



# ANTLEY SYKE, OSWALDTWISTLE, LANCASHIRE

## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



**Oxford Archaeology North**

**April 2012**

**The Environment Agency**

Issue No: 2012-13/1283  
OA North Job No: L10466  
NGR: SD 74545, 28622

**Document Title:** ANTLEY SYKE, OSWALDTWISTLE, LANCASHIRE

**Document Type:** Archaeological Watching Brief Report

**Client Name:** The Environment Agency

**Issue Number:** 2011-12/1283  
**OA Job Number:** L10466  
**Site Code:** AS12  
**National Grid Reference:** SD 74545, 28622

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## SUMMARY

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As part of the River Hyndburn Flood Alleviation Scheme in Oswaldtwistle, Lancashire, the Environment Agency (EA) undertook the renewal of the Antley Syke culvert next to the Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School (NGR SD 74545 28622: Fig 1). As the development was located within an area of heritage potential, the EA Archaeological Advisor requested that a programme of archaeological watching brief should be undertaken during the excavations for the new drain. EA commissioned Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) to undertake the watching brief, which was completed in accordance with standard OA North practices and Lancashire County Archaeology Service (LCAS) excavation, recording and reporting requirements, between February and March 2012.

The groundworks exposed what was considered to be part of the natural profile of the Antley Syke before it had been culverted. A stone-built wall on the edge of the syke and a large amount of debris filling its depression were thought to derive from the north wing of Tanpits Court, which was demolished during the inter-War period, and may have originated, or replaced on virtually the same footprint, a possible watermill dating to the post-medieval or early industrial period.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) would like to thank Connor McIlwrath, Tony Callaghan and Ed Wilson of the Environment Agency for commissioning the project and, also Richard Walsh (Volker Stevin), and Doug Moir (Lancashire County Archaeology Service) for their liaison and support throughout.

The watching brief was conducted by Vickie Jamieson and Becky Wegiel. The report was compiled by Vickie Jamieson and the illustrations were produced by Mark Tidmarsh. The project was managed by Stephen Rowland, who also edited this report.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF PROJECT

1.1.1 As part of the River Hyndburn Flood Alleviation Scheme in Oswaldtwistle, Lancashire, the Environment Agency (EA) undertook the renewal of the Antley Syke culvert next to the Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School at (NGR SD 74545 28622: Fig 1). As the development was located within an area of heritage potential, the EA Archaeological Advisor requested that a programme of archaeological watching brief should be undertaken during the excavations for the new drain. EA commissioned Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) to undertake the watching brief, which was completed in accordance with standard OA North practices and Lancashire County Archaeology Service (LCAS) excavation, recording and reporting requirements, between February and March 2012. The following report documents the results of the archaeological watching brief, and discusses them in their historical and archaeological context.

### 1.2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

1.2.1 The site is located within the southern corner (bound by Tanpits Road and Wesley Street) of the grounds of Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School, within the Church area of Oswaldtwistle, and lies to the north of Foxhill Bank Nature Reserve. The Antley Syke, now mostly culverted, is a tributary of the River Hyndburn, which meanders on a rough east/west course across the north of the town. The East Lancashire town of Oswaldtwistle is contiguous with the western edge of Accrington, and 5.5km to the east of the major town of Blackburn.

1.2.2 Oswaldtwistle lies in a gently undulating landscape, on the lower hills of the western Pennines. The settlement grew alongside the banks of Tinker Brook, a tributary of the river Calder. The town's relief ranges from around 128m aOD at the Leeds Liverpool Canal, to over 200m aOD at Broadfield (Egerton Lea and LCC 2005, 9). The present landscape has an intensely urban character (Countryside Commission 1998, 101).

1.2.3 The underlying geology of the area consists of Lower Westphalian productive coal measures of the Carboniferous era ([www.bgs.ac.uk](http://www.bgs.ac.uk)). These contributed to the early industrial exploitation of the area. To the north, where land falls away to the Calder Valley, the coal measures give way to millstone grit. This also protrudes through the coal measures on the hills to the south and forms the basic building materials of the historic settlement (Ashmore 1969, 15).

### 1.3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

1.3.1 The following section presents a very brief summary of the historical and archaeological background of the development site in order to place the watching brief results within context. It is not intended to be a comprehensive review of the region's heritage, examples of which are readily available elsewhere.

