

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

# **STRETTON WATERMILL**

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For Grosvenor Construction

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B. Poole MSc MCIfA

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L~P:ARCHÆOLOGY

## Archaeological Watching Brief Report

# STRETTON WATERMILL

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Client: Grosvenor Construction

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Local Authority: Cheshire West and Chester Council

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NGR: 345405,352895

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Planning App: 14/00363/LBC

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Author(s): Poole, B.

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Doc Ref: LPI771C -WBR-v1.3

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Site Code: CDN/SWM 14

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Date: November 2014

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## L-P:ARCHÆOLOGY

A trading name of the L – P : Heritage LLP.

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# Abstract

This report outlines the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Stretton Watermill by L – P : Archaeology, on behalf of Grosvenor Construction, in September 2014. The watching brief monitored groundworks to clear around and repair a sluice to the south of the mill.

Although there is evidence of activity from the Palaeolithic period onwards within a 1km radius of the site, only Post Medieval activity was identified during the watching brief.

The excavations identified several phases of building and modification of the sluice walls. Cut into the natural sand were the footings for an early sluice wall. These appear to be contemporary with the sluice floor, possibly dating to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The northern and eastern walls of the sluice had been replaced at some point in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

A cast metal pipe had been inserted to drain surface water from the high ground at the south. It is thought that the insertion of the pipe was not completely effective and in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century a concrete support was laid against the sluice walls.

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This document outlines the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Stretton Watermill by L – P : Archaeology, on behalf of Grosvenor Construction, between 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> September 2014.
- 1.2. The watching brief monitored groundworks to clear around, and repair, the water management system to the south of the mill. The works were carried out due to a planning condition attached to planning consent 14/00363/LBC.
- 1.3. The site is located at Stretton Watermill, Mill Lane, Stretton, Cheshire, SY14 7HP, at national grid reference SJ 345405,352895 (FIGURE 1).
- 1.4. The site code allocated by L – P : Archaeology was CDN/SWM 14.
- 1.5. All works were carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (POOLE 2014), agreed in advance by the advisor the to Local Planning Authority.
- 1.6. The work was carried out in accordance with Cheshire County Council's revised General Conditions for Archaeological Contractors and Consultants (CHESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL 2003) in conjunction with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (Cifa) Standards and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief (CHARTERED INSTITUTE FOR ARCHAEOLOGISTS 2014).

## 2. Site Background

### 2.1.PLANNING

2.1.1. In March 2012 the Department for Communities and Local Government issued the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT 2012). This document sets out planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment and replaces all previous Planning Policy Guidance, specifically PPS5. Section 12 of the NPPF sets out planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment.

2.1.2. Paragraph 128 of the NPPF indicates planning decisions should be made based on the significance of Heritage Assets. These are defined as buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions.

2.1.3. In considering any planning application for development the Local Planning Authority is Cheshire West and Chester Council. The council work within the policies laid out in the Chester District Local Plan.

2.1.4. Stretton Watermill is a grade II\* listed building. The listing description can be found in Appendix 1.

2.1.5. A condition, number 4, has been attached to planning consent (14/00363/LBC) for the works;

The works hereby approved shall not be commenced until the implementation of a programme of archaeological work that is wholly in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which shall have been approved in writing by the local planning authority. The archaeological work shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved scheme.

2.1.6. The local planning authority take advice from Julie Edwards of Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service (APAS).

### 2.2.GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY

#### Geology

2.2.1. The British Geological Survey GeoIndex for the site records the superficial

(drift) deposits as Devensian Till, and the solid deposits as Chester pebble beds and sandstone.

### **Topography**

- 2.2.2. The site is located approximately 4km to the southeast of Farndon within the extents of Carden Park Golf Course.
- 2.2.3. The site is situated to the south of Mill Lane and is surrounded by fairways, rough, greens and water courses associated with the golf course (FIGURE 2).
- 2.2.4. The site area measures 4.5 hectares, although works were only carried out in an area measuring 230m<sup>2</sup>. The southern sluice is situated in a low lying area, at approximately 21mOD (FIGURE 3). The surrounding area is relatively flat, varying over a large area between 21mOD and 24mOD.

### **2.3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORIC BACKGROUND**

- 2.3.1. The landscape around the site has produced good evidence of Prehistoric activity, such as that from the multi period site at Carden Park, 1km to the north east of the site. The Carden rock shelter produced finds from towards the end of the Palaeolithic, a Creswell point dated to 12,800 to 12,000 Cal BC, Mesolithic and Neolithic stone tools, as well as Bronze Age and Iron Age ceramics.
- 2.3.2. The name Stretton comes from Old English and is derived from *straet*, a Roman road, and *tun*, an enclosed settlement. This indicates that Stretton was a settlement off a Roman road. The Roman road is thought to have linked Holt and Malpas, and would have run east-west approximately 1km to the south of the site.
- 2.3.3. The Old English origin of the name also suggests an early settlement, likely Medieval in date. A mill is recorded within the catchment of Tilston in the Domesday book, which has been suggested as being that of Stretton. However, the earliest record for a mill at the site comes from 1324, when the mill and pond are noted in Stretton.
- 2.3.4. A firm development sequence from historic records and archaeological



investigations in the area show Stretton as being established by the 16<sup>th</sup> century, with further evidence from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. These relate to historic structures, property boundaries, field enclosures, hedgerows and stone walls dating from these periods.

