



# Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological watching brief at Snibston  
Colliery, Ashby Road, Coalville, Leicestershire  
April-May 2011



## Northamptonshire Archaeology

2 Bolton House  
Wootton Hall Park  
Northampton NN4 8BE  
t. 01604 700493 f. 01604 702822  
e. [sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk)  
w. [www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk](http://www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk)



Northamptonshire  
County Council

Joe Prentice

Report 11/205

October 2011

X.A68.2011



**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL  
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY  
SEPTEMBER 2011**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT SNIBSTON COLLIERY,  
ASHBY ROAD, COALVILLE, LEICESTERSHIRE  
APRIL-MAY 2011  
X.A68.2011**

**STAFF**

Project Manager: Steve Parry MA, FSA, MIfA

Text: Joe Prentice

Fieldwork: Joe Prentice, Laszlo Lichtenstein MA, Pete  
Townend MA and Tim Upson-Smith BA, PG  
Dip

Pottery and brick: Iain Soden BA, MIfA

Illustrations: Amir Bassir BSc

**QUALITY CONTROL**

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	Pat Chapman		
Verified by	Iain Soden		
Approved by	Steve Parry		

**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project name	Snibston Colliery, Coalville	
Short description	An archaeological watching brief was carried out on derelict land formerly occupied by part of the Snibston Colliery at Ashby Road, Coalville, Leicestershire. The site had been cleared of all standing buildings, the most recent of which had been a coal preparation plant and railway sidings which had replaced earlier coalminers cottages which fronted onto Ashby Road. Elements of the preparation plant remained below ground along with fragments of the cottages, but no traces of the railway sidings were observed.	
Project type	Watching brief	
Site status	Undesignated but adjacent to Scheduled Monument	
Previous work	None	
Current Land use	Redundant industrial site	
Future work	Redevelopment for residential use	
Monument type/ period	Post-medieval	
Significant finds	No	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Leicestershire	
Site address	Snibston Discovery Gardens, Ashby Road, Coalville, Leicestershire	
Study area	Development site	
OS Easting & Northing	Centred on SK 41795 14530	
Height OD	c 150m above Ordnance Datum	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Project brief originator	Brief from Richard Clark, Leicestershire County Council	
Project Design originator	Mike Dawson, CgMs	
Director/Supervisor	Joe Prentice (NA)	
Project Manager	Steve Parry (NA)	
Sponsor or funding body	CgMs	
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	April 2011	
End date	May 2011	
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)</b>
Physical	<b>X.A68.2011</b>	1 box pottery and brick
Paper		Lever arch file
Digital		Site plans and photographs
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)		
Title	An archaeological watching brief at Snibston Colliery, Ashby Road, Coalville, Leicestershire	
Serial title & volume	11/205	
Author(s)	J Prentice	
Page numbers	9 text, 23 figs	
Date	September 2011	

## Contents

- 1 INTRODUCTION
  - 2 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY
  - 3 DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT
  - 4 THE WATCHING BRIEF
  - 5 FINDS by Iain Soden
  - 6 CONCLUSIONS
- BIBLIOGRAPHY
- ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**Cover photo:** The development site looking north-west

### Figures

- Fig 1: Site location, 1:5,000
- Fig 2: Site location showing foundations
- Fig 3: 1883 First Edition Ordnance Survey map
- Fig 4: 1929 Ordnance Survey map
- Fig 5: 1938 Ordnance Survey map
- Fig 6: Photograph of the rear (south) side of the cottages, looking east. Undated. Copyright Leicestershire County Council
- Fig 7: Photograph of the Ashby Road street frontage of the cottages, looking south-west. Undated
- Fig 8: Plan of the coal preparation plant. Undated. Copyright Leicestershire County Council
- Fig 9: Plan of the coal preparation plant, with numbered buildings and their functions taken from another plan. Undated. Copyright Leicestershire County Council
- Fig 10: Coal preparation plant under construction, looking north-east. Undated. Copyright Leicestershire County Council
- Fig 11: Coal preparation plant, looking west?. Undated. Copyright Leicestershire County Council
- Fig 12: Railway tracks and ancillary buildings, looking north-east? c1962. Copyright Leicestershire County Council

- Fig 13: The former coal preparation plant site before clearance, looking south-east
- Fig 14: Parallel concrete foundations, looking east
- Fig 15: Deep concrete base, looking north
- Fig 16: Concrete floor slabs to coal preparation plant building, looking north-east
- Fig 17: Salt glazed half pipe set in concrete channel, looking north
- Fig 18: Concrete 'tank', possibly blending bunkers, looking south
- Fig 19: The street frontage foundations of the row of cottages, looking east
- Fig 20: Dividing wall foundation between two cottages, looking south
- Fig 21: Foundations to the corner fireplaces of the kitchen/scullery in the foreground and front room fireplaces beyond, looking north
- Fig 22: Quarry tile floor to rear kitchen/scullery, looking south
- Fig 23: Made ground at the south-east corner of the site, looking south-west

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT SNIBSTON COLLIERY,  
ASHBY ROAD, COALVILLE, LEICESTERSHIRE  
APRIL-MAY 2011**

