



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological trial trench evaluation at 115 – 116 Far Gosford Street, Coventry



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OAS/S REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS	
Project name	Archaeological trial trench evaluation at 115-116 Far Gosford Street, Coventry
In January 2010, an archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology on land at 115-116 Far Gosford Street, Coventry, Warwickshire. The remains of a row of 19th-century brick cottages known as Albert Place were present. Evidence of the early 20th-century cinema which also occupied the site may have been truncated by the leveling for the present car park.	
Project type	Archaeological trial trenching
Site status	None
Previous work	None
Current Land use	Car park
Future work	Unknown
Monument type/period	19th-century brick cottage foundations
Significant finds	None
PROJECT LOCATION	
County	Warwickshire
Site address	115-116 Far Gosford Street, Coventry, Warwickshire
Study area	775sq m
OS Easting & Northing	SP 3447 7898
Height OD	c83m
PROJECT CREATORS	
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology
Project brief originator	Coventry City Council Archaeological Advisor
Project Design originator	ID Partnerships
Director/Supervisor	Anne Foard-Colby
Project Manager	Iain Soden
Sponsor or funding body	ID Partnerships
PROJECT DATE	
Start date	6 January 2010
End date	8 January 2010
ARCHIVES	
Location FGS10	Content
Physical	1 archive box of site documents
Paper	
Digital	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)	
Title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation at 115-116 Far Gosford Street, Coventry
Serial title & volume	10/19
Author(s)	Anne Foard-Colby and Iain Soden
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION
AT 115-116 FAR GOSFORD STREET
COVENTRY
JANUARY 2010**

Abstract

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology on land at 115-116 Far Gosford Street, Coventry, Warwickshire which exposed foundation remains of a row of 19th-century brick cottages. Evidence of the early 20th-century cinema was limited to concrete bases while everything present had been truncated by the leveling for the present car park. There was no evidence of pre-19th-century occupation

1 INTRODUCTION

Archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) in January 2010, on land between 115 – 116 Far Gosford Street, Coventry, Warwickshire (Fig 1, NGR SP 3447 7898).

The work was undertaken in order to inform a planning application for the construction of a proposed new building. The evaluation met the requirements of a specification issued by Northamptonshire Archaeology on behalf of ID Partnership, October 2009, which was itself in pursuance of a brief by the Coventry City Council Archaeological Advisor, (September 2009).

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Topography and geology

Far Gosford Street is located to the east of the historic core of Coventry outside of the medieval town. The site of the proposed development is situated on the south side of Far Gosford Street on land currently used as a car park (Fig 1).

The site occupies an L shaped area of ground measuring c40m north-south by c37m east-west and 14m wide an area of c775 square metres. It sits on a generally flat plateau, at 83m aOD sloping down gently to the south. It is bounded to the north by Far Gosford Street, to the east and west by shops, and to the south by housing.

The underlying geology consists of Keuper Marl, a stiff red clay of the Triassic Enville Beds. This overlies distinctive coarse-grained red sandstone, which in turn seals Carboniferous coal seams.

2.2 Archaeological and historical background

No archaeology has previously taken place upon this site, but work has taken place on nearby properties for which evidence has been gleaned from the Coventry Historic Environment Record, Access to Archives (www.A2A.com) and reports kindly provided by fellow archaeological contractors (Fig 1).

In 2003 Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an evaluation at 121–124 Far Gosford Street which looked at the rear yards of these Grade II listed frontage properties which are three properties west of the current site. This work uncovered evidence of late medieval and early post medieval rubbish pits at the base of 1m+ of later stratification and yard surfaces. The floors inside the standing building had been previously reduced (Brown 2003).

On the far side of the road in 2005 an evaluation by Warwickshire Museum took place on the property of 61-63 Far Gosford Street recovered evidence of later medieval occupation some way back from the frontage where evidence was primarily of post-medieval buildings having truncated earlier occupation (Warwickshire Museum Field Services 2005; report kindly provided by Bryn Gethin). Further work on this site in 2006 by Richard Cherrington of Benchmark Archaeology found a possible clay quarry pit of 13th to 14th century date extending from the plot into (under) the current carriageway line. The work suggests that Far Gosford Street may have begun as a narrower thoroughfare (Coventry HER).

Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an excavation on the former site of Astleys at the city end of Far Gosford street during 2006, the excavation found evidence successive street frontages dating from 13th century to the 20th century (Mason and Soden 2008).

Documentation for the plot goes back at least to the 16th century.

