

**Archaeological watching brief at  
Ufton Close  
Blurton  
Stoke-on-Trent  
Staffordshire  
NGR SJ 89548 41007**

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Site Code: UCB 19

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Produced for

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## **Non-technical summary**

*Stoke-on-Trent Archaeology Service carried out an archaeological watching brief on land at Ufton Close, Blurton, Stoke-on-Trent (NGR SJ 89458 41007) during groundworks associated with the construction of ten new dwellings. The excavation of footings and drainage trenches was monitored.*

*The watching brief took place between March and October 2019 and recorded a generally consistent soil profile of overburden overlying geological clay substrate in all excavated trenches. Remnants of brick structures presumably associated with the former Newstead Farm were encountered during the watching brief.*

*Disclaimer: all statements and opinions contained within this report arising from the works undertaken are offered in good faith and compiled according to professional standards. Stoke-on-Trent Archaeology Service will not accept responsibility for any errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party. No responsibility will be accepted for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in any such report/s, howsoever these facts or opinions may have been derived.*

## 1.0 Introduction

**1.1** Planning permission (SOT/63168/FUL) for residential development on land formerly occupied by the Swallows' Nest public house, Ufton Close, Blurton, Stoke-on-Trent (NGR SJ 89458 41007) (Fig.1), was granted by the Local Planning Authority (LPA), Stoke-on-Trent City Council, on the 6<sup>th</sup> December 2018. The LPA, acting on the advice of the Planning Archaeologist (PA), required that an archaeological watching brief take place on site during all ground-works necessitated by the development as a condition of permission. Stoke-on-Trent Archaeology Service (SOTARCH) was subsequently commissioned by the Ellis Hillman Partnership to undertake the watching brief.

## 2.0 Site information

**2.1** The development site is located towards the southern side of Blurton, off the north-west side of Ufton Close and was most recently occupied by the Swallows' Nest public house. It is bounded by residential properties on Waterside Drive to the west and Urmston Place to the north (Fig. 2).

**2.2** The solid geology of the site is mapped as sandstone of the Pennine Upper Coal Measures formation with superficial deposits of Diamicton Till (British Geological Survey).

## 3.0 Scope and aims of the project

**3.1** A watching brief is defined by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Standards and guidance: Archaeological watching brief* (December 2014) as a formal programme of observation and investigation that will define as far as reasonably possible the nature, depth and preservation of archaeological materials encountered during any operation conducted for non-archaeological reasons.

**3.2** The broad aims of the project as set out in the PA's brief (Goodwin 2018) were to:

- Preserve by record any archaeological deposits encountered.
- Notify all interested parties of the presence of any archaeological deposits which cannot be satisfactorily recorded within the scope of a watching brief.

### 4.0 Archaeological and historical background

**4.1** Blurton, now a suburb of the city of Stoke-on-Trent, was once a small rural township in the parish of Trentham. Although it does not feature separately in the Domesday Survey of 1086 it is known to have been in existence by at least 1348, when it appeared in the Cartulary of Trentham Priory. Blurton remained principally a farming community until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century although in the early-20<sup>th</sup> century Hem Heath Colliery was opened and two tileries were also established. Significant housing development was undertaken in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century including on land formerly belonging to Blurton Farm and Newstead Farm (Staffordshire Past Track).

**4.2** The development site was formerly occupied by a house and agricultural buildings forming part of Newstead Farm (Figs. 3 & 4), part of the Trentham Estate owned by the Marquises of Stafford, who later became the Dukes of Sutherland. The farmstead, which may date back to at least the 1600s (Goodwin 2018), is shown on Hargreaves' Map of 1832 (Fig. 3) which illustrates the farmhouse with a roughly L-shaped range of buildings to the east. The 1880 Ordnance Survey (OS) map (Fig. 4) shows the site in more detail; the farmhouse consists of a roughly square block with ranges extending north west and the agricultural buildings appear to have been extended or rebuilt, now consisting of an inverted F-shaped block, with an enclosing U-shaped block to the east. This layout persisted into the 20<sup>th</sup> century but between 1937 and 1950 (Fig. 5) all but the farmhouse was demolished. The farmhouse was subsequently subsumed into the Swallows' Nest public house (Fig. 6), which was demolished in 2015.