- 2.3.5. The earliest records of Stretton indicate that the lords of the estate were the Strange's of Blackmere. They were known to have held the manor under the auspices of Barony of Malpas in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Over time the estate passed between families, before falling within the lands of the Leche family of Carden, who took control of the mill by the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Leche family oversaw construction of an estate mill in 1630 and the standing building is constructed on top of these earlier footings. It is thought that the 17<sup>th</sup> century mill occupies the same location as the earlier Stretton mill. Initially a timber framed, thatched, structure the mill has undergone numerous modification through the Post Medieval period. Evidence of the original timber frame can still be seen inside the current mill building, with wattle uprights, and oak mullions visible.
- 2.3.6. The 17<sup>th</sup> century mill had a single wheel at the east end of the building, thought to be an undershot wheel, powering 2 sets of mill stones. Another, overshot, wheel was added in the 18<sup>th</sup> century during upgrading works, which also saw the external elevations weatherboarded and the thatched roof replaced with slate in 1770.
- 2.3.7. Burdett's map of Cheshire, dated 1771 (FIGURE 4) shows the location of the watermill, indicating its importance in the area. The mill continued to grow into the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The 1874 Ordnance Survey map clearly depicts the mill and race (FIGURE 5).
- 2.3.8. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the mill was converted to production of animal feed. During World war II the mill was temporarily drafted, like many others, to begin flour production again for human consumption. This was due to larger urban mills being bombed and maritime blockades, which led to the smaller rural mills having to be re-established.
- 2.3.9. Following the war the mill returned to animal feed production until 1959, when the mill closed after the retirement of the miller. The mill lay unused

until the 1970s, when Cheshire County Council bought and converted it to a museum.

## 3. Aims & Methodology

### 3.1.AIMS

3.1.1. It is recorded that a mill has occupied the site since at least 1324 and the standing structure is thought to date to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, with 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century extensions. It is possible that evidence for the Medieval mill or associated water management features survive, obscured by the later structures and banks. As such an archaeological watching brief was carried out on ground disturbance associated with the clearance and repair works.

3.1.2. The objectives of the project were to maintain an archaeological watching brief during intrusive groundworks associated with the project, prepare a formal report and submit a project archive. This work covered:

- ◇ The bank reinforcement to areas upstream and downstream of the control structures, to repair erosion and prevent further erosion of the riverbank around the wingwalls of the structures
- ◇ Excavation behind the walls which are to be subject to repair works and rebuilding

3.1.3. The general aims of the watching brief were:

- ◇ To determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits or remains.
- ◇ To record the character, date, location and preservation of any archaeological remains on the site.
- ◇ To record any historic fabric associated with extant or buried structures on the site exposed during groundworks.

### 3.2.METHODOLOGY

3.2.1. A detailed methodology can be found in the written scheme of investigation (POOLE 2014), which was agreed by the advisor to the LPA in advance of commencement of works.

3.2.2. A site presence was maintained during ground disturbance works. All excavated

material was examined for finds recovery to aid in interpreting and dating deposits.

3.2.3. Exposed sections were recorded by drawn record and photography. All deposits were recorded on *pro forma* context sheets.

3.2.4. Registers were kept for context sheets, drawings, and photography.

## 4. Results

- 4.1. This section will outline the results of the archaeological monitoring at the southern sluice of Stretton Watermill. Fieldwork was carried out between 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> September 2014 by Blair Poole of L – P : Archaeology. Deposit numbers are given in (parentheses).
- 4.2. A small, 1.5 tonne, tracked excavator removed the overburden (101) from the eastern face of the sluice wall (100). This exposed the construction form of the wall and clearly demonstrated late 20<sup>th</sup> century intervention works had been undertaken.
- 4.3. Deposit (101) was a loose, mid brown, silt loam with a grass surface. This extended to a depth of 1.6m below current ground level. Within (101) were fragments of sandstone, brick tile, plastic sheeting, plastic bottle caps and golf balls. The loose nature of the deposit and the late 20<sup>th</sup> to early 21<sup>st</sup> century finds recovered indicate that this is a backfill material which appears to relate to previous repair works to the sluice wall (PLATE 1). The golf course opened in 1998, and the presence of golf balls within the backfill suggests that the repair work was carried out after that date.