*Abstract*

*An archaeological watching brief was carried out on derelict land formerly occupied by part of the Snibston Colliery at Ashby Road, Coalville, Leicestershire. The site had been cleared of all standing buildings, the most recent of which had been a coal preparation plant and railway sidings which had replaced earlier coalminers cottages which fronted onto Ashby Road. Elements of the preparation plant remained below ground along with fragments of the cottages, but no traces of the railway sidings were observed.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The town of Coalville is situated in north-west Leicestershire and, as the name suggests, was primarily occupied in the mining of coal (NGR SK41795 14530; Fig 1). The Snibston Colliery has ceased mining, and whilst the majority of the buildings are now preserved to the east of the present site, the area of the current development contained ancillary buildings associated with it. Planning Permission was granted on appeal to develop this site (APP/G2435/A/07/2058404). However, a condition required a programme of archaeological work should be undertaken, and in consequence a Written Scheme of Investigation was prepared and submitted by CgMs in fulfilment of that requirement (Dawson 2011). This record was made by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) after being commissioned to do so by CgMs on behalf of the client.
- 1.2 The proposed development site lies at the junction of Ashby Road and Chiswell Drive (Fig 2). The solid geology of the area is of Tarporley Siltstone (Geological Survey of Great Britain website). The present topography of the site is relatively flat although the ground surface rises away from the Ashby Road on the north side by approximately one metre before forming a flat plateau; on the south side there is a sharp drop to the level of the adjoining Snibston Discovery Park of approximately three metres suggesting a degree of man-made adjustment to the natural landscape.
- 1.3 Five separate visits were made to the site, between 23 April and 24 May 2011 as removal of foundations and ground reduction proceeded, to assess and record the surviving elements of the various phases of development on the site.
- 1.4 A Leicestershire Museums Archaeology Collections accession number has been allocated to the project: X.A68.2011.

## **2 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY**

- 2.1 The general objectives of the recording were focussed on three main areas:
  - The street frontage buildings along Ashby Road visible on the Ordnance Survey maps of 1883, 1901 and 1929, but no longer present on the 1960 edition.

- The coal preparation plant present on the 1970 Ordnance Survey edition.
  - Railway structures in the south-east quadrant of the development area identified from historic maps.
- 2.2 The drawn record was based upon the current Ordnance Survey plan of the area. The accuracy of the plans was checked and they were annotated and amended to produce an accurate archaeological building record. Features were located using a Leica 1200 System GPS.
- 2.3 All works was conducted in accordance with the English Heritage procedural document, *The Management of Research Projects on the Historic Environment* (EH 2006b, revised 2009) and the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (IfA 2008b).
- 2.4 A basic desk-based assessment was requested and the search has been undertaken at the Snibston Discovery Centre and using digital versions of the various relevant Ordnance Survey maps.
- 2.5 The watching brief was carried out with the aid and co-operation of the site contractors, however, given the large number machines present and the Health and Safety constraints which resulted both from those machines and a degree of contamination, recording was in some cases restricted to observation from a safe distance. However, in the case of the cottages fronting Ashby Road, sufficient time and safe working conditions allowed a full record to be made of the surviving elements as they were uncovered.

### 3 DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

- 3.1 The colliery at Snibston was founded in 1831 by the famous railway pioneer George Stephenson who bought the estate and sunk the first shaft of what later became the Snibston Colliery (Bell 2007). George, and his son Robert, had previously built a railway to transport coal from Swannington to Leicester and this line passed the new mine. A second pair of shafts was sunk off a country road called Long Lane, the name given to the area before it was re-named Coalville ([www.coalville-heritage](http://www.coalville-heritage)). These formed the basis of the new colliery which began to produce coal in 1832.

Miners from County Durham came to the area to work. By 1840 around 250 men were employed at the colliery ([www.minesofmemory](http://www.minesofmemory)). At first they were housed in tenements and later in six rows of terraced cottages on Long Lane, which it is thought was re-named as Ashby Road. The row of cottages thought to be located on the current development site was known as Row No 5, later known as Kimberly Row which lie on the south side of Ashby Road (Figs 3, 4 and 5). These cottages are thought to have been built in 1833, and, on the 1929 map appears to show a continuous row of twenty one cottages (The Coalville 150 Group, <http://scoilnet.magicstudio.co.uk>). To the rear (south) is an alleyway which separates the houses from what are probably privies and perhaps also coal sheds, as coal would have been provided for the workers (though not for free). This alleyway is shown on an undated photograph which shows the rear of the houses on the left and the outhouses on the right (Fig 6). In the background can be seen the buildings of the colliery. It is possible that further south beyond these sheds or privies the land was allocated for growing food in allotments. This row appears to almost identical to another situated immediately to the west further along Ashby Road and shown in an undated photograph of possibly the same date as that showing the rear view (it must be after 1926 when the first concrete lamp posts were introduced as one



---

can be seen in the photograph, Fig 7). This photograph shows the Ashby Road frontage and it can be seen that each house was a simple two-up two-down structure with paired front doors and to either side a single window. The windows appear to be fitted with sash frames, probably nine over nine lights to each window. The buildings appear to be part pebble-dashed, a finish which can be seen more clearly on the photograph of the rear alleyway (Fig 6). This type of finish is not likely to be original and most likely represents an attempt to up-grade them. The row of houses displays a slightly stepped profile as the land falls gently towards the east, most clearly seen on Figure 7. Each adjacent pair shares a large, square chimney stack, though as none have any chimney pots it is not possible to determine the numbers of flues; if there were fireplaces in both downstairs and upstairs room there would be eight pots to each stack (four to each house). Given the basic nature of the houses it is possible that only the downstairs rooms were heated, but this cannot be certain. None have any front or rear gardens.

- 3.2 In 1947 the coalmine was taken over by the National Coal Board, and over the following twenty years there was a programme of new building work with offices, workshops and a sick bay being built. Underground new machinery was installed to increase production and by the 1970s the former cottages along Ashby Road had been demolished and the site to the south given over to a new coal preparation plant (Fig 8). Original drawings of this plant are held by Leicestershire County Council at the adjoining Snibston Industrial Heritage Museum buildings and a number were photographed for use in this report. However, the large number of drawings and fact that they are un-catalogued makes it uncertain to be sure if all relevant material has been accessed. Furthermore, most are un-dated which makes placing them in a coherent sequence impossible and difficult to interpret meaningfully. However, where they could be either dated or were felt to be placed with a degree of certainty in a chronological sequence, they have been reproduced here.
- 3.3 On both the 1929 and 1938 Ordnance survey maps the two rows of cottages on the south side of Ashby Road are shown, with to the south of what is thought to be row No 5 a recreation ground and beyond that a cricket ground, both indicating that welfare facilities were available, though whether or not these were provided by the coal mine is uncertain (Figs 4 and 5). To the east the buildings of the colliery are shown with a series of railway lines curving to the south-west along the eastern edge of the recreation ground.
- 3.4 An undated, but clearly later, plan in the Snibston collection shows the two rows of cottages to be no longer present; it is thought that this plan may date to the late 1960s or 1970s (Fig 8). The faint lines of the railway tracks indicated on the two Ordnance Survey maps can be seen, but drawn over them, and clearly replacing them, is another set of tracks aligned east-west before they also turn to the south-west. Positioned across these new tracks are a series of buildings, presumed to be the coal preparation plant. It is assumed that railway carriages with coal on board was carried into the building before being processed and taken out of the other side after washing and grading.
- 3.5 Another undated plan shows the complex with further additions suggesting a later date (Fig 9). By this time the site has expanded southwards with either long ranges, or perhaps more likely, conveyors projecting both to the south and south-west. On yet another undated drawing some of these buildings are numbered with a key indicating their various uses (not illustrated, numbers transferred to Fig 9 which is a clearer plan).
- 3.6 A series of photographs provided by Nick Pell, Curator, Mining and Transport at Snibston, shows the plant under construction and in operation (Figs 10, 11 and 12). It is