### 5.0 Methodology

**5.1** The watching brief was carried out between March and October 2019 in accordance with the brief produced by the PA (Goodwin 2018) and the Written Scheme of Investigation produced by SOTARCH (Sutherland 2019). The project also conformed to current best archaeological practice, embodied in the by-laws, codes of professional conduct, and standards and guidance (specifically that for archaeological watching brief) of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA).

**5.2** The project involved the monitoring of ground-works undertaken by mechanical excavators using toothless buckets, followed by inspection of the exposed sub-soils for archaeological features. Written records in the form of site notes and annotated sketches were made and digital photographs taken to show specific stages of fieldwork and the layout and relationship of archaeological features or deposits. Any discernible archaeological horizons were cleaned by hand and finds were sampled where appropriate. The project archive is stored at The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Bethesda Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent (site code: **UCB 19**; museum accession number: **2019.LH.2**).

**5.3** SOTARCH will retain copyright of all documentary and photographic material under the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act (1988).

### **4.0 Results of the watching brief**

**4.1** The watching brief involved the excavation of foundation trenches for the ten new properties to be constructed on the site. These were all 0.70-1.00m in width and 0.90-1.30m in depth, except those in Plots 5 and 6 at the north-west end of the site where the ground conditions necessitated trench depths of up to 2.40m, and similarly the eastern side of Plots 7 and 8 and the northern side of Plots 9 and 10 which were excavated to 4.00m and 2.50m in depth respectively. A drainage trench extending NW-SE down the middle of the site was subsequently excavated and was 0.90m wide and 1.40m deep, widening to 2.00m to accommodate three man holes at intervals along its length.

**4.2** The excavations cut through a very mixed rubble waste (100) containing brick, stone and concrete fragments in a grey-brown soil matrix. This deposit ranged in depth from 0.30m to 1.10m and directly overlay the yellowish-brown clay geological substrate (101). Both deposits were seen across the site (Plate 1). Some variation in this soil profile was observed in Plots 5 and 6 where a 1.00m thick layer of mid-brown sandy silt containing frequent brick rubble (109) was seen below (100) and above clay (101) (Plate 2). On the eastern side of Plots 7 and 8 a layer consisting of mixed clays, large cobbles, shale and ironstone (110) of between 0.60m and 2.40m in thickness was seen below (100) and above (101).

**4.3** Excavations on the south-west side of the site (Plots 3 & 4) revealed the red brick walls of a cellar belonging to the Swallows' Nest public house (Plate 3), including elements that may

be associated with the Newstead Farm house. The walls to the north east and south west, were clearly older being browner in colour and more degraded. The more modern walls were of a redder brick and had a band of blue bricks three courses deep 0.50m up from the floor. The floors were concrete throughout. Safe access to the cellars was not possible due to the depth and instability of excavations.

**4.4** Beyond the remains of the Swallows' Nest cellar, several structures were revealed, located on the north-east side of the site within Plots 7, 8, 9 and 10. To the north-east corner of Plot 7 a 2.60m long and c.0.32m high red-brick wall (102) was seen in section (Plate 4). The bricks were bonded with off-white mortar and laid directly on to clay (101). To the south-west (at the corner of Plot 8) a second red-brick structure, again with off-white mortar, consisted of a 0.85m long and 0.56m high wall (103) on a NW-SE alignment with a return at its north west end extending 2.20m north eastwards (104) (Plate 5). To the south (on the north-east side of Plot 9), two parallel red-brick walls (105 & 106), 1.80m apart, were exposed below 0.80m of deposit (100) (Plate 6). Each measured 7.00m length and up to 1.12m in height. A blue-brick floor (107) was seen between the walls. A further section of red-brick wall (108) measuring 1.30m in length and c.0.48m in height was observed at the south-east end of (105), and above it, but did not appear to be bonded into it.

