2006. Brief for an Archaeological watching brief, former site of Rounds Timber Yard, High Street, Tipton, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council.

## Appendix 2



### Borehole records

Borehole No.	Depth (from surface)	Description
<b>1</b>	0-2.5m	Modern backfill
	2.5m	Redeposited mid-grey clay (modern backfill)
	4.2m	Redeposited mid-dark grey clay (modern backfill)
	6.0m	Redeposited mid-dark grey clay (modern backfill)
<b>2</b>	2m	Orange-brown clay with lenses of grey-brown clay and small stones
	2.5m	Dark grey clay and organic silt, red brick, coal, charcoal.
	2.7m	Mid yellow-brown sandy clay, with small angular stones ( <b>Natural deposit</b> ).
	3.0m	Yellow-brown sandy clay
	3.5m	Yellow-brown coarse clayey sand
	4.0m	Mid yellow-brown sandy clay with lenses of light grey clay, sparse stones
	4.5m	Mid yellow-brown sandy clay
	4.8m	mid red-brown sandy clay with sparse stones
	<b>3</b>	1.0m
2.2m		Yellow-brown clay with light grey-brown mottling ( <b>Natural deposit</b> ).
2.5m		Mid grey-brown sandy clay, mudstone and coal inclusions
3.5m		Yellow-brown sandy clay with stiff grey clay lenses
3.8m		Orange –brown sandy clay with grey clay lenses
4m		Light brown clay with grey clay lenses
5m		Dark grey clay with yellow clay mottling
5.5m		Light grey clay
<b>4</b>		1.0m
	1.5m	Mid orange-brown clay, mottled with light grey clay with mudstone
	2.0m	Light orange brown sandy clay
	2.5m	Light yellow-brown sandy clay, with mudstone
	3.0m	Stiff mid orange-brown clay with light grey clay
	3.5m	Light yellow brown clay with lenses of light grey clay
	4.0m	Stiff grey clay
	4.5m	Black coal-like deposit
	5.0m	Mid-grey clay and coal deposits
<b>5</b>	1.0m	Mid grey clay-silt with coal dust
	1.5m	Mid orange brown sandy clay with mid grey-brown mottling, with angular mudstone ( <b>Natural deposit</b> ).
	2.0m	Yellow-brown sandy clay, light grey clay mottling, and mudstone
	2.5m	Light brown and mid orange-brown sandy clay with stiff light grey clay mottling and lenses of soft coal-like material.
	3.0m	Light brown and mid orange-brown sandy clay with coal-like material and lenses of orange clay
<b>Borehole No.</b>	<b>Depth (from surface)</b>	<b>Description</b>
	3.5m	Stiff blue-grey clay with dark-grey to black coal-like material
	4m	Light grey stiff clay with orange-brown mottling

	4.5m	Light grey clay with orange-brown lenses
	5.0m	Mid grey clay
<b>6</b>	1.0m	Light brown sandy clay, with black silt and some brick fragments
	1.5m	As above
	2m	Orange-brown sandy clay (Natural deposit)
	2.5m	Grey brown clay
	3.5m	Light brown sandy clay
	4.0m	As above
	4.5m	Coal deposits
<b>7</b>	1.0m	Mid brown sandy clay, black silt and brick inclusions
	1.5m	Brown sandy clay, dark grey silt, iron nails
	2m	Light brown silty clay with brick
	2.5m	Light brown sandy clay with coal and brick
	3.2m	Laminated coal deposits (Natural deposit).
	3.9m	As above
	4.2m	Grey clay
	4.5m	Grey
	5m	Stiff grey clay
<b>8</b>	1.0m	Grey-brown silty clays, brick and industrial material
	1.6m	Dark brown sandy clay with brick
	2.0m	Orange sandy clay (Natural deposit).
	3.0m	Orange-brown sandy clay
	4.0m	Stiff grey clay
	5.0m	Stiff grey clay
<b>9</b>	1.0m	Sandy clay with coal dust and brick
	2.0m	Light brown sandy clay (Natural deposit).
	2.5m	Orange-brown sandy clay
	3.0m	Sandy clay with sandstone inclusions
	3.5m	Light brown sand with sandstone
	3.8m	Stiff grey clay
	4.5m	Black coal deposits
<b>10</b>	1.0m	Black sand, charcoal and ash
	1.5m	Light brown clay with charcoal and ash
	2.0m	Light brown clay, ash and brick
	3.0m	Orange-brown sandy clay with brick
	3.8m	Compact brown sandy clay (Natural deposit).
	4.2m	Hard coal deposits
<b>11</b>	1.0m	Grey-black industrial deposits
	1.6m	Dark brown sandy clay with industrial waste deposits
	2.0m	Light brown sandy clay (Natural deposit).
<b>Borehole No.</b>	<b>Depth (from surface)</b>	<b>Description</b>
	3.0m	Compact orange sandy clay
	3.5m	Light brown sandy clay
	4.0m	Light brown clay-sand
	4.8m	Light brown sand
	5.0m	Coal deposits
<b>12</b>	1.0m-1.6m	Grey-black industrial waste

	2.5m	Orange brown sandy clay (Natural deposit).
	3.8m	Grey-brown sandy clay with orange sand lenses
<b>13</b>	1.0m-3.5m	Modern redeposited material
	4.2m	Clay and coal (Natural deposit).
	4.9m	Grey silty clay