Plate 1: East facing elevation of sluice wall during removal of overburden, 2x 1m scales.

- 4.4. The backfill, (101), overlay a concrete support (102) for the wall. This extended from the southern sluice wall to the northern sluice wall and sloped down to the east (PLATE 2).



Plate 2: East facing elevation of sluice wall, 2x 1m scales.

4.5. The concrete could be seen to be covering a cast metal drainage pipe which ran from south to north, falling to an outlet on the north wall (FIGURE 6 & PLATE 3). The concrete support appears to have inadvertently formed a run off channel for surface water, which has allowed water to flow beneath it, washing out the lower deposits and the lower courses of the north wall, seen as a void below the wall in PLATE 3.



Plate 3: North facing elevation of sluice, 2 x 1m scales.

4.6. The sluice wall could be seen to have several phases of repair. The floor of the sluice was of large squared sandstone cobbles, above which the walls had been constructed. The cobbles can be clearly seen below the upstanding wall in the eastern elevation in PLATE 2 (FIGURE 7).

4.7. The inner face of the sluice wall (100) was of brick in English Garden wall bond,

with a sandstone coping course (PLATE 4). The brick appears to be a later repair.



Plate 4: Inner face of sluice wall, looking east.

4.8. The northern wall is of sandstone in a coursed bond, with hard grey mortar. At the eastern extent of the northern wall a single sandstone foundation block was identified (104) below the backfill material (101). This block extended beyond the finished face of the north wall, although appeared to be contemporary with the lowest course of the wall (PLATE 5).



Plate 5: Southern facing elevation of north wall, 2 x 1m scale, looking north.

4.9. This suggests that the foundation course of the wall, the lowest visible course exposed, relates to an earlier wall, and that the upstanding wall is of a later date. It is clear that the upstanding wall has a finishing course at its eastern end.

4.10. The foundation course, and floor of the sluice, were cut into a fine yellow-red sand deposit (103). This appears to be a natural riverine sand deposit and no finds were recovered from this deposit.



## 5. Summary and Conclusions

- 5.1. This report outlines the result of the archaeological watching brief carried out at Stretton Watermill. Planning permission has been granted for clearance and repair works to be carried out on structures associated with the water management system serving the mill.
- 5.2. Archaeological monitoring was undertaken by L – P : Archaeology, on behalf of Grosvenor Construction, between 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> September 2014.
- 5.3. The watching brief monitored groundworks to clear around, and repair, the water management system to the south of the mill.
- 5.4. All works were carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (POOLE 2014), which had been agreed in advance by the advisor to the Local Planning Authority.
- 5.5. The surrounding area as revealed evidence of activity from the Palaeolithic period onwards. However, the results of the monitoring only encountered activity from the Post Medieval period.
- 5.6. The excavations have shown that the sluice walls have undergone several phases of repair over the years. The earliest deposit encountered was the natural riverine sand (103), into which had been cut the foundations for the sluice (104) and the sandstone cobbled floor of the sluice.
- 5.7. The northern and eastern walls of the sluice (100) had been replaced at some point in the Post Medieval period. Based on the construction forms of the walls it is thought that the northern wall was replaced in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the eastern wall replaced in the late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 5.8. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century a cast metal pipe was inserted to drain surface water from the high ground at the south to the water course. Interruption in the construction material of the sandstone north wall shows the pipe is a later modification. Potentially the cast pipe and brick wall (100) are contemporary intrusions in order to stabilise the area. It is likely that the previous wall was undermined due to water ingress.
- 5.9. It is likely the insertion of the pipe did not have the desired effect and in the late 20<sup>th</sup>

century the brick wall was identified as requiring additional support. As such a concrete support (102) was inserted to prop up the wall. The concrete was covered with backfill material (101).

5.10. Water ingress has continued, possibly from both high ground and seeping in from the floor of the sluice. This has washed away the lower deposits and created a void below the north wall.

## 6. Archive

6.1. The paper archive consists of:

- ◆ 1 x Drawing Register
- ◆ 1 x Drawing Film
- ◆ 1 x Photographic Register
- ◆ 36 x Black and white photographs and negatives
- ◆ 1 x Context Register
- ◆ 5 x Context sheets