## 5.0 Conclusions

**5.1** The watching brief at Ufton Close showed the site had been heavily disturbed by the construction and subsequent demolition of Newstead Farm and the Swallows' Nest public house. The overburden deposit (100) was present in all the monitored trenches and contained industrial waste together with material from demolition of previous buildings. In addition rubble layer (109) and mixed clay layer (110), both interpreted as made-ground layers, were seen to depths of up to 2.80m below ground level towards the northern end of the site.

**5.2** The cellars of the former Swallows' Nest public house seen on the south-west side of the site showed evidence of at least two construction phases, the earlier potentially relating to the farmhouse.

**5.3** The remains of brick structures on the north-east side of the site appear to relate to the farm's agricultural buildings. Walls (105) and (106) with brick floor (107) between



correspond well in location to the north-eastern range of the inverted F-shaped block shown on historical maps from 1880 (Fig. 4) to 1937. The depth at which the floor was seen (2.20m below ground level) may, interestingly, suggest that this end of the building was cellared. Walls (102) and (103)/(104) cannot be quite so precisely located in relation to historical mapping but fall roughly within the northern range and the middle range of the same block. Whether these represent internal divisions or earlier buildings is unclear. Slight discrepancies or inaccuracies between different phases of mapping cannot altogether be discounted either. Certainly the farms on the Trentham Estate, having had little investment and yielding low rents, underwent a phase of reorganisation, repair and rebuilding from the late-18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, particularly under the tenure of chief agent James Loch who was appointed in 1812 (Boden 1985, 42-22). It may be that the changes evident on historical mapping between 1832 and 1880 represent such improvements.

### 6.0 Acknowledgements

**6.1** This report was written by Rob Barnett of Stoke-on-Trent Archaeology Service. Fieldwork was undertaken by Rob Barnett and Zoe Sutherland. Thanks are due to staff of Ellis Hillman Partnership and Phillip M Lally Ltd Building Contractors for their help throughout the project. Thanks are also due to Jonathan Goodwin, Stoke-on-Trent City Council Planning Archaeologist.

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### 7.0 References

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Staffordshire Past Track

Blurton

URL:<<https://www.search.staffspasttrack.org.uk/Details.aspx?&ResourceID=22880&PageIndex=1&KeyWord=Newstead Farm&SortOrder=2>> [Date accessed: 18/12/19]