A document produced for the City Corporation in 1581 sets out the tenement and its neighbours as former Warden's Land and the land of Thomas Wheatley, benefactor of the Bablake charity. This early document is as follows (CA: BA/A/1/2/3):

Gosforde Streete (South Syde)

There is a cottage in the tenure of Edward Shepparde of Stoke conteing 2 little bayes of building and a crofte conteing the halfe an acre and halfe of the acre which butteth upon the streete on the northe and upon the lande of Mr Renfeide on the southe. And the waye leading to Stoke against the hermitage on the [word illegible] upon the lande of the wardens in the tenure of Mr Raffe Joyner on the west. The rent is 26s 8d.

(Marginal note: 'wardens land' and 'this cottage is taken away by Mr Raffe Joyner')

There is a bay of building and a close in the holding of Mr Raffe Joyner by the barr gates and a piece of grounde being to the same in length by the wall by the streete side 10 yards and in breadth at the western end 30 yards and so commeth off with a triangle from the nether corner to the corner of the ston wall near the streete; the rent is 6s 8d.

(Marginal note: 'wardens land')

Tenement in the tenure of the said Raffe Joyner by name called The George in breadth by the street 20 yards in length 14 bays of buildings and 2 and a little crofte on the back side in length 42 yards and in breadth 20 yards with a little garden layinge to the Queenes grounde on the weste and there is a close belonging to the same by affirmation 2 acres and a half on which abuts a barne of 3 bayes standing therein upon Shortley on the south and upon the land of George Kevett on the west. Rent £3 6s 8d

(Marginal note: 'Mr Wheatley's land')

Subsequently these three plots were combined to become component parts of a single holding, that of The George (George Demidowicz pers comm) In 1575 The George

had been leased to Raffe Joyner, Draper, together with land to the rear for a term of 61 years (CA: BA/D/8/14/3).

While the inn known above as The George was also called The George and Dragon, it seems to have been demolished between 1851 and 1863 at the latest since it was shown as an open frontage site undergoing some small-scale earthmoving, in a sketch by the artist Nathaniel Troughton (copy provided by George Demidowicz). The drawing shows vestiges of a former two-storey gable.

By 1851 much of the site had been redeveloped. The Board of Health Map of that year indicates that behind the George was constructed a row of cottages which formed an L-shape in plan around two sides of a rectangular yard and were accessed through an entryway in the frontage of The George.

In 1863 the site was planned and elevations drawn of the cottages for the owners, The Bablake Estates (Fig 2; CA:PA 488/1/2/4). The plan indicates that the south-west corner of the row comprised a stable, while the property nearest to Far Gosford Street is shown as incorporating a typical weaver's topshop window. It is notable by this date that the old frontage of The George had been demolished, providing the period during which the Troughton sketch must have been made (1851-63).

The cottages stood and were mapped by the Ordnance Survey from 1888, 1903 and in 1906 (Singlehurst 2000, map on page 2). In 1913 they were swept away and their site redeveloped into that of a 'Picture Theatre' which was mapped up until 1938 as a large simple rectangular building. This was known as the Scala or Odeon Cinema (Singlehurst 2000, 19, 41). It stood until the post Second World War period. After its demolition the site was set out as a surface car park.

The site sands within the Far Gosford Street Conservation Area which was declared on 21 October 1992.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The general objectives of the evaluation were:

- To prepare a detailed assessment of a development site's or area's history & archaeological potential
- To identify any evidence for the survival of buried archaeological remains on the site which may be threatened by development of a site and area
- To determine the depth of burial, character, date, extent, and state of preservation of any such remains
- To provide an initial assessment survey of any standing buildings on the site and assess the degree to which earlier historic fabric survives within buildings currently occupying the site

The specific objectives were:

- To recover evidence for land use prior to the creation of Far Gosford Street
- To recover evidence for the creation and development of the tenements along Far Gosford Street

4 METHODOLOGY

A single trench, 20m long by 2m wide was approved by Coventry City Council's Archaeological Advisor, however, due to existing services and a metal barrier which had been connected to a recently removed portable cabin, the single trench was divided into two. Trench 1 was 12m long and Trench 2 was 10m long (Fig 1).

The trenches were excavated using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. All overburden was stripped under archaeological supervision, and stacked adjacent to the trenches. Mechanical excavation proceeded to the top of the archaeological deposits or to the natural substrate where no archaeology was encountered.

Archaeological excavation and recording followed the guidelines outlined in the Northamptonshire Archaeology Archaeological Fieldwork Manual (NA 2003) and the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IfA 1994, revised 2008).

Trenches were cleaned by hand, sufficient to define the features. Each feature or deposit was given a unique number consisting of the trench number and an individual context number (e.g. 104, Trench 1, context 4). The details of each context were recorded on pro-forma sheets. The trenches were planned (scale 1:50). Levels, which were related to Ordnance Datum, were taken on the trenches at appropriate points, and on features. Trench locations were related to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. A photographic record was made of the excavation, using both 35mm colour transparency and black and white negative films, supplemented by images taken using a digital camera.

