

# REGENT ARCADE, CHELTENHAM, GLOUCESTERHIRE

(NGR SO 95038 22393)

Results of monitoring and recording

Planning ref. Cheltenham Borough Council 10/1850/TIME

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On behalf of:  
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archaeology

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## Summary

*Historic building recording was carried out by AC archaeology prior to the infilling of cellars associated with the 1825 Plough coaching inn, Regent Arcade, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire (SO 95038 22393). Limited evidence for earlier fabric was recorded, although most of the cellars appear to be contemporary and of early 19th-century date. Later alterations included removal of ceilings (including vaults), replacement of the floors, partitioning of rooms and the creation of new staircases.*

*No archaeological features or deposits were exposed during the subsequent watching brief.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

1.1 This document sets out the results of historic building recording and an archaeological watching brief undertaken prior to and during works associated with the demolition and refurbishment of Regent Arcade, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire (SO 95038 22393). The work was commissioned by Norman Rourke Pryme LLP and was required under condition 9 of the grant of planning permission (Cheltenham Borough Council reference 10/1850/TIME). It was undertaken by AC archaeology between October 2011 and August 2012.

1.2 Regent Arcade was a three-storey structure built in 1982 and used as an indoor shopping centre. The development comprised the demolition and then refurbishment of the existing High Street frontage, as well as the general refurbishment of the arcade as a whole. The site lies at around 60m aOD and the underlying natural geology comprises river terrace deposits.

### 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 A preliminary desk-based assessment has been prepared for the scheme (Cox 2004). This established that the present High Street was a rural lane in the medieval period and the shopping centre is situated on what was in 1690 the site of an inn. By 1825 the Plough Hotel was rebuilt on the site in Regency style. It was demolished in 1982 when Regent Arcade was built, although cellars adjacent to the High Street were retained.

2.2 When the site was redeveloped in 1982 an archaeological watching brief was carried out during some of groundworks. At least four wells and two pits were recorded, with the latter containing 19th-century pottery.

2.3 The High Street frontage is described in the *Buildings of England* series (Verey and Brooks) as follows:

"...the sad vestige of the former PLOUGH HOTEL, which was always the most important in the town. G.A. Underwood's long symmetrical stucco front of c. 1825, four storeys and twelve bays, with a little Soanean detail, was demolished in 1982 and rebuilt in facsimile, but with a yawning gap cut through the middle beneath the low pediment. This leads to the long, narrow glitzy REGENT ARCADE, and indoor shopping mall on the site of the Plough Yard, Dyer Associates, completed 1984. Impressively high curved glazed roof, though its most appealing feature is an animated

CLOCK, designed by Kit Williams, 1986. The rebuilt Plough Hotel façade extends for an additional eight bays, the first three on a gentle curve."

### **3. AIMS**

- 3.1** The aims of the investigations were threefold. Firstly, to prepare a photographic record of the High Street frontage prior to demolition. Secondly, to record the cellars prior to infilling, and thirdly, to monitor groundworks outside the footprint of the cellars.

### **4 METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1** The work was undertaken in accordance with a method statement prepared by AC archaeology (Valentin 2011), and in line with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 1*.

- 4.2** A photographic record of the High Street frontage was prepared using a high quality digital camera.

- 4.3** The cellars were recorded to levels 1/2 as set out in *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice* (English Heritage 2006). The following methodology was employed

- a written description;
- annotation of architect's as existing drawings to show the archaeological observations and location of photographs; and
- a photographic record showing the overall character of the cellars, as well as any significant fixtures, fittings and architectural details. This comprised colour digital format only (minimum 10 megapixels), and where appropriate, all photographs included a photographic scale.

- 4.4** The recording took into account the following:

- site layout and organisation;
- function;
- materials and method of construction;
- internal arrangements;
- original and subsequent fixtures and fittings;
- architectural features;
- evidence for use; and
- date/period of initial build and subsequent design.

- 4.5** Attendance during groundworks took place during ground reduction at the rear of the site. All deposits were recorded using the standard AC archaeology pro-forma recording system, comprising written, graphic and digital photographic records.

### **5. THE CELLARS (Fig. 2; Appendix 1)**

- 5.1** The plans provided by the client showed six groups of cellars. The northern group lay outside the development and no access was permitted. For the purposes of this project the remainder have been labelled NW cellars, and SE cellars, Areas A-D. They are constructed of brick laid in English Bond, some having low shallow brick vaulted ceilings with brick walls continuing upwards that would have supported the buildings above (Plate 1).