- 1.3.2 Little is currently known of prehistoric and Romano-British activity in the area now occupied by Oswaldtwistle, with the earliest documented settlement dating to the medieval period. The name ‘Oswaldtwistle’ is derived from the Old English personal name *Oswald* and *twisla* ‘fork in a river’ to produce ‘a tongue of land between two rivers belonging to Oswald’ (Ekwall 1922, 90; Mills 1976, 118). This would appear to relate to the site of the embryonic settlement between White Ash and Tinkers Brook and White Ash Brook and Hyndburn (Ekwall 1922, 90).
- 1.3.3 The settlement of Oswaldtwistle is not specifically mentioned in Domesday Book of 1086, but in the late eleventh century the lands would have been granted to the de Lacys, lords of Pontefract, as part of the Honour of Clitheroe (Smith 1961, 24). Oswaldtwistle is recorded in documents from the early thirteenth century (Farrer and Brownbill 1911, 405) when the settlement is thought to have taken the form of scattered farmsteads across the township, and focused on, or near, Tinker and White Ash Brooks (Egerton Lea and LCC 2005, 15). A medieval corn mill on the Tinker Brook was in existence by 1554-5 (Farrer and Brownbill 1911, 405), later becoming a fulling mill, before being subsumed by the Foxhill printworks in the eighteenth century (Rothwell 1993, 10). Oswaldtwistle had 128 hearths liable for tax in 1666 (Farrer and Brownbill 1911, 403-5) and, although many properties were likely to be moorland farms, woollen textile production, first as a supplement to agriculture, then as a specialised industry in its own right, became increasingly important. By the 1820s, powered cotton spinning and powerloom weaving had also been introduced into the area (Rothwell 1980, 2) and was linked with an increase in terraces of purpose-built workers’ housing built by speculative developers. In 1841 there were over 1000 weavers in Oswaldtwistle and 1200 just over ten years later (*op cit*, 4; Rothwell 1993, 25).

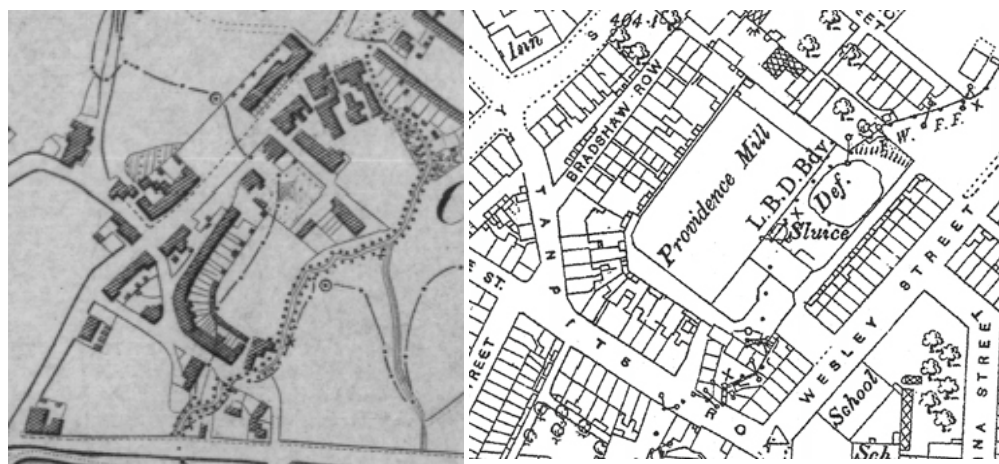


Plate 1: Detail of the development site as shown on the OS maps of 1848 (left) and 1893 (right)

- 1.3.4 Hennet’s map of 1830 indicates the presence of buildings on the north side of Blackburn Road next to the Antley Syke, within, or very close to, the present development site. By 1848 the First Edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map shows an L-shaped terrace of houses along Tanpits Road, together with a slightly larger structure next to the Syke (Plate 1). If this latter building represents a

water mill, then it may have been demolished by 1893, when the OS First Edition 25" to 1 mile map depicts a small terrace of buildings, named Tanpits Court, on the site. The court occupies a very similar footprint to the putative mill, and evidence for industrial activity on the site is provided by the depiction of a hexagonal chimney and also, possibly, the leat within the courtyard. The remainder of the Antley Syke in the area would appear to have been culverted below ground, although its course, incorporating the possible leat, may be demarcated by the sinuous dotted line for the Local Board District (LBD; Plate 1) which adjoins some sluices on the south-eastern side of the Providence Mill. The latter was built in 1860 in the space behind the L-shaped terrace shown on the 1848 OS map, just to the north of the present development site.