Artefacts were collected by hand and retained, receiving appropriate care prior to removal from site. The spoil heaps and features were scanned to ensure maximum finds retrieval. Unstratified animal bones and modern material were not retained.

All procedures complied with Northamptonshire County Council Health and Safety provisions and Northamptonshire Archaeology Health and Safety at Work Guidelines.

The fieldwork was monitored by Chris Patrick, Archaeological Advisor, Coventry City Council.

5 FIELDWORK RESULTS

The natural substrate was Keuper Marl, a stiff red clay. This was overlain by a layer of grade 1 foundation chippings, approximately 0.30 – 0.50m thick. A Tarmac car park surface, 0.12m thick overlay a sub-base of stone chippings.

The evaluation recorded patches of brick foundations set into the natural clay, which were probably the remains of the cottages of 1851-1913, a stone-lined well which was most likely associated with the cottages and concrete patches, some of which may relate to the cinema built after the demolition of the cottages in 1913.

5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was orientated north to south, all features were either cut into or laid upon the natural red clay.

The foundation trench [111] was cut into the natural red clay and within it stood the junction of two brick walls (110 and 112; Figs 4 and 5). The former measured 1.8m by 0.45m in plan and comprised two courses of red plain bricks bonded in lime mortar. The latter wall lay perpendicular to it and extended beyond the trench. The wall construction trench produced three sherds of 19th-century pottery from its silty loam fill (113).

To the south-west was a concrete base (107), which measured 1.3m by 0.75m and was more than 0.15m deep. This had been truncated by a modern water pipe trench (Fig 4). The concrete had infrequent inclusions of tile or brick fragments typical of local 19th-century manufacture and seen on such sites as Derby Lane 1982-4. This concrete was poured and formed the base for a brick foundation (106, 108; Fig 6). This wall too had been truncated by the modern water pipe trench.

A discrete concrete base (104) lay nearby but it too had been truncated by the same modern pipe trench. It contained the same brick and tile fragment mix as the other base.

On the east side of the trench was a third concrete base (114) of identical manufacture, which extended beyond the trench.

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was on the same alignment as Trench 1; all features were either cut into or laid upon the natural red clay.

On the west side of Trench 2 was part of a 1.55m-diameter circular, stone-lined well, (Figs 4, and 7-9). Two, large curved blocks of Triassic sandstone formed its upper lining (205). It had been deliberately backfilled with firm, mid red-brown silty clay (215) with fragments of red bricks, the cap being topped up with the chippings on which the car park was laid.

To the east was a concrete base (208) of a similar construction to those in Trench 1. It measured 1.60m long, 0.83m wide and at least 0.12m deep. The base and the well had been truncated by a modern gully [207] (Figs 4 and 8) which was probably cut as an overflow for the well after the clearance of the site in preparation for the car park. It was filled with stone chippings (206).

To the south and on the same north-south alignment as the brick wall in Trench 1 (110), wall (210) was a brick foundation in the same bricks as the wall in Trench 1 (Figs 4 and 7). It measured 3.60m long and 0.60m wide and stood two courses high. The bricks were bonded with lime mortar and lay in a foundation cut [211] into the natural red clay (203). The north end of the wall was truncated by the modern well-overflow gully.

At the south end of the trench, was concrete base (212) (Figs 4 and 7). It was 2.70m long and 0.80m wide and was very similar to the other bases. To its north was an area of brick rubble (214), probably from the demolition of the cottages, which made way for the cinema. The bricks were pressed into the overflow gully, making its edge difficult to discern.

6 THE FINDS

6.1 Pottery by *Iain Soden*

Three small sherds of 19th-century or early 20th-century modern glazed tableware (MGW in the Warwickshire County Type Series) were recovered from fill (113) of wall foundation trench [111]. There were no other finds.

7 DISCUSSION

There was no evidence for the survival of later medieval or early post-medieval frontage building, such as might have been expected based upon documentary sources and nearby previous work. No medieval layers or features were present anywhere in the evaluation trenches and natural Keuper Marl geology was exposed throughout. This means that the evaluation can rule out the presence of deeply-cut rubbish pits, at least within its bounds.

The excavation has demonstrated the survival of archaeological remains dating to the 19th century and later. These brick foundations, aligned north to south in both trenches, are likely to be the wall remains of cottages situated at the rear of the George and Dragon public house. The remains of a stone-lined well were also located close to these brick foundations and may be the site of a pump shown on the Board of Health map of 1851 as serving these cottages.

Some of the patches of concrete may be related to the Scala Picture House or cinema which was built on the site after the demolition of the cottages in 1913.

The levelling of the site and ground preparation for the current car park has truncated even the foundations of both the former cinema and the cottages. The same ground work is likely to have accounted for any earlier remains which predated the cottages.