not certain when the plant was demolished but the colliery was finally closed some time after 1984 as a result of the miners' strike.

## 4 THE WATCHING BRIEF

### 4.1 *The coal preparation plant*

When first visited the site had been cleared of weed growth and trees which were self-set across the whole site. A number of concrete foundations and floors were visible and these were plotted using a Leica 1200 System GPS (Figs 2 and 13). Although the ground plan of these buildings was incomplete due to partial removal at the time of demolition, it is possible to locate some of these foundations to the undated plans of the site and identify the former functions of some surviving elements. Along the southern border of the site two parallel concrete footings were cleaned and recorded which do not appear on any of the plans copied at Snibston and is therefore presumed to post-date those plans. The footings were aligned approximately east-west and had along their length the stumps of upright concrete piers which had been removed above ground level although the steel reinforcing rods remained (Figs 2 and 14). This suggests that the building was probably covered or supported another level, although its function is unknown. At the eastern end of the two parallel footings a massive block of concrete was present and when that foundation was being broken-up its full depth was revealed which showed that there, at least, it was a solid block of concrete at least two metres deep (Figs 2 and 15). It retained around its exterior pieces of both plywood and polystyrene shuttering into which the concrete had been poured. The size of the footing suggests that it supported a large superstructure, although its purpose is unknown.

4.2 Towards the western side of the site a larger area of concrete comprising floor slabs along with the bases of vertical reinforced posts was similarly observed and planned (Figs 2 and 16). This corresponds approximately with the main group of buildings indicated on the undated plan of the plant, some of which are numbered and named on the corresponding key. Building 32 on the north side is listed simply as 'coal preparation plant', the name by which the whole complex appears to have been known. The only other element of this group which is numbered is the circular feature, not identified on the ground, which is listed as number 33 and identified as 'thickener'. The fact that this was not observed on the ground suggests that this must either have been constructed of different materials or was located above ground and had been totally removed during demolition. To the south remains of a long, north-south aligned narrow channel were also observed and recorded (Fig 2). This retained half sections of salt glazed pipes set in concrete which must have formed a channel for the carrying of waste water since it retained a hard deposit within it suggesting that at the time of demolition the channel had not been cleaned out (Fig 17). It is not labelled on the site plan.

4.3 Towards the eastern side of the site two smaller areas of concrete foundation were observed, one that appeared to be a tank of some sort, the other a fragment of what appears to be the corner of an unidentified building (Figs 2 and 18). The tank may correspond with what is identified as number 30, 'blending bunkers' on the undated plan. The other fragment appeared to be the corner of a building, but the plans do not show any buildings in that area, and therefore it appears that this structure must have been added at a later date and so its purpose is unknown.

### 4.4 *The miners cottages fronting Ashby Road*

Thought to have been built in 1833 when the colliery was first developed, these cottages are now known only from maps and some general photographs (Figs 4, 5, 6 and 7). The photograph showing the Ashby Road street frontage is undated but most likely dates from the late 1950s or 1960s given the style of the apparently concrete street lamp in the

picture. The houses are thought to have been originally called Row Number 5 and later Kimberly Row and both photographs appear to show that their walls were pebble-dashed. Stripping of this section of the site commenced from the west end close to the present Chiswell Drive and proceeded eastwards parallel to Ashby Road (Fig 2).

- 4.5 At the west end there was no surviving evidence of the cottages, the ground comprising clearly re-deposited rubble, thought to be associated both with the demolition of the cottages and later demolition of the coal preparation plant which superseded it. As the ground reduction proceeded eastwards the footings of the front (north) wall of the cottages was observed (Figs 2 and 19). This comprised a standard construction with bricks laid alternately lengthwise and perpendicular to the wall plane. The unfrosted bricks were 245mm x 110mm x 75mm in size (10 x 4 ½ x 3 inches), of a hard red fabric bonded in lime mortar. It was not possible to discern whether or not the bricks had been laid in a recognised bond. Perpendicular to the front (north) wall were fragments of the dividing walls between the separate cottages (Figs 2 and 20). These were more fragmentary in nature and only survived in a few places. They were fully bonded to the front wall and at the lowest level were of two bricks laid side by side, though above this, and presumably at a level above ground, were only a single brick wide. This corresponds exactly with a reference to miners cottages which mentions the thinness of the walls between adjoining properties, often being constructed of a single brick (Bailey 2007). This meanness of building was then, as now, dictated by building costs and whilst the cottages may have been relatively well appointed in some respects, they were clearly built on a budget. The photograph of the backs of the houses indicates that there were no projecting ranges, and thus the houses would only have been two rooms deep, the front room most likely a sitting room, the back room the scullery/kitchen.
- 4.6 Projecting from every other dividing wall were remains of footings for back-to-back fireplaces, set in the angle of the south-west and south-east corners of the front rooms, and across the angles of the north-west and north-east corners of the back rooms (Fig 21). Those in the front rooms were built square to the dividing walls, those in the back rooms across the angles. Quite why this was the case is uncertain, but it does indicate that each pair of cottages would have shared a central stack, a fact confirmed by the photograph showing the row from Ashby Road (Fig 7). None of the large stacks in the photograph have chimney pots so it is uncertain how many flues each stack contained; if only two per house this would indicate that each cottage had only two fireplaces, one to each of the ground floor rooms, if four each they would have had a fireplace in each upstairs room. However, the large size of the stacks evident on the photograph and given the fact that coal would clearly be in plentiful supply, the latter might have been the case if needed, or could be afforded. The front room size was approximately 3.5m wide x 3.4m deep (11 feet 6 inches x 11 feet), the back scullery's were 3.5m wide and only 2.5m deep (11 feet 6 inches x 8 feet). Though small by modern standards, these rooms seem to have been reasonably well proportioned compared to some recorded by George Orwell in the 1930s who travelled around the south Yorkshire coalfields. He wrote of a house in Barnsley that there was a