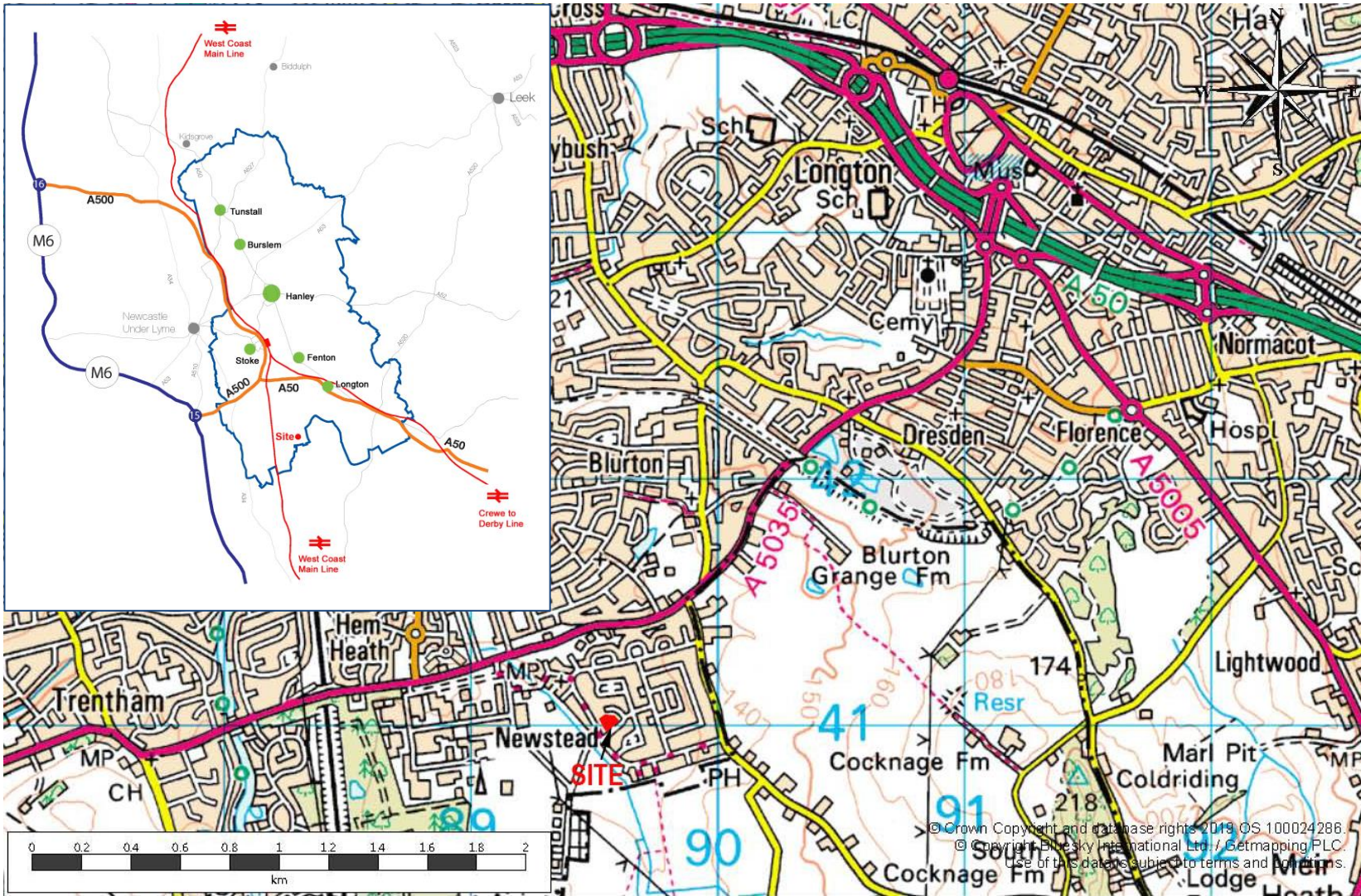


FIG. 1  
Site location.



**FIG. 2**

Modern OS map showing the development site outlined in red.