A noticeable difference in the levels of archaeology between the previous works at 122-124 and the current works, suggest that the frontage as it ranges up and down the hill slope of Far Gosford Street may have been terraced at different points in cut-and-fill construction. Only a couple of doors away the natural geology was over 1m deep in 2003 and late medieval pits were found cut into it. In the current works, however, the natural geology lay at only 300-400mm below the car park surface, and was cut only by the vestiges of 19th and 20th-century foundations. It seems likely that earlier remains, if ever present, were shallowly buried and scraped away in the 19th century. Medieval remains, where present across the road at 61-63 Far Gosford Street, were similarly shallow when found in 2005-6. These share a similar contour in the local topography.

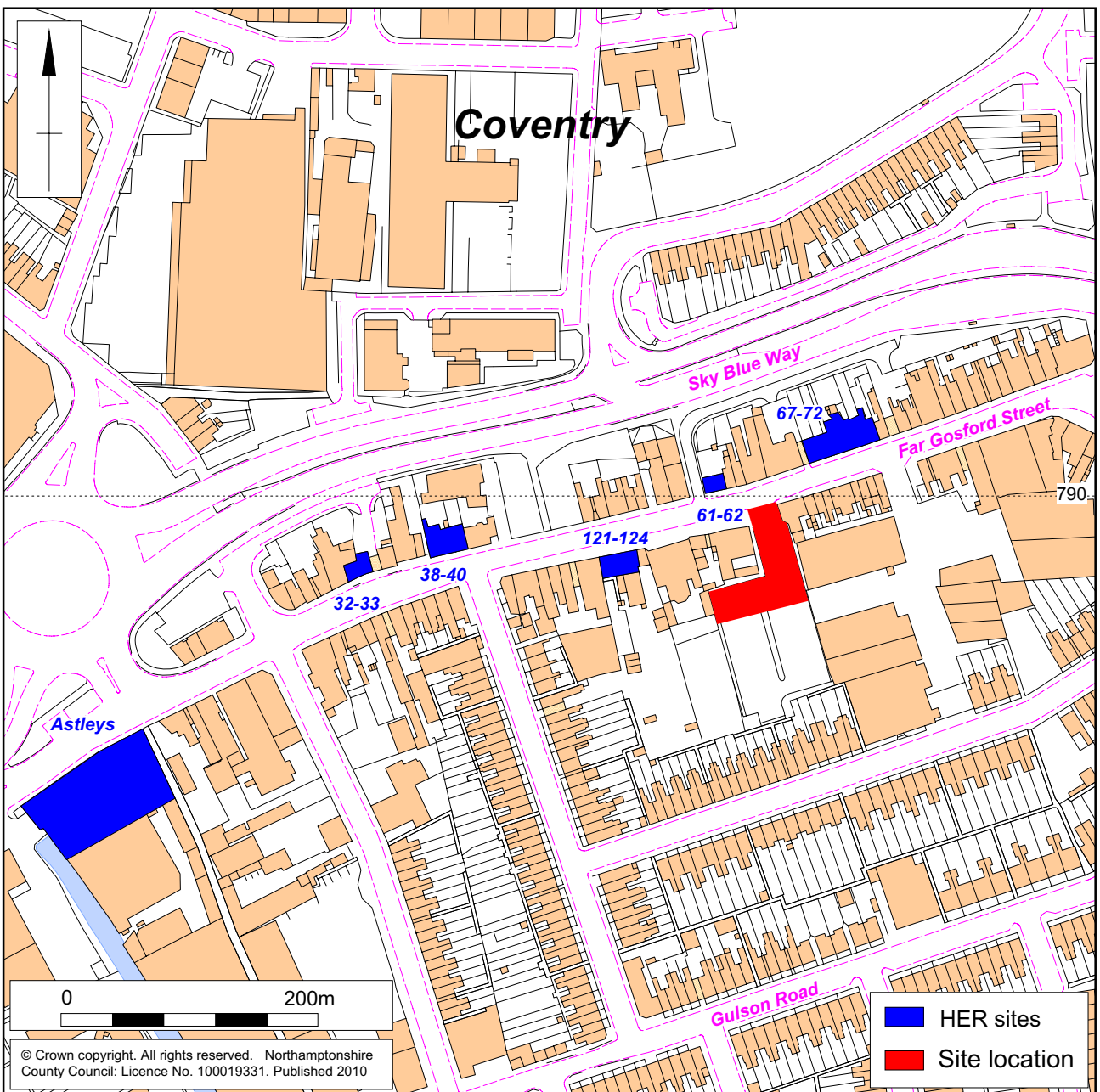
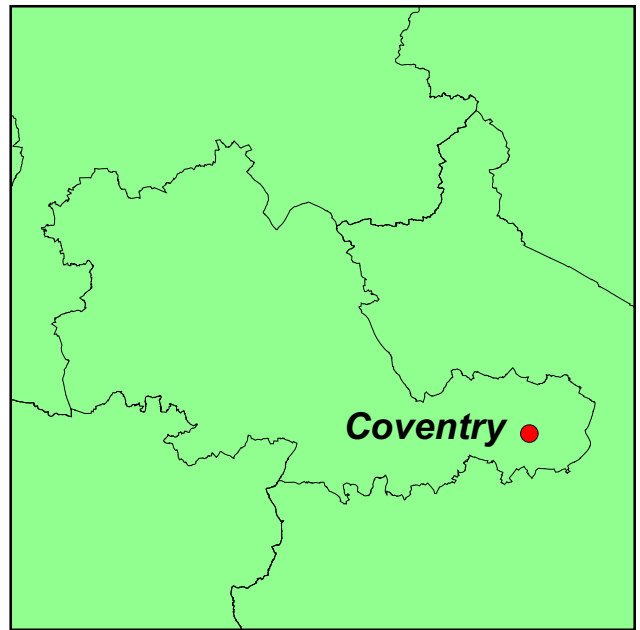
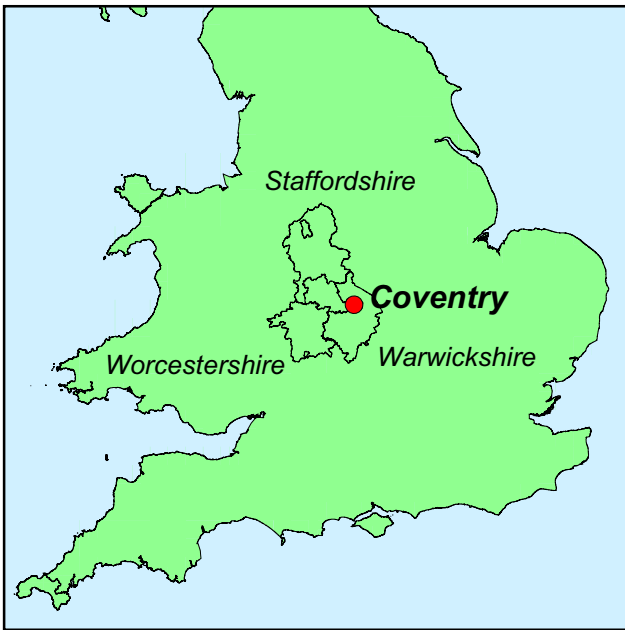
In relation to the current site there were insufficient finds to advance or refine any of the type series currently in use in Coventry or Warwickshire.