'House in Wortley Street. Two up, one down. Living room 12 feet by 10 feet. Sink and copper in living room, coal hole under stairs. Sink worn almost flat and constantly overflowing. Walls not too sound. Penny in slot gas-light. House very dark and gas-light estimated at 4d a day. Upstairs rooms are really one large room partitioned into two. Walls very bad-wall of back room cracked right through. Window frames coming to pieces and have to be stuffed with wood. Rain comes through in several places. Sewer runs under house and stinks in summer but Corporation "says they can't do nowt". Six people in house, two adults and four children, the eldest aged fifteen. Youngest but one attending hospital-tuberculosis suspected. House infested with bugs. Rent 5sh. 3d., including rates'

(Bailey 2007)

---

Further references to miners housing can be found within the same book which reveal a generally poor level of housing, though different pit owners treated their workers with more or less respect. However, the basic form of housing seems to be much the same, and indeed, this type of housing was not limited to mining towns, it was unfortunately representative of most housing for the working classes of the time. The back doors of the houses opened onto the 'backs' the name given to the alleyway which ran along the rear of the terrace and which separated the houses from the privies. In this lane washing was hung and children played.

- 4.7 In only one place along the former row of houses was a fragment of flooring uncovered (Fig 22). This indicates that in this location, at least, the floor was of red ceramic un-glazed quarry tiles, 195mm square and 50mm thick (7 ¾ x 2 inches). It is assumed that this remnant indicates the original flooring, and as it was located in the back room which was most likely the scullery/kitchen it makes sense to have tiling in this location where there would likely have been a sink and perhaps copper for heating water. It is probable that the front room had a wooden floor although no evidence for this was found.
- 4.8 There were no finds of domestic or personal refuse from this part of the site which suggests that before demolition the houses had been cleared. It is also likely, given the depth of removal of foundations, that there was little chance of finding occupation material since this would have been at a much higher level.
- 4.9 No indication was found of either the surface of the back alley or the outbuildings located to the south, although references to similar terraces of the time suggest that in many cases the alleyway would have been un-paved. Also, in this location, the further away from Ashby Road, the greater the depth of ground reduction and therefore any foundations (which for single storey privies or stores would have most likely been shallower anyway) have been removed.
- 4.10 ***The railway sidings***  
No evidence was found of the railway sidings which are indicated on the Ordnance Survey maps and the colliery plans. This appears to be because any rails would have been removed for re-use and the sleepers, at least early on in the development of the site, would have been of wood and therefore also removed if of use, or if left in position would most likely have rotted. A building shown on the Ordnance Survey maps, but not on the later colliery plans and clearly relating to the earlier phase of sidings was not located on the ground. This appears to be because the location, south of Ashby Road had been graded off to such a depth that no foundations survived.
- 4.11 This great depth of ground reduction was most clearly observed at the southern edge of the site where approximately two and half metres of made-ground was removed (Fig 23). This made ground appears to be the result of both dumping of waste material and deliberate levelling for the 1970's coal preparation plant. It stretches from immediately adjacent to Ashby Road on the north side of the site, and the present southern limit of the development area. All of this made ground was removed as part of the re-development so that any pockets of un-compacted or unstable ground and remnants of foundations could be removed. The concrete was crushed and the soil was then graded and replaced before being compacted in layers to restore the former recent ground level prior to development.

## **5 FINDS** by Iain Soden

- 5.1 Whilst no finds were retrieved from the location of the row of cottages adjacent to Ashby Road, the removal of the deep layers of levelling and build-up material at the southern edge of the site yielded a small variety of domestic pottery. All was retrieved from the spoil heap since Health and Safety precluded the possibility of being present within the excavation at the time of the spoils removal due to the depth of build-up. Thus, whilst the general location of the pottery can be ascribed to the south-eastern corner of the site, specific layers within the build-up were not identified.

The pottery included examples of iron-glazed pancheons of late nineteenth-early twentieth-century date such as are often found within kitchens for either dairying or pickling. Of tableware there were examples of underglaze transfer decorated Willow pattern from Staffordshire factories. A similarly decorated example with an image of a marching rifle band had a press-moulded rim. Mocha ware and lustre ware was represented by teapot and teacup fragments (both probably from Swadlincote production sites) and there was a single example of slightly better quality hand-decorated teacup which perhaps indicates the breaking of a Sunday-Best set. All date to the mid-late nineteenth-century and none display evidence of great quality. Given the method of retrieval the pottery has not been weighed or tabulated but has been retained.

A single twentieth-century brick with NCB WATNALL impressed within the frog was identified. This brickworks was attached to a colliery on the same site where apparently waste clay spoil was used to produce bricks for Coal Board collieries. The Watnall colliery closed in 1950 although the brickworks continued for an unknown length of time after that date. At the time of the writing of this report the former brickworks site off Long Lane, Watnall, Nottinghamshire is for sale as a development opportunity.

No finds were retrieved from the area of the modern coal preparation plant, and apart from fragments of concrete, metal fragments, plastic and pieces of corrugated asbestos, no objects were identified.