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## 2. METHODOLOGY

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### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.1.1 Throughout the project, close liaison was maintained with the EA archaeologist, LCAS, and the groundworks team. All work adhered to standard OA North practices and LCAS excavation, recording and reporting requirements and was consistent with the relevant Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) and English Heritage (EH) guidelines (IfA 2008a, 2008b, 2010; EH 2006).

### 2.2 WATCHING BRIEF

2.2.1 The purpose of the watching brief was to identify, investigate and record any archaeological remains encountered during the groundworks. Accordingly, a permanent archaeological presence was maintained during the ground reduction, which comprised the excavation of a north-east/south-west-aligned pipe trench and, at its south-western extent, a new manhole (MH-Y) at the southern corner of the school grounds. The pipe trench ran for 18m from the existing manhole (MH4), and was up to 2.3m wide by 2.7-3m in depth. New installation MH-Y measured 4.5m by 5m wide and 3.5m deep.

2.2.2 A daily record of the nature, extent and depths of groundworks was maintained throughout the duration of the project. All archaeological contexts were recorded on OA North's *pro-forma* sheets, using a system based on that of the EH former Centre for Archaeology. An indexed monochrome and digital photographic record was maintained throughout, and all remains of archaeological interest identified were recorded on scaled drawings.

2.2.3 Due to the deep excavation and the unstable nature of the surrounding deposits, it was not safe for the archaeologist to enter the trench, with all recording instead completed from the ground surface. The lower reaches of the pipe trench were shored with trench boxes, which meant that it was not possible to record the corresponding sections of the trench.

2.2.4  ***Finds:*** all finds recovered were exposed, lifted, cleaned and bagged in accordance with standard guidelines (UKIC 1998)

### 2.3 ARCHIVE

2.3.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with current LCAS, OA North, IfA and EH guidelines (EH 2006). The paper and digital archive will be deposited with the Lancashire County Record Office, Preston, on completion of the project, whilst any elements of the material archive worthy of retention will be deposited with Lancashire Museum Service. A copy of the report will be lodged with the Historic Environment Record, Preston.

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## 3. RESULTS

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 The following section provides a summary of the results of the archaeological watching brief. Full descriptions of the contexts encountered are tabulated in *Appendix 1*.

### 3.2 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

3.2.1 A similar stratigraphic sequence was observed along the length of the pipe trench and within the area of the new manhole (MH-Y). Removal of the modern tarmac (**001**) and hardcore levelling (**002**) revealed a thick deposit of made ground, **003**, that comprised brick, concrete and stone rubble. This deposit of demolition debris sealed the boulder clay natural geology, **006** and **007** (Plate 2) which was seen to rise steeply towards the south-west. At the eastern end of the trench (at existing brick-built MH-4; Plate 3) the natural geology was not revealed, but lay beyond a depth of 2.8m below ground level (bgl), sealed by demolition debris **003**, which at that point was more than 2.48m thick. At a distance of 8.5m from MH-4, the natural topography rose steeply, being identified at a depth of only 1.1m bgl and was sealed by an 0.8m-thick deposit of made ground **003**.



*Plate 2: Section of trench showing deposits 001, 002, 003 and 006, looking south*



*Plate 3: MH-4 with new pipe, looking north-east*

3.2.2 Lying 13m west of MH-4 and just below the tarmac surface, north-west/south-east-aligned stone wall **005** was the only archaeological feature encountered during the watching brief (Plate 4). It was made up of dressed stones of varying sizes, with the average stone measuring 350mm by 400mm by 150mm, and seemingly without mortar bonding. The wall sat within construction trench **004**, cut into the natural geology, and had been abutted by rubble deposits **003** and **008**, the latter of which produced a small quantity of finds within a distinct tipped horizon.