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DATA

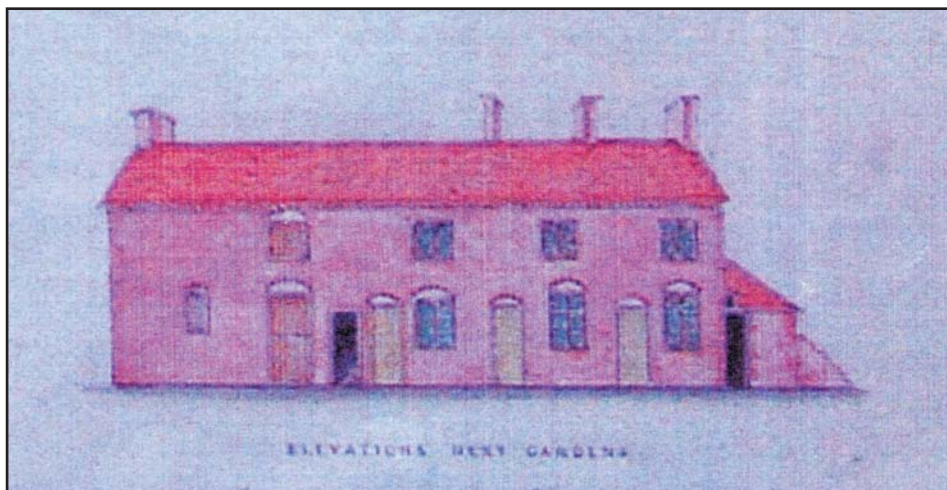
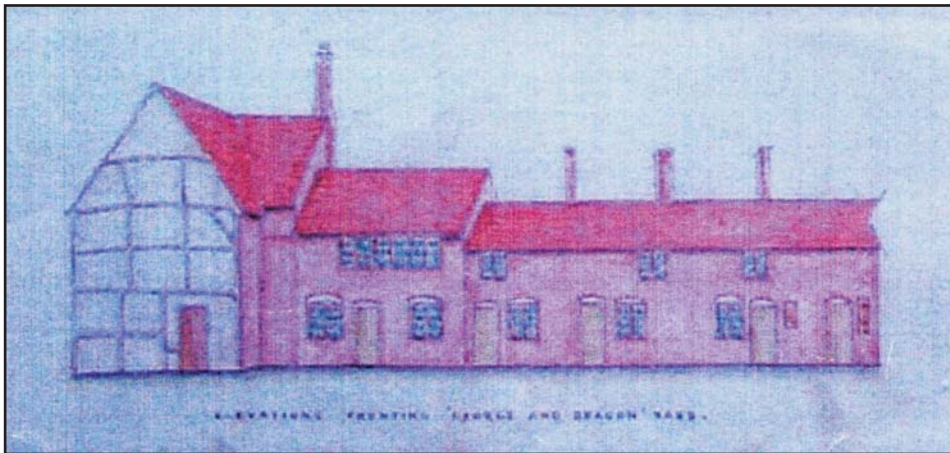
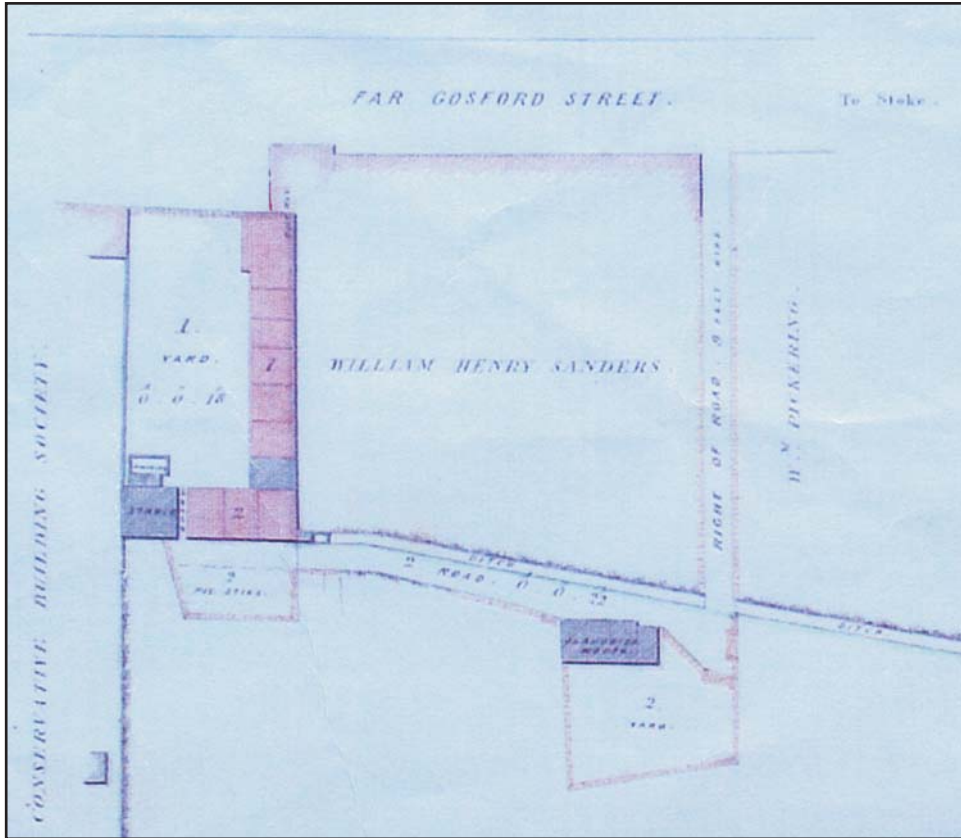
Trench	Context	Type	Description	Dimensions /thickness (m)	Artefact type
1	101	Layer	Tarmac car park surface	0.10 - 0.12m thick	
	102	Layer	Base layer to surface	0.50 thick	
	103	Layer	Natural red clay		
	104	Wall	Brick foundation	1.55m long, 0.50m wide	
	105	Cut	Cut of foundation	1.55m long, 0.50m wide	
	106	Wall	Brick foundation	0.56m long, 0.42m wide	
	107	Concrete	Concrete base	1.30m long, 0.75m wide	
	108	Wall	Brick foundation	0.53m long, 0.11m wide	
	109	Cut	Cut of foundation	1.30m long, 0.75m wide	
	110	Wall	Brick foundation	1.80m long, 0.47m wide	
	111	Cut	Cut of foundation	0.40m long, 0.23m wide	
	112	Wall	Brick party wall foundation	0.37m long, 0.23m wide	