## **6 CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1 The broad chronology of the Snibston colliery at Coalville is known from documentary sources, being established in 1831. Whilst site specific information of the development of the very early history of individual buildings and mine workings are not certain, the rows of miner workers cottages are reasonably well documented and a date of 1833 for their construction indicated on one website, although this cannot be confirmed and no source given to substantiate this. Photographs of these show their exteriors from both sides, which whilst of little use regarding the internal layout, shows them to have been of standard nineteenth-century configuration. Monitoring of the ground reduction prior to the recent re-development of the site has revealed the dimensions of the interior rooms and the disposition of the fireplaces along with a single fragment of flooring. All evidence confirms their layout as a fairly standard form for the date, and the materials used in their construction are also what would be expected for the period. No evidence was found of the row of privies located to their rear and this appears to be most likely due to the fact that as single-storey buildings they would have had shallower foundations than the houses, and given the great depth of grading-off of the site any evidence has been lost. However, their location and disposition is known from Ordnance Survey maps and they are shown in the photograph of the alleyway.

- 6.2 No evidence was found of other nineteenth-century mine related buildings on the remainder of the site which has undergone significant ground reduction and then subsequent build-up to produce the ground level apparent today. Within and on top of this raised level were modern concrete foundations and wall remnants relating to the 1970s coal preparation plant for which a number of original architects and management drawings, along with a limited collection of photographs, survive. Whilst outside the scope of this report, and given the recent operational lifespan of the building, it is likely that there are a number of mine workers still living locally who could create a meaningful record of that element of the colliery from memory, and who would help to establish a long-term record of aspects of the mine which have otherwise been lost. Recording of fragmentary foundations simply highlights the limited nature of the archaeological record, even on a site of such recent date.
- 6.3 No evidence was found within the site of the railway sidings indicated on historic maps and it appears that all evidence has been removed due to the probably relatively high scrap value of the component parts, particularly the ironwork, whilst any foundations of associated buildings appear to have been lost during previous ground reduction and subsequent build-up.
- 6.4 The removal of made-ground has shown that the site has been severely truncated and then subsequently built-up with imported material. Whilst it has not been possible to determine when this ground reduction first took place, the presence of pottery dating to the middle years of the nineteenth-century corresponds well with the date known for the establishment of the colliery. There were no surviving pre-colliery soil levels and no evidence of archaeological remains which pre-date the nineteenth-century.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thanks are extended to the staff of the Snibston Discovery Centre and also to Nick Pell, Curator, Mining and Transport, Leicestershire County Council for his help identifying plans and photographs of the coal preparation plant. Thanks also to the contractors on site during the clearance of the foundations and ground reduction.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

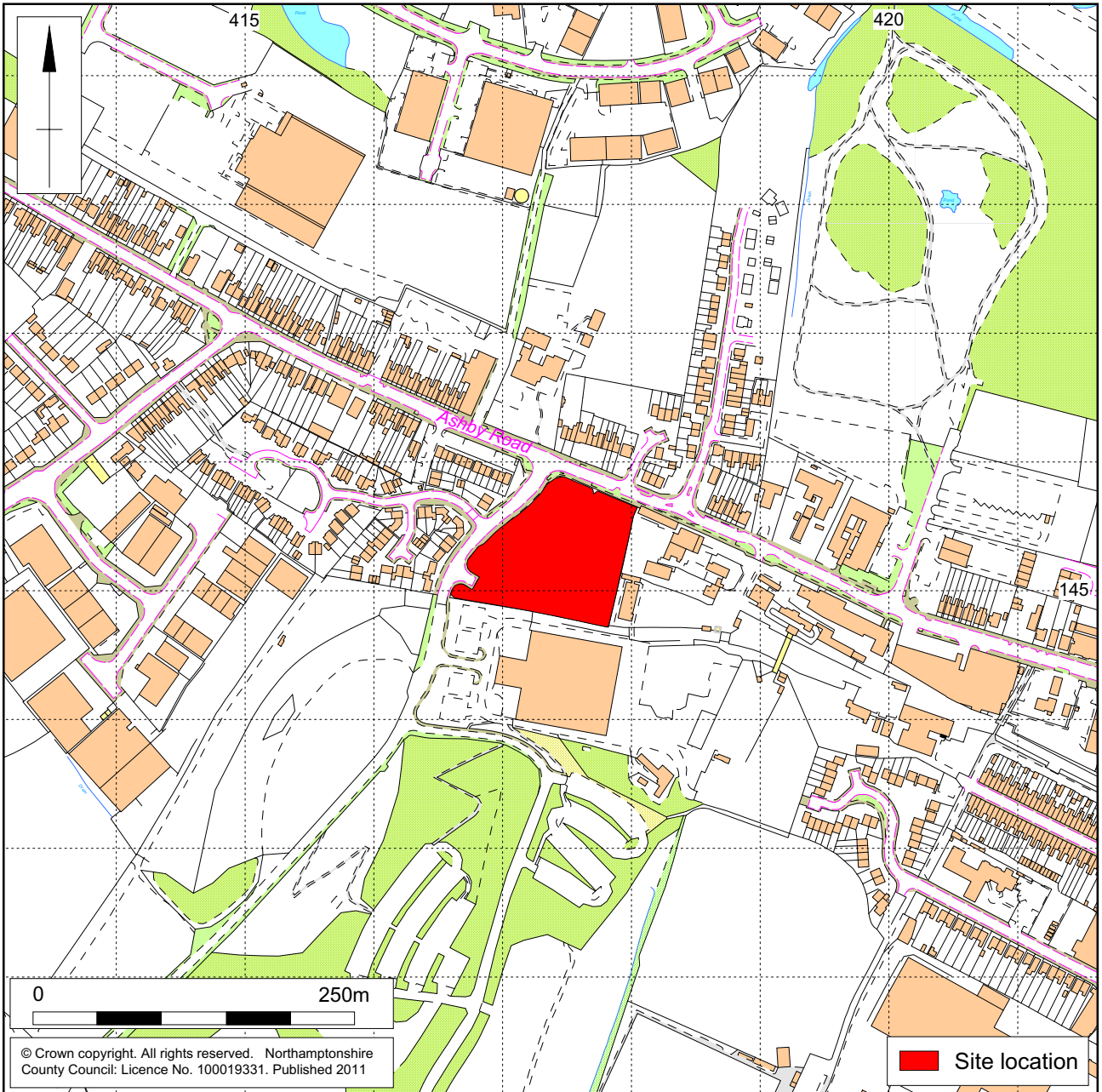
Bailey, C, 2007 *Black Diamonds, The rise and fall of an English dynasty*