*Plate 4: Structure 005, looking north*

### 3.3 FINDS

- 3.3.1 A very small group of finds, comprising pottery and glass, was recovered from made ground deposit *008*. Six sherds of pottery represented two late grey stoneware straight-sided jam jars, probably of early twentieth-century date. The glass included four vessels represented by seven fragments. One was an embossed rectangular-sectioned bottle of very late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century date. The legend 'JS SNELL MPS' 'CHURCH & ACCRINGTON' implies that its contents were medicinal and that the bottle was produced for a local retailer. There were also two machine-blown bottles of early to mid-twentieth-century date, a 2lb jam jar of similar date, and a cast stopper. All were in pale greenish glass.
- 3.3.2 Beyond providing a date for activity associated with the context in which they were found, these objects are of no further archaeological significance.

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## 4. CONCLUSION

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### 4.1 DISCUSSION

- 4.1.1 Several features of archaeological interest are known to have occupied the development site and the wider area, including early nineteenth-century terraced housing and a possible post-medieval watermill and its leat. The similarity of its position and configuration on the 1848 and 1893 OS maps strongly suggest that the possible watermill may have been converted into Tanpits Court, a small L-shaped terrace of buildings, in the later nineteenth century (Fig 3). Further editions of the OS map suggest that the eastern wing of Tanpits Court stood into the 1950s, but that the northern wing was demolished between the wars. The leat, although remaining extant beyond the use of the putative watermill, seems eventually to have been culverted with the remainder of the Antley Syke, and is most likely to lie within the east/west portion of the culvert to the south of the present development (Plate 1; Fig 2).
- 4.1.2 It is probable that the sharp drop in the level of the natural geology mid-way between MH-4 and MH-Y reflects the original topography of the syke's cutting, and it is thus possible that this depression was occupied by the more easterly elements of the northern wing of the putative watermill and Tanpits Court. However, no structural remains were identified at that point, although much of the demolition debris encountered may have derived from those buildings. As shown by Figure 3, wall **005** could well represent the rear wall of the northern wing of the mill/Tanpits court, and the finds from the rubble there would be consistent with an early to mid-twentieth-century date for demolition.

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## 5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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### 5.1 PRIMARY SOURCES

Hennet's Map of Lancashire, 1830

Ordnance Survey, First Edition, 6" to 1 mile, 1848, Sheet 63

Ordnance Survey First Edition 25" to one mile, Lancashire Sheet LXIII.14, surveyed 1890-1, published 1893

Ordnance Survey Edition of 1911 25" to one mile, Lancashire Sheet LXIII.14, Revised 1909

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### 5.2 SECONDARY SOURCES

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### **5.3 WEBSITES**

[www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/beta.html](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/beta.html)