	113	Fill	Fill of foundation trench	0.40m long, 0.23m wide	3 sherds 19th-century pot
	114	Concrete	Concrete base	2.10m long, 0.30m wide	
	115	Cut	Cut of foundation	2.10m long, 0.30m wide	
2	201	Layer	Tarmac car park surface	0.10 – 0.12m thick	
	202	Layer	Base layer to surface	0.30 – 0.40m thick	
	203	Layer	Natural red clay		
	204	Stone	Limestone curb of well	c1.55m diameter	
	205	Cut	Cut of well	c1.55m diameter	
	206	Fill	Fill of gully [207]	2.70m long, 0.50m-0.70m wide	
	207	Cut	Cut of modern gully	2.70m long, 0.50m-0.70m wide	
	208	Concrete	Concrete base	1.60m long, 0.83m wide	
	209	Cut	Cut of foundation	1.60m long, 0.83m wide	
	210	Wall	Brick foundation	3.60m long, 0.60m wide	
	211	Cut	Cut of foundation	3.60m long, 0.60m wide	
	212	Concrete	Concrete base	2.70m long, 0.80m wide	
	213	Cut	Cut of foundation	2.70m long, 0.80m wide	
	214	Layer	Brick rubble	1.10m long, 0.70m wide	
	215	Fill	Fill of well	c0.90m diameter	