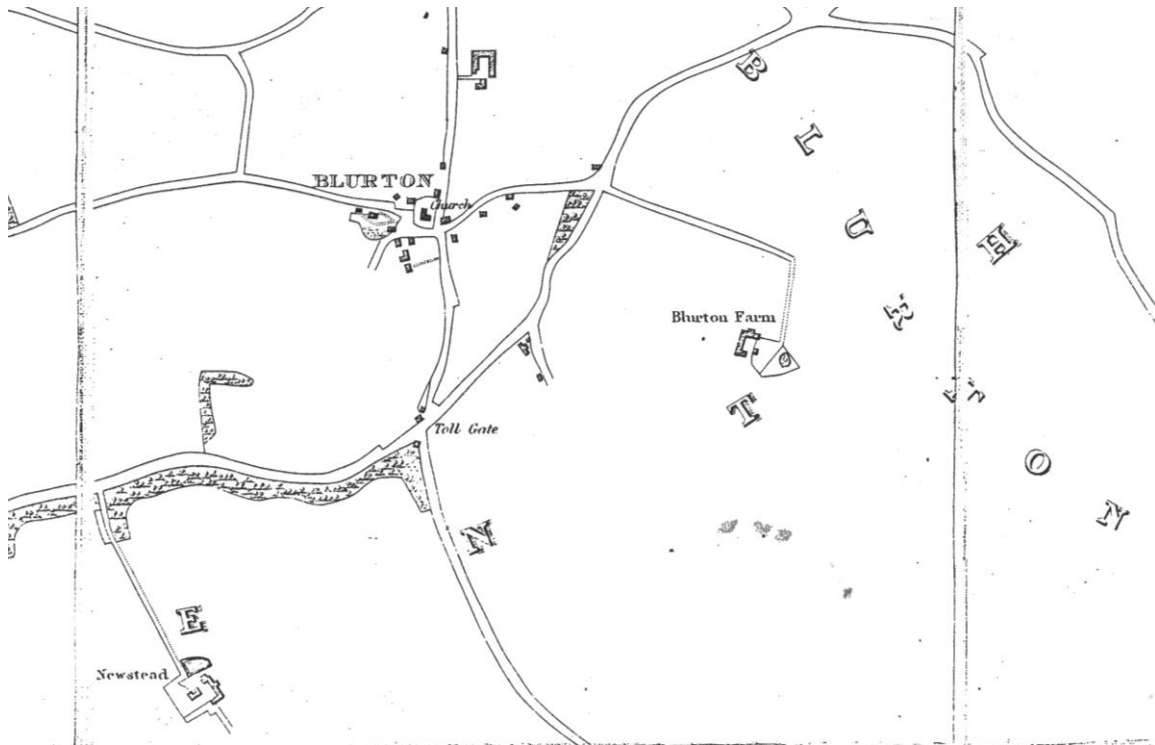


FIG. 3

Extract from Hargreaves' 1832 map showing Newstead Farm (bottom left), which formerly occupied the development site.