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## 6. FIGURES

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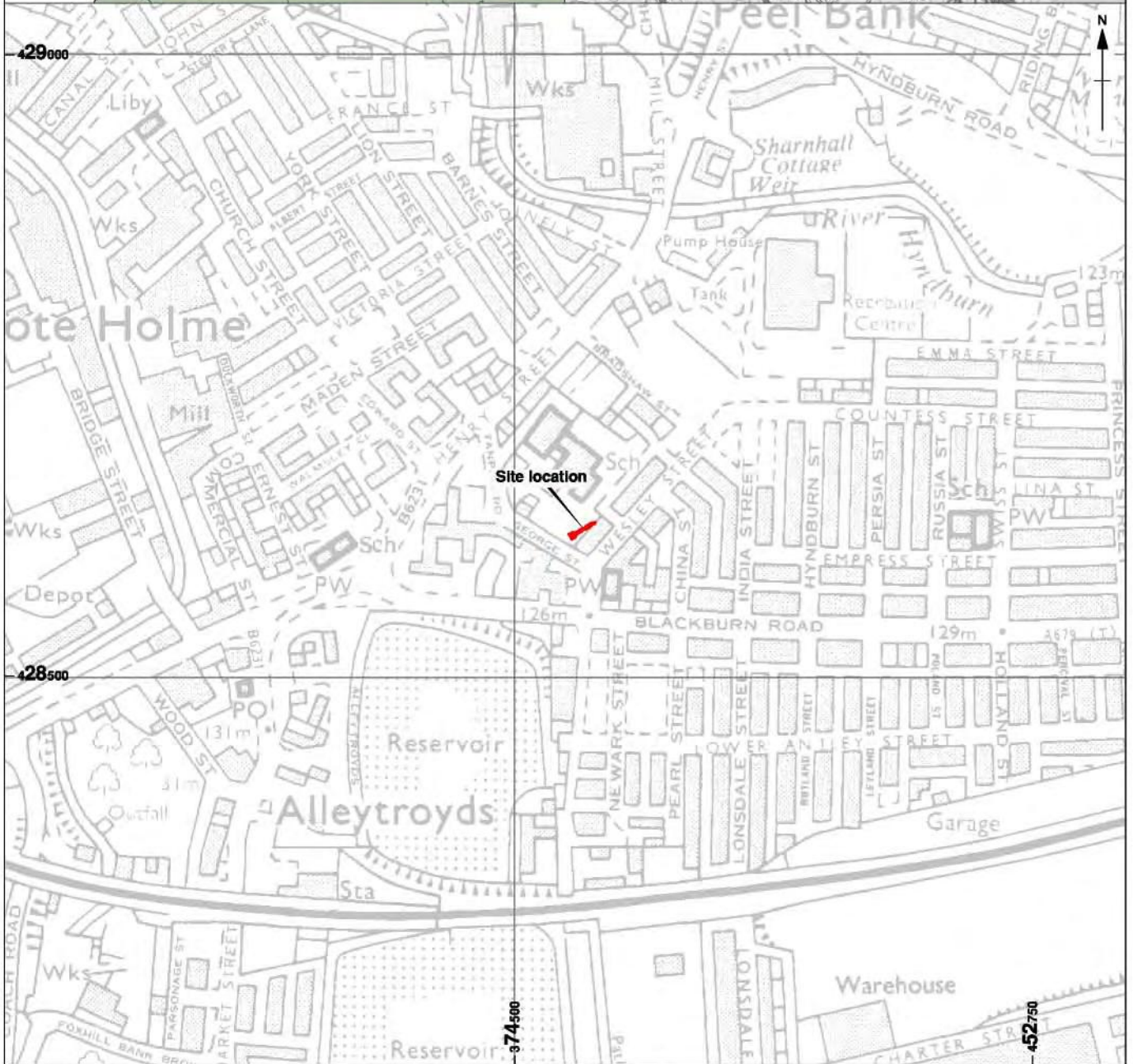
### 6.1 FIGURES

Figure 1: Site Location Map

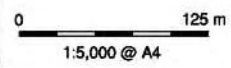
Figure 2: Plan of Watching Brief Area and Results