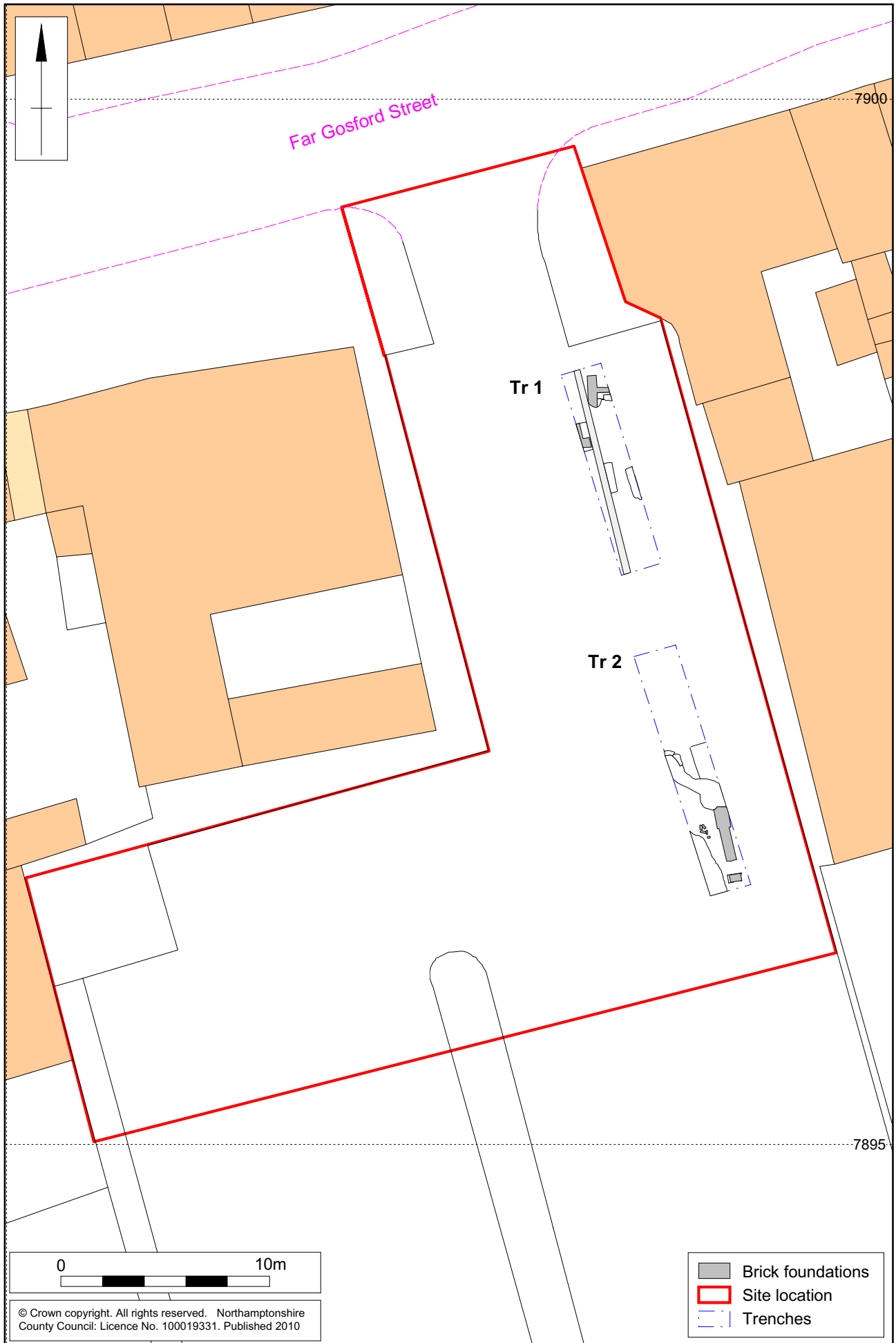
Scale 1:5000

Site location and other sites identified within the Coventry Historic Environment Record