# SOURCES CONSULTED

## BIBLIOGRAPHIC

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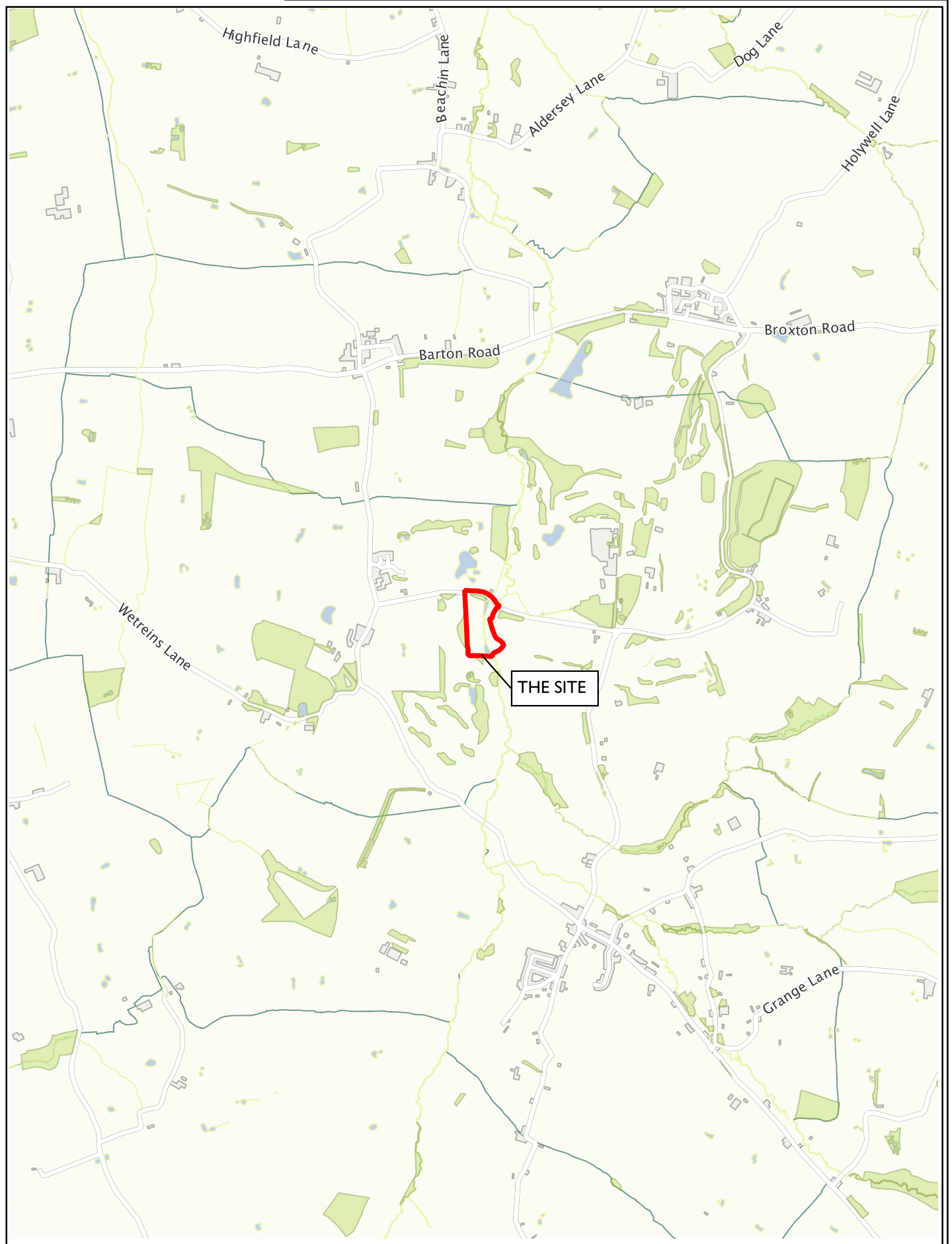
ORMEROD, G., 1882. *The History of the County Palatine and City of Chester*. London: George Routledge and Sons.

POOLE, B., 2014. 'Written Scheme of Investigation for Stretton Watermill'. L – P : Archaeology