Bell, D, 2007 *Memories of the Leicestershire coalfields*

Dawson, M, 2011 *Project Design for Archaeological Recording, Ashby Road, Coalville, Leicestershire* CgMs Consulting Limited

EH 2006b, revised 2009 *The Management of Research Projects on the Historic Environment* English Heritage

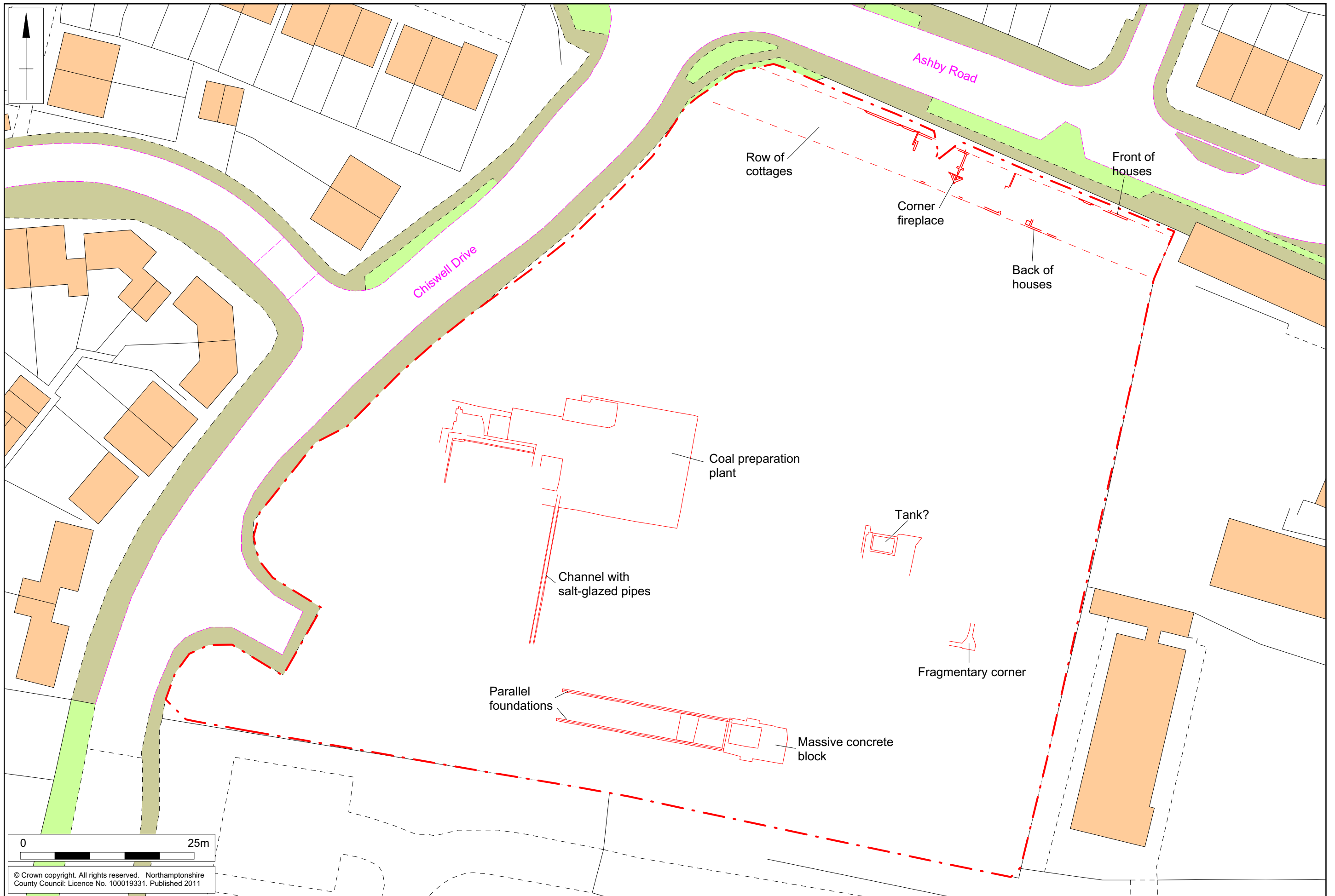
IfA 2008b *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* Institute for Archaeologists