Figure 3: Watching Brief Results Superimposed onto the 1893 OS Map



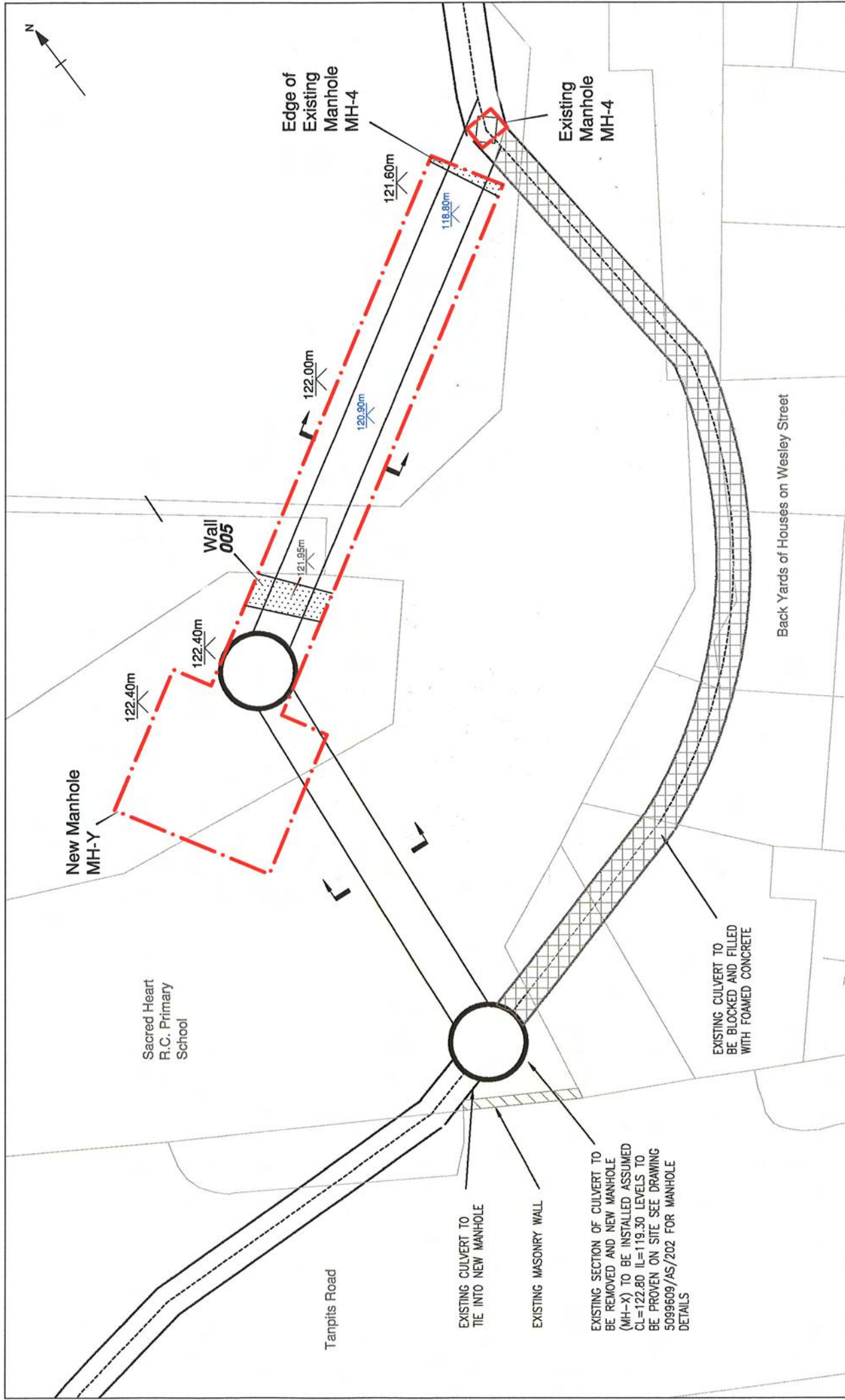


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Figure 1: Site location



 Limit of Monitored Excavation  
 Height of Natural Geology

0  3 m  
 1:150 @ A4

Figure 2: Plan of Watching Brief Area and Results

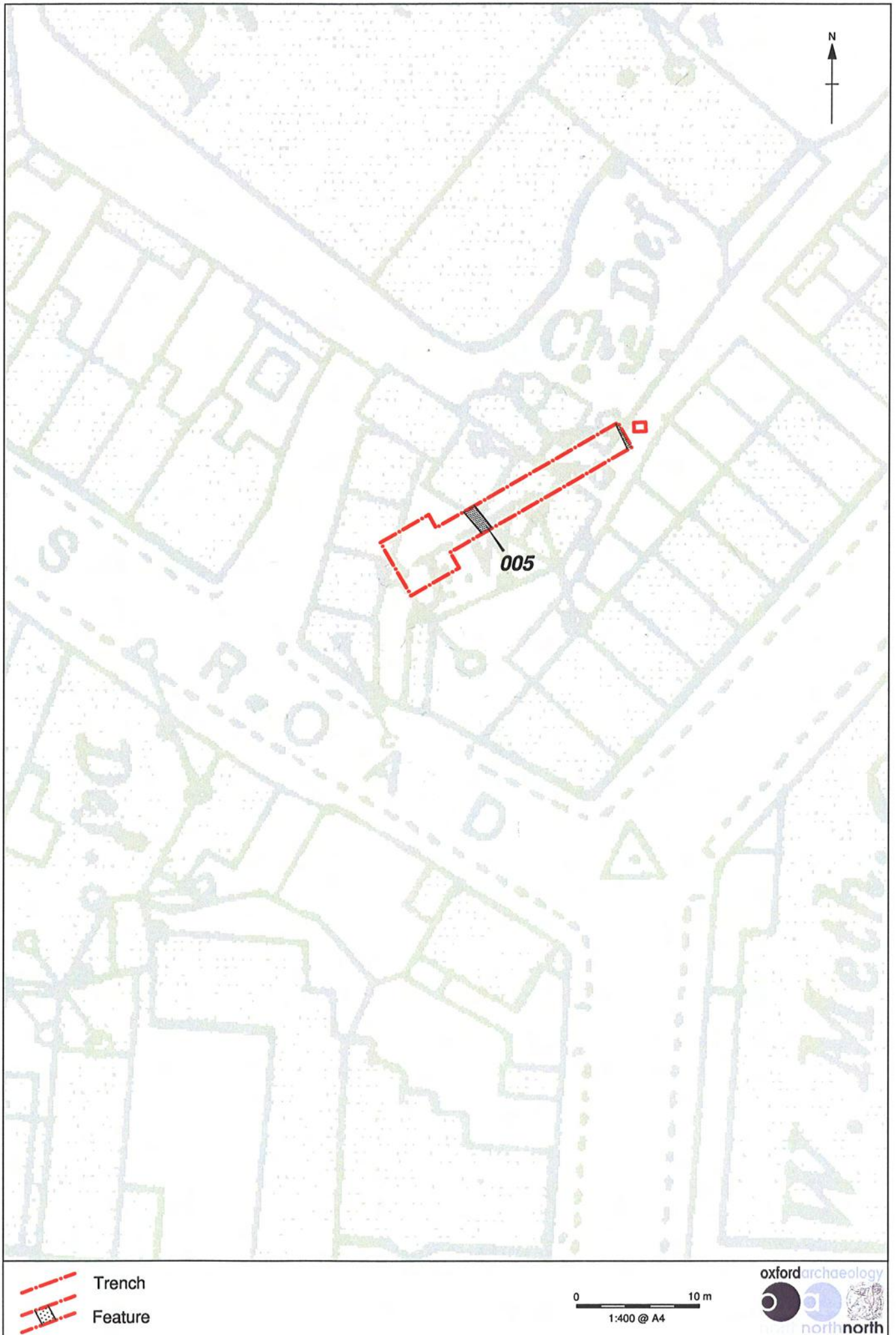


Figure 3: Trench superimposed upon the Ordnance Survey First Edition 25"-1 mile map, 1893

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**APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX**


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<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>001</b>	Tarmac of modern play ground. 0.1m thick
<b>002</b>	Dark grey compact angular stones of medium size. 0.2m thick. Modern levelling deposit laid in advance of the tarmac
<b>003</b>	Dark brown loose clayey silt, with >75% mixed rubble including brick, stone, iron, concrete fragments and roots. Minimum 2.48m thick. Made ground layer
<b>004</b>	Construction cut for wall <b>005</b> . 0.9m wide by 1.45m deep. Linear in plan, squared U-shape in profile, with a sharp break of slope at top, near-vertical sides, and a sharp break of slope to a flat base. Aligned north-west to south-east
<b>005</b>	Stone-built wall aligned north-west to south-east, with no visible signs of mortar. Made of dressed stones of varying sizes, with the average block measuring 350mm x 400mm x 150mm
<b>006</b>	Dark brownish-yellow firm sandy clay with no inclusions. 0.9m thick. Natural clay deposit
<b>007</b>	Dark bluish-grey firm clay with 40% mixed well-rounded stones. Minimum of 0.65m thick. Natural boulder clay deposit
<b>008</b>	Dark brown loose clayey silt, with >75% mixed rubble including brick, pottery, stone and glass. 1.1m thick. Made ground layer

## APPENDIX 2: ARCHIVE INDEX

Record group	Contents	Comments	Box/File Number
	<b>Introduction</b> Project Design	N/A	
A	<b>Report</b> Final Report		1
B	<b>Primary Fieldwork Records</b> Watching Brief records Context Index Context Records		1
C	<b>Primary Drawings</b> Annotated, pre-printed plans		1
D	<b>Finds Box and Bag Lists</b> N/A	N/A	
E	<b>Environmental Records</b> N/A	N/A	
F	<b>Photographic Record</b> Photographic Indices Monochrome prints Digital shots		1
G	<b>Electronic Media</b> CD		1