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# FIGURES

FIGURE 1 // Site Location General



0 500 m



PROJECT // 1771C - Stretton Water Mil

DESCRIPTION // Site Location General

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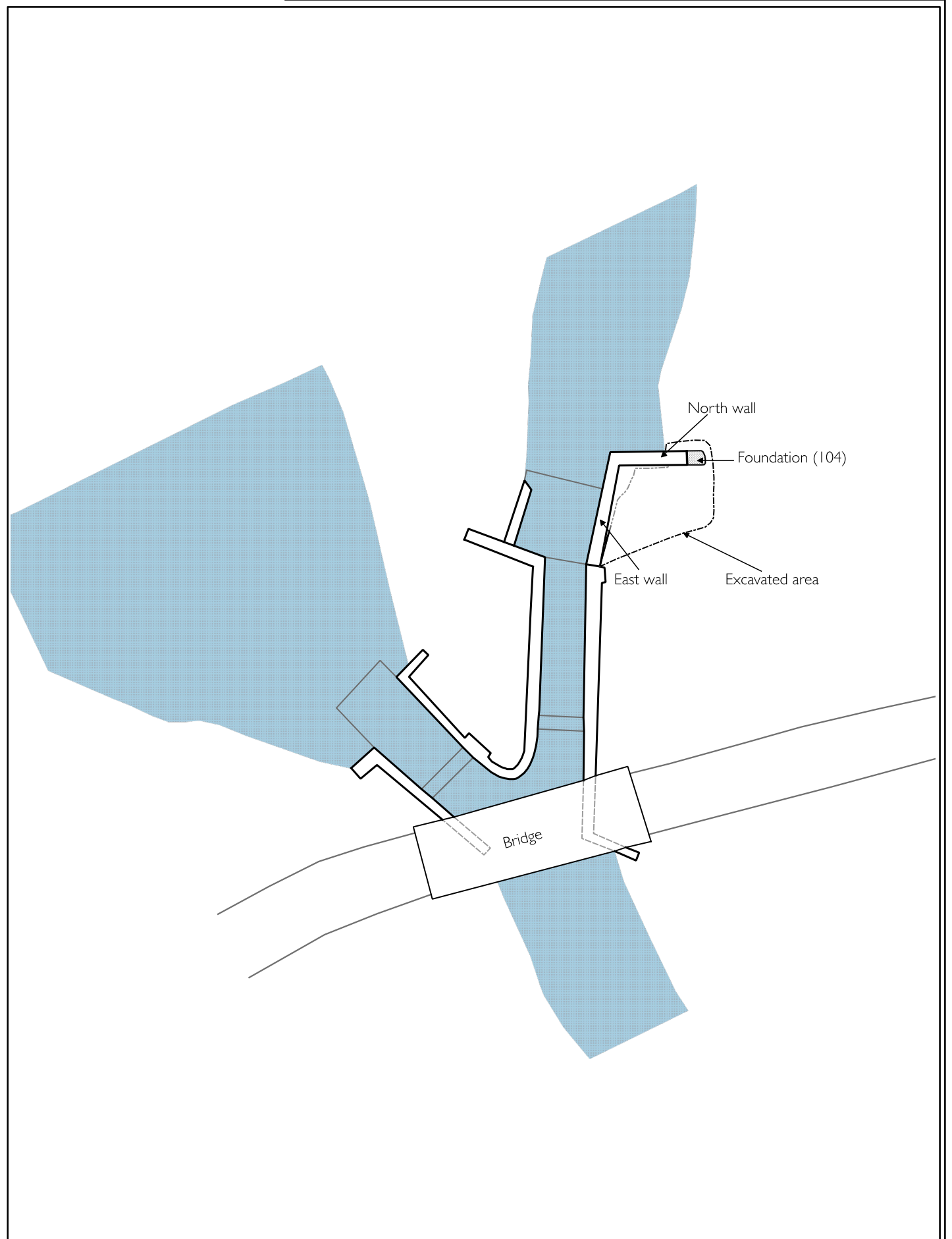
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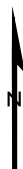




FIGURE 3 // Area Monitored



0 10 m



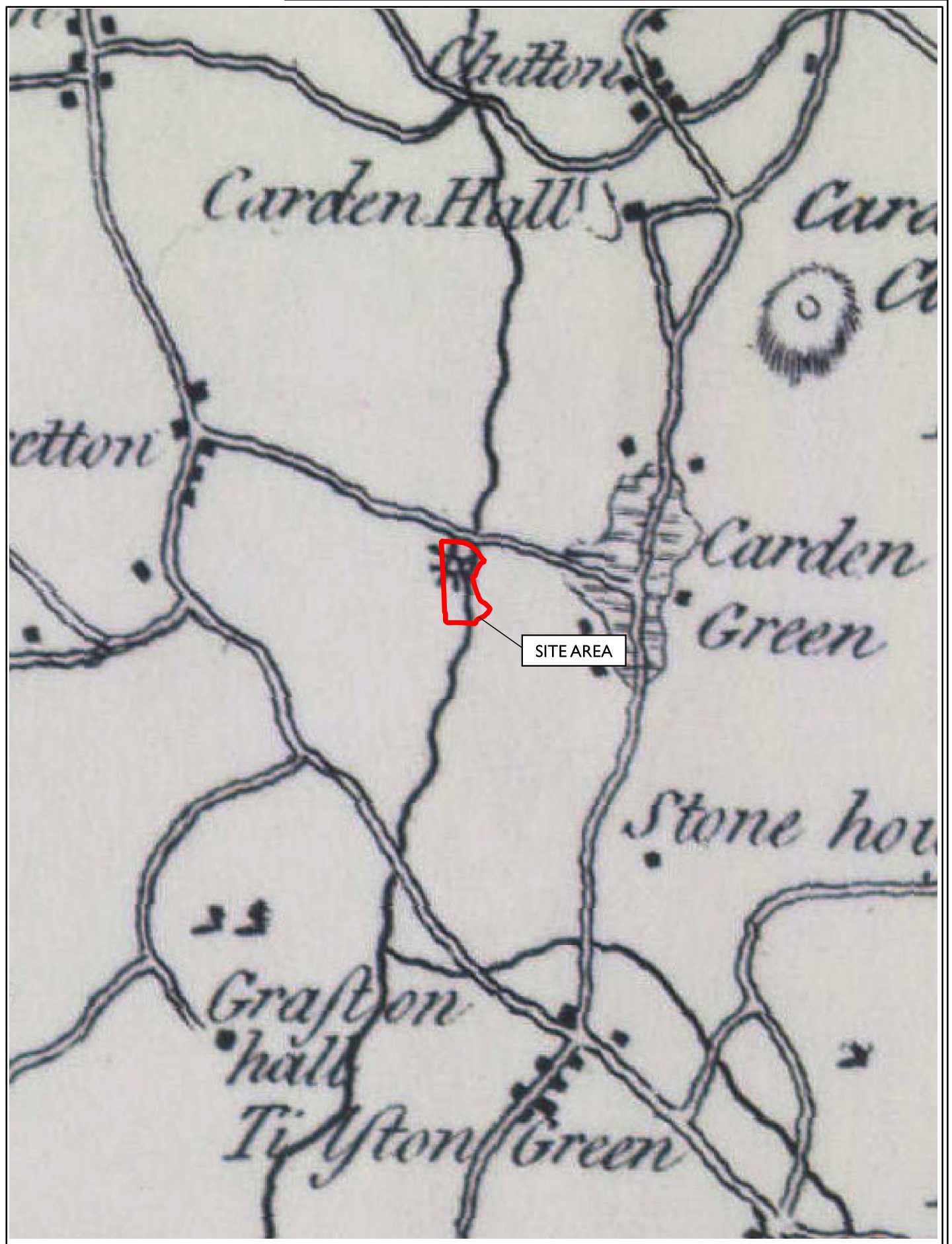
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DESCRIPTION // Area Monitored