Scale 1:5000

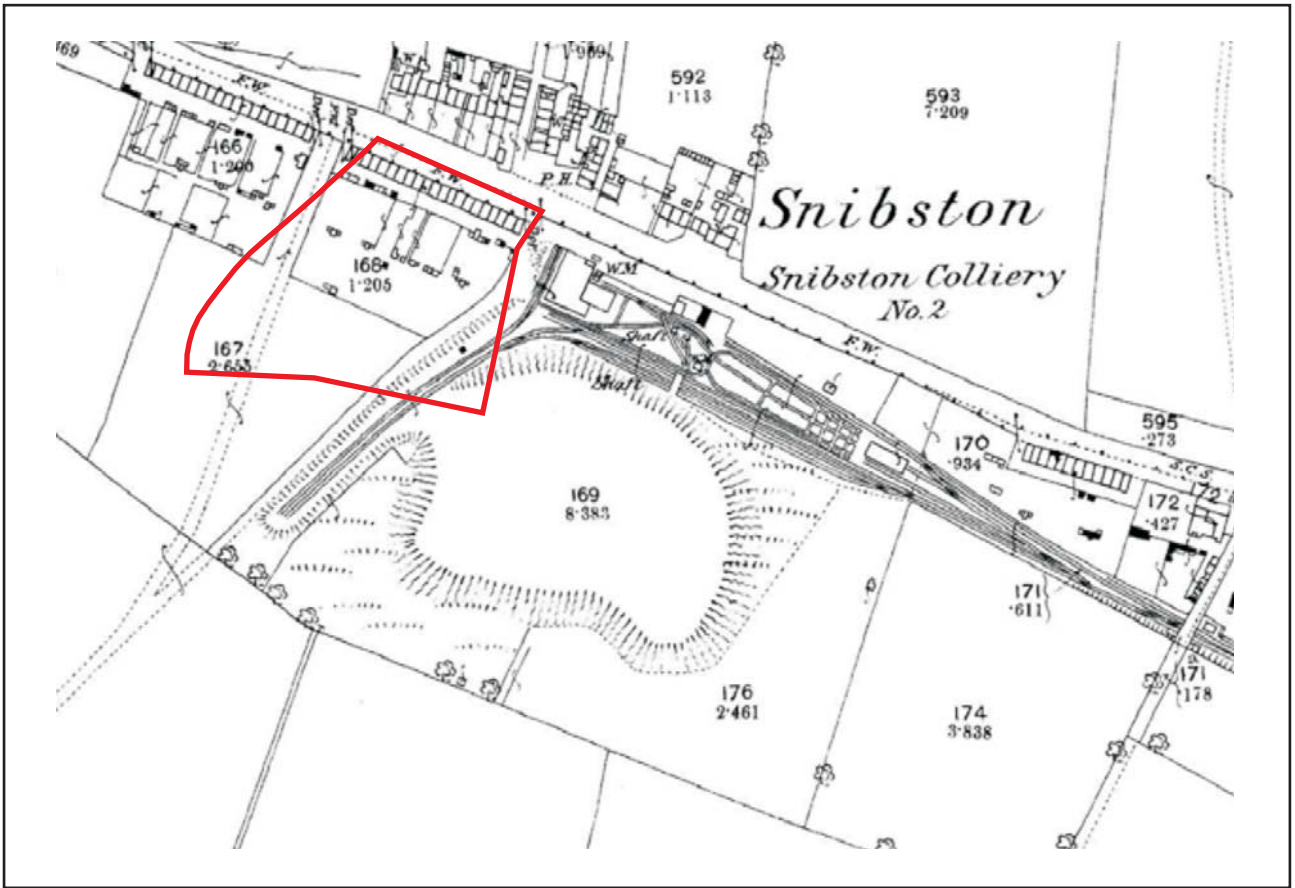
Site Location Fig 1





Scale 1:500

Site location showing foundations Fig 2



1883 First Edition Ordnance Survey map Fig 3



1929 Ordnance Survey map Fig 4



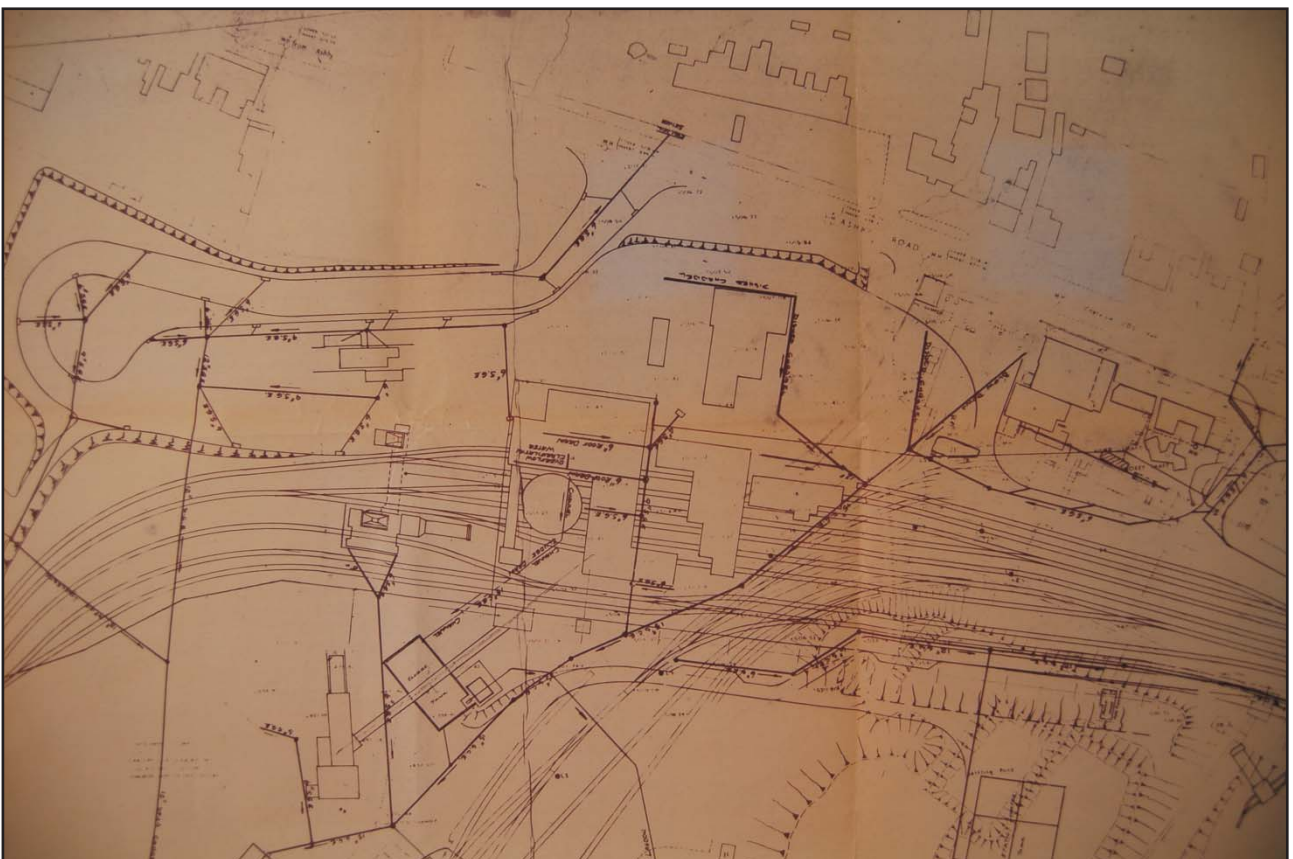
1938 Ordnance Survey map Fig 5



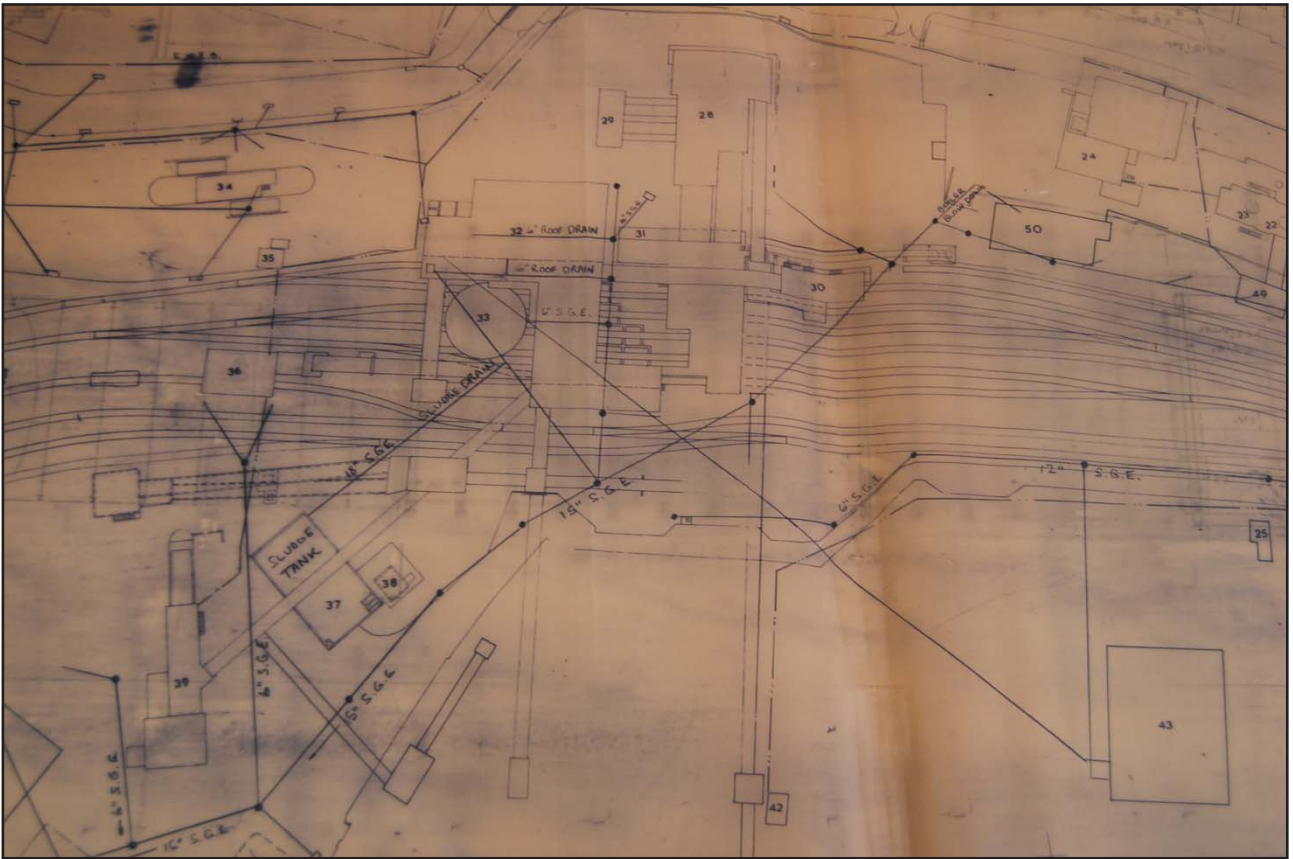
Photograph of the rear (south) side of the cottages, looking east. Undated. Fig 6  
Copyright Leicestershire County Council



Photograph of the Ashby Road street frontage of the cottages, looking south-west. Undated Fig 7



Plan of the coal preparation plant. Undated. Copyright Leicestershire County Council Fig 8



Plan of the coal preparation plant, with numbered buildings and their functions taken from another plan. Undated. Copyright Leicestershire County Council Fig 9



Coal preparation plant under construction, looking north-east. Undated. Copyright Leicestershire County Council Fig 10



Coal preparation plant, looking west? Undated. Copyright Leicestershire County Council Fig 11



Railway tracks and ancillary buildings, looking north-east? c1962. Fig 12  
Copyright Leicestershire County Council



The former coal preparation plant site before clearance, looking south-east Fig 13



Parallel concrete foundations, looking east Fig 14



Deep concrete base, looking north Fig 15



Concrete floor slabs to coal preparation plant building, looking north east Fig 16





Salt glazed half pipe set in concrete channel, looking north Fig 17



Concrete 'tank', possibly blending bunkers, looking south Fig 18



The street frontage foundations of the row of cottages, looking east Fig 19



Dividing wall foundation between two cottages, looking south Fig 20



Foundations to the corner fireplaces of the kitchen/scullery in the foreground and front room fireplaces beyond, looking north Fig 21



Quarry tile floor to rear kitchen/scullery, looking south Fig 22



Made ground at the south-east corner of the site, looking south-west Fig 23



Northamptonshire County Council

# Northamptonshire Archaeology

## Northamptonshire Archaeology

2 Bolton House  
Wootton Hall Park

Northampton NN4 8BE

t. 01604 700493 f. 01604 702822

e. [sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk)

w. [www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk](http://www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk)



Northamptonshire  
County Council