Fig 1



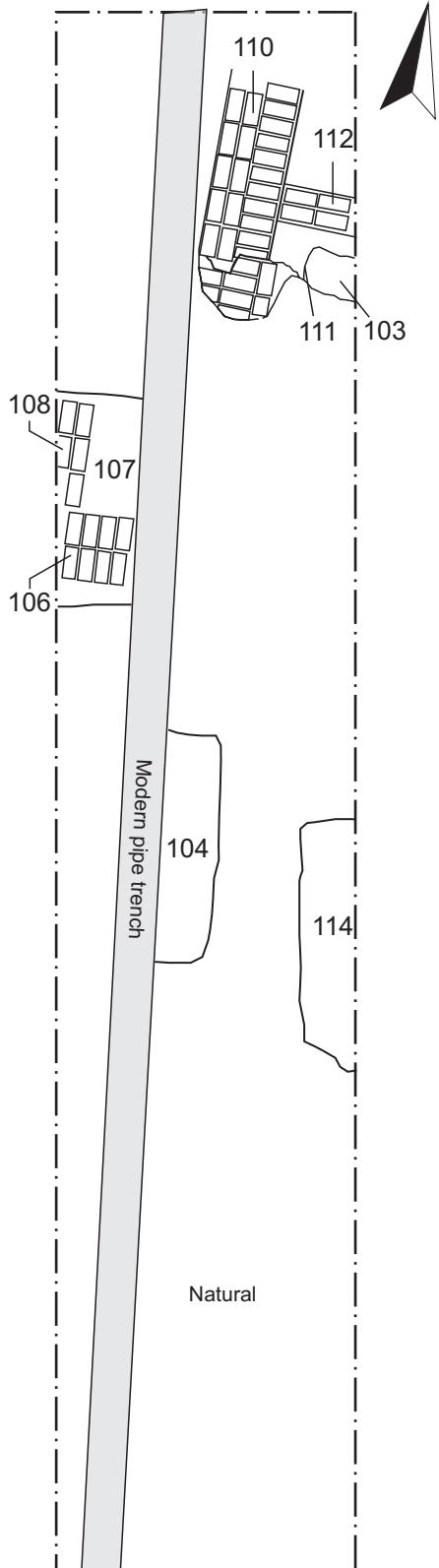
Plans and elevations of the former cottages on the site (1863) Fig 2



Scale 1:250

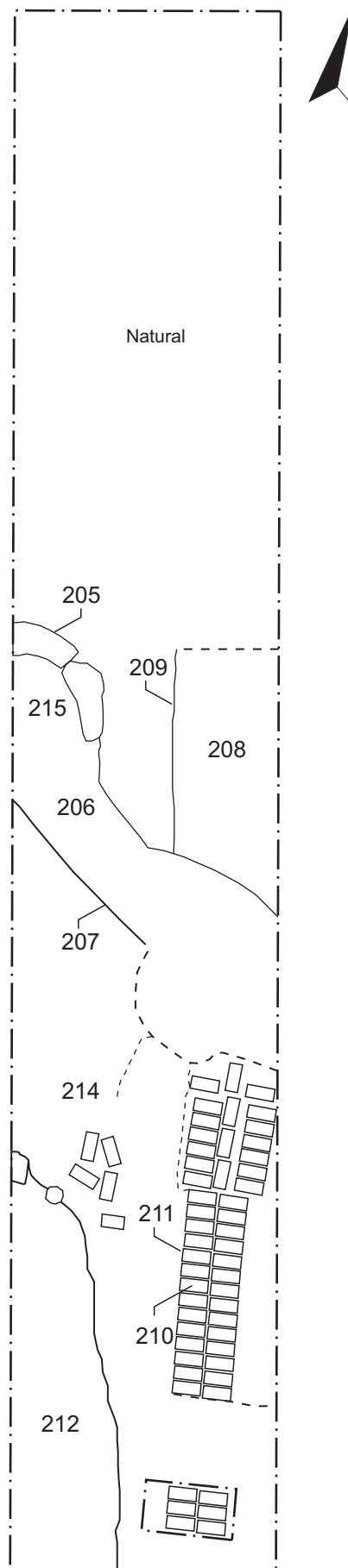
Trench locations Fig 3

Trench 1



0 2m

Trench 2



Trenches 1 & 2 Fig 4



Trench 1, Walls (110) and (112), foundation cut [111] and fill (113), looking north Fig 5



Trench 1, Concrete foundation (107), walls (106) and (108), looking west Fig 6



Trench 2, general view of wall (210), concrete (212), and well (204), looking north Fig 7



Trench 2, well (204), concrete base (208), cut by modern gully [207], looking north Fig 8



Trench 2, well (204), fill (215), looking north Fig 9



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