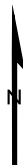
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FIGURE 4 // Burdett 1771



0 1000 m



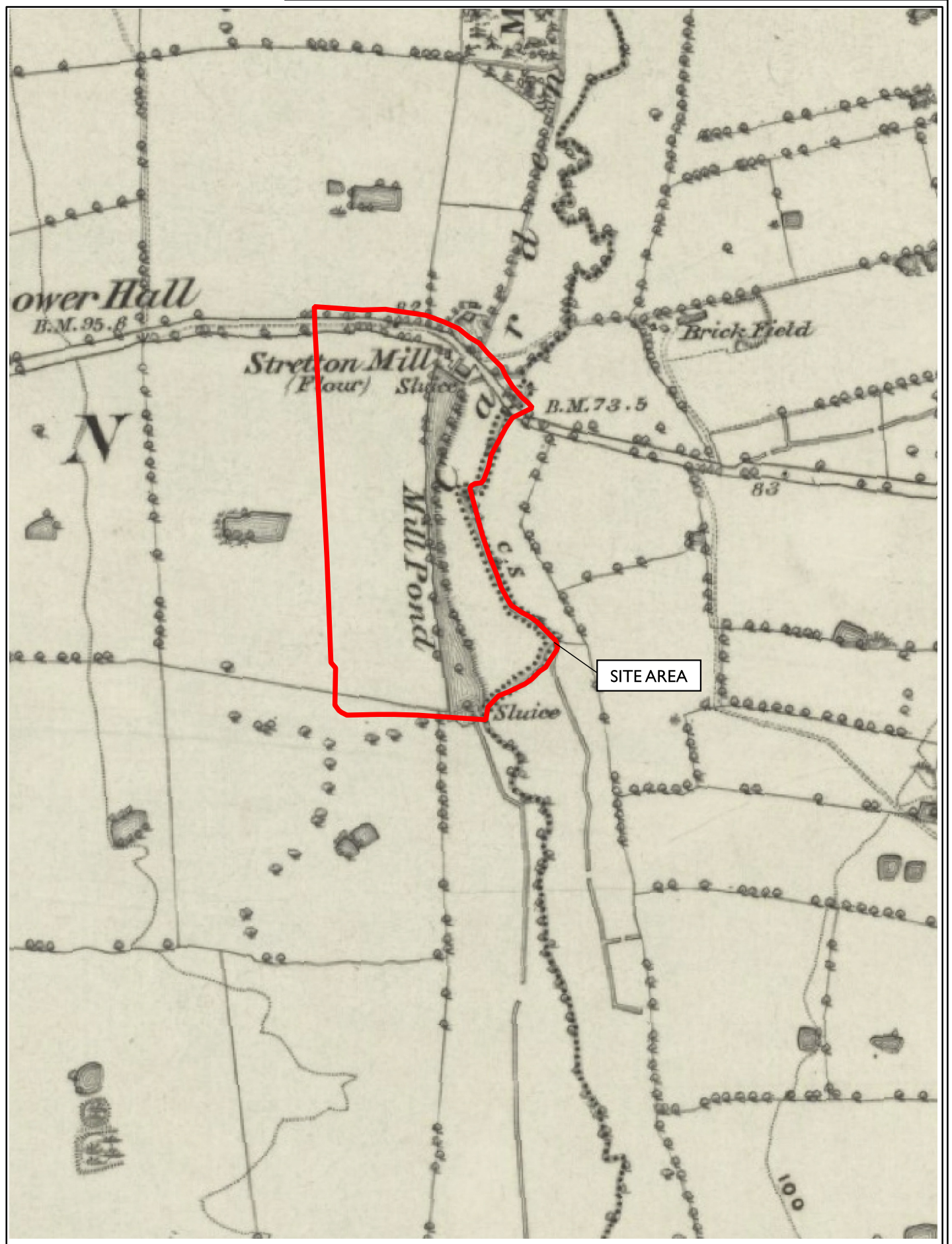
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DESCRIPTION // Burdett 1771