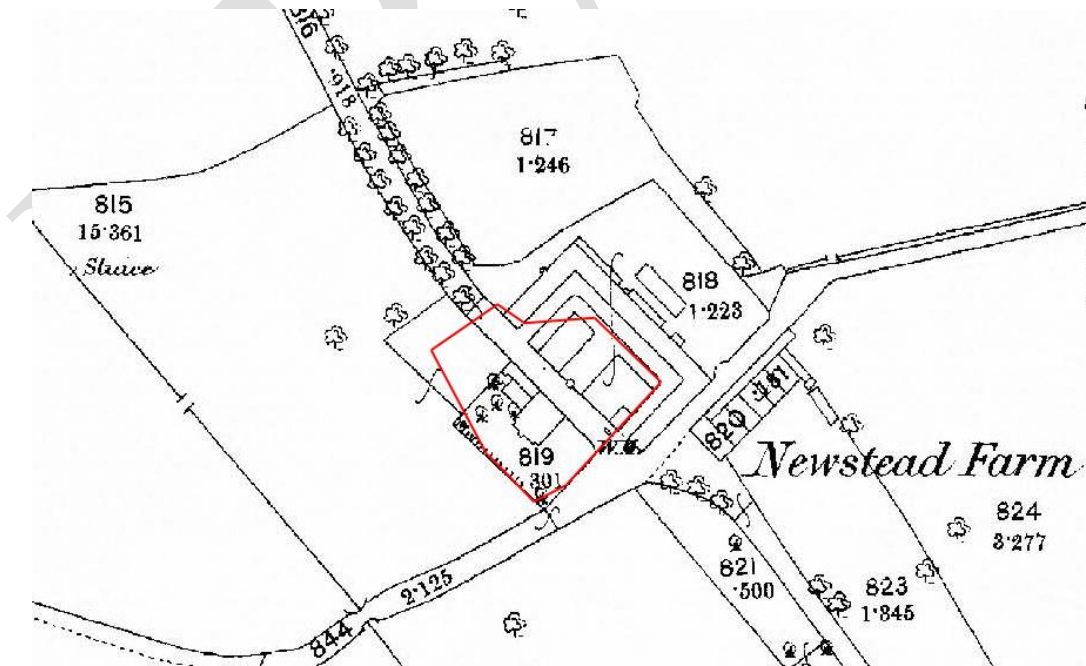


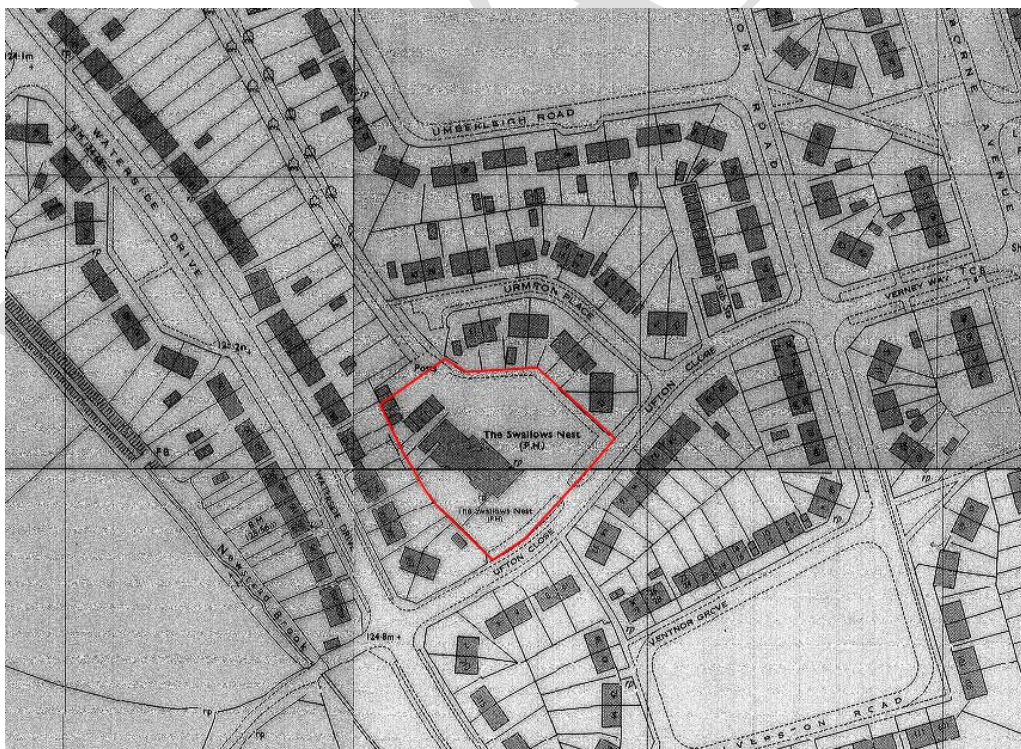
FIG. 4

Extract from the 1880 OS map showing the development site outlined in red.



**FIG. 5**

Extract from the 1950 OS map showing the development site outlined in red.



**FIG. 6**

Extract from the 1970 OS map showing the development site outlined in red.



**FIG. 6**

Plan of the site showing the location of wall remains. The location of the former Swallows' Nest Public House is shaded blue.



**PLATE 1**

Plot 1 and 2 foundation trenches looking north, showing the typical soil profile seen across the site (scale: 1.0m).



**PLATE 2**

Plot 6 western foundation trench looking south east showing rubble layer (109).





**PLATE 3**

Cellars in Plots 3 and 4 looking east. The sections to the back right may relate to the Newstead Farm farmhouse.



**PLATE 4**

Wall (102) at the north-west end of Plot 7, looking north east (scale: 1.0m).



**PLATE 5**

Walls (103) and (104) at the south-east end of Plot 8, looking west (scale: 1.0m).



**PLATE 6**

Walls (105) and (106) at the north-east end of Plot 9, looking north (scales: 1.0m, 2.0m).