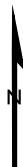
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FIGURE 5 // OS 1874



0 100 m



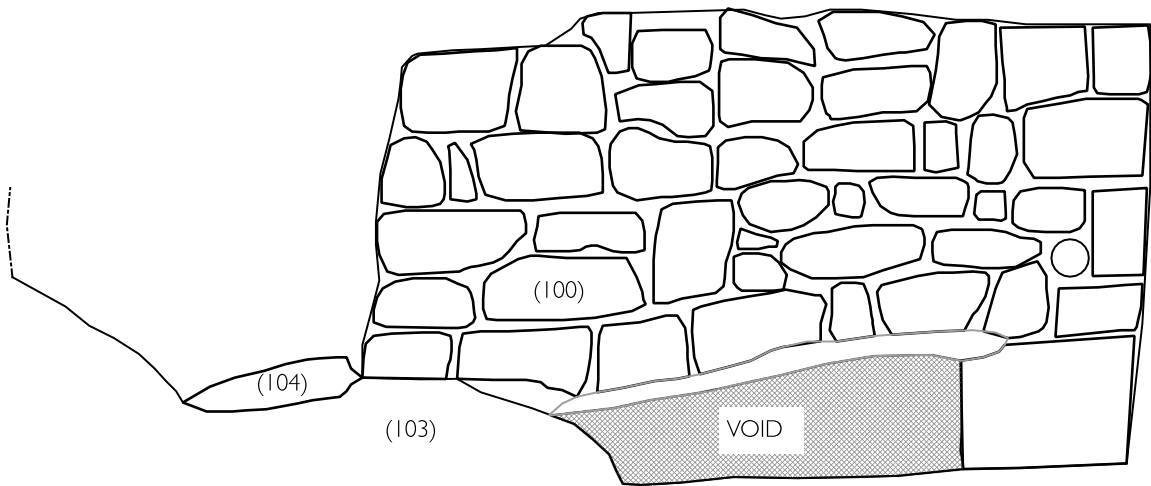
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DESCRIPTION // Ordnance Survey 1874

DOC REF: LPI771C-WBR-v1

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FIGURE 6 // North Facing Elevation



0 | m

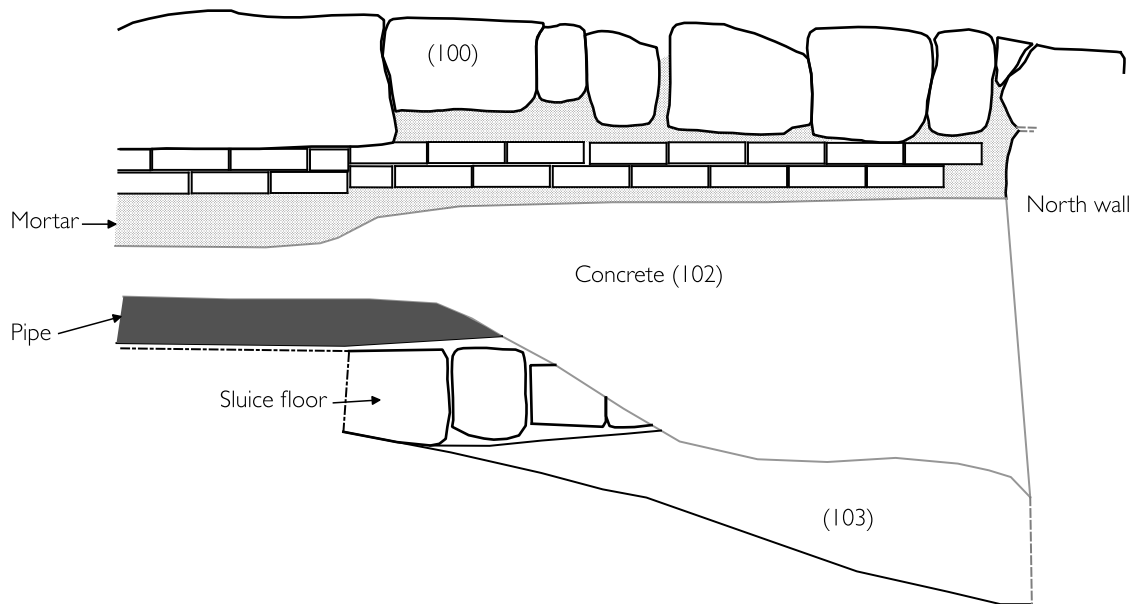
PROJECT // 1771C - Stretton Water Mill

DESCRIPTION // North Facing Elevation

DOC REF: LPI771C-WBR-v1

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FIGURE 7 // East Facing Elevation



0 1 m

PROJECT // 1771C - Stretton Water Mil

DESCRIPTION // East Facing Elevation

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# LISTING DESCRIPTION

## APPENDIX I

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IoE Number: 403423

STRETTON MILL AND STEPS, MILLRACE AND SLUICE ADJOINING, MILL LANE (south side),

Date listed: 18 July 1972

Grade II\*

Stretton Mill and steps, millrace and sluice adjoining 18/7/72 GV II\*

Water-powered cornmill C16 and C17, extended C18 and C19.

Weatherboarded oak frame and coursed red sandstone with brown brick lean-to extension and chimney of stone and brick at rear; graded grey slate roof, stone plinth and stone replacement as part of the walls of the older (right) part of the mill. C19 extension, left, of stone. Two storeys plus attic grain store.

External overshot wheel of timber on right gable wall. Divided boarded door of oak. 1 leaded casement and 1 iron-barred opening to lower storey and 3 leaded casements to upper storey at front; 1 leaded casement to upper storey and to attic in west gable; all have oak shutters on wrought iron hinges. East gable end has camber-arched barred opening to the internal wheel-pit with an oak boarded loading-door above flanked by small leaded and shuttered casements. 2 leaded, shuttered casements in C18 lean-to at rear, and boarded door. The chimney of stone has a diagonal flue of brick; the stonework bears carved initials and dates: IHM 1763; JOHN HUGHES; GD; HB; ?W 17?? Bargeboards; eaves have exposed rafters. Adjoining east gable wall is a flight of stone steps up mill dam, and a stone-walled millrace with sluice.

Interior contains a breastwheel in C19 extension, left, driving a complete train of mid-Victorian largely cast iron machinery, and (right) a train of restored largely C18 wooden machinery driven by the external wheel. On lower storey at rear is a forge-hearth. On upper floor (reached by steep stair left of entrance) are the underdrift millstones, ancillary equipment and hoist-hatch. In the lean-to extension are carved on east side of chimney: PB; IR; IMO; 1640; EW(?); PB 1712. Grain loft (access by ladder) in older (right) part of main building contains 2 diagonal-strut oak trusses with windbraces, chamfered oak purlins and diagonally set ridge-piece. The oak frame and kingpost truss of the former left gable (now between the older part and the C19 extension of the mill) survives.

The mill machinery (restored by Dr Cyril Boucher partly at the expense of the Science Museum, in 1967) is of national importance.

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# OASIS FORM

## APPENDIX 2



# OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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## Printable version

**OASIS ID: Iparchae1-217580**

### Project details

Project name	Stretton Watermill
Short description of the project	Watching brief on the southern sluice repair of Stretton Watermill.
Project dates	Start: 08-09-2014 End: 24-11-2014
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	CDN/SWM 14 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Listed Building
Current Land use	Community Service 2 - Leisure and recreational buildings
Monument type	SLUICE Post Medieval
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	CHESHIRE CHESTER STRETTON Stretton Watermill
Postcode	SY14 7HP
Study area	230.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	SJ 345405 352895 52.910721226 -2.97350050041 52 54 38 N 002 58 24 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 21.00m Max: 24.00m

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	L - P : Archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body

Project design originator	L - P : Archaeology
Project director/manager	Blair Poole
Project supervisor	Blair Poole
Type of sponsor/funding body	Cheshire West and Chester Council
Name of sponsor/funding body	Cheshire West & Chester Council

### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Cheshire Museum Service
Digital Archive ID	CDN/SWM 14
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography"
Paper Archive recipient	Cheshire Museum Service
Paper Archive ID	CDN/SWM 14
Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Drawing", "Photograph", "Plan", "Report", "Section"

### Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Archaeological Watching Brief Report, Stretton Watermill
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Poole, B.
Other bibliographic details	LP1771-WBR-v1.3
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Issuer or publisher	L - P : Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	Chester
Description	Report on the results of the archaeological watching brief carried out at Stretton Watermill
Entered by	B. Poole (chester@lparchaeology.com)
Entered on	13 July 2015

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