- 5.2** Evidence for buildings pre-dating the cellars was observed in two locations. The fabric of room 4 in the NW cellars, which fronted onto High Street, was largely earlier than the remainder of the cellars; only the west wall was later. It was constructed from rows of large blocks of stone masonry and painted white hindering geological identification. The north elevation incorporated two recesses, one of which had been later narrowed with brick piers supporting an arch (Plate 2). The top of the rear face of the open arch had also been rebuilt in brick, which may indicate that the recess was open to the ground floor above. This may be corroborated by the modern plasterboard infilling of the ceiling above the recess.
- 5.3** In room 5 of Area B in the SW cellars a short fragment of painted stone masonry was visible, dividing the room from room 6. The same masonry was visible forming room 4. Any other fabric in room 5 had been removed or obscured when these rooms were remodelled into wine cellars.
- 5.4** The NW cellars comprised four rooms that were entered from a 20th-century dogleg staircase in room 1 that has been inserted through the vaulted ceiling. In rooms 1-4 the walls were concealed by stud and plasterboard lining, but the vaulted ceilings, arrangement and visible masonry in room 4 indicate that (apart from the reused cellar in room 4) they are all part of the 19th-century phase of cellars. In room 4, the ceiling was formed by two large beams supporting the floorboards (Plate 3). Some had been replaced in wood during the later 20th century, and further supported and/or replaced by rolled steel joists fixed with bolts, probably in 1982.
- 5.5** Area A of the SW cellars comprised five rooms, and was located to the rear of the former front range. The vaulted ceilings had been removed from all rooms, although short lengths survived adjacent to the partition wall between rooms 1 and 3. The opening in this wall was of a standard door width, but its lower half has been widened on each side, possibly to allow barrels to be rolled through (Plate 5). In room 3 there was a blocked-up fireplace in the southern wall, whilst in the southeast corner east wall of room 5 there was a low arched recess. This was mostly obscured by modern fittings and its function is unclear.
- 5.6** Area B of the SW cellars comprised six rooms arranged in an L-shape with four rooms along the High Street frontage and a further narrow, tapering range of two rooms extending west to the rear of the site. It was entered via two flights of stairs in the west range, both of 20th-century date. The partitions in this range were also of 20th-century date. There was a blocked fireplace in the north wall of room 3, whilst room 4 contained an angled fireplace in the northwest corner that had been partially removed. In the south wall of room 3 was a blocked doorway. This may have led into room 6 of the area C cellars, although the alignments of the openings do not fully correspond. Room 4 contained a low-level recess in its north elevation. Rooms 5 and 6 were provided with brick wine bins (Plates 1 and 4). These were constructed just above the floor level and some contained grooves for shelves, although none survived. In room 5 one had been replaced using concrete blocks. Other features here were a high-level coal chute in room 5, and two very low-level arched openings in the north wall of room 6.
- 5.7** Area C of the SW cellars comprised seven rooms arranged roughly in pairs back from the street frontage. It was entered via a modern staircase in room 3. In the later 20th century major changes made to the layout of the cellars. Two internal doorways and a doorway in room 3 in Area D were blocked, and a new wall forming the west side of room 4 constructed. The position of an earlier door and the potential for the

cellar to continue westward is not known. In room 1, at an unknown date, a north-south aligned wall had been removed. The only primary architectural feature was an arched recess within the north wall of room 6. In the north wall of room 5 was a low blocked opening adjacent to which was a cast-iron plate in the floor. Their functions are not known. In rooms 2 and 5 cast-iron drainpipes passed through the ceiling to the floor.

- 5.8** Area D of the SW cellars comprised a row of four rooms. They were entered from a staircase at the rear of the building in room 1. Room 3 had angled corners to its west elevation (Plate 5). The significance of this is not known, although since its western end could be bypassed (through room 2), it may have had a specialised function such as a cold store. In room 4 the primary brick and flagstone floor was exposed (Plate 7); otherwise the floors were all concrete. No other primary architectural features survived.

## **6. THE WATCHING BRIEF**

- 6.1** Monitoring of ground reduction along an 8m wide strip on the western side of the site was carried out. The deposit sequence comprised c. 0.50m rubble material from the recent demolition and crushed natural overlying natural dark grey clays. No features were present.

## **7. COMMENTS**

- 7.1** No archaeological deposits were exposed during the monitoring of the groundworks. Limited survival of walls predating the 1825 rebuild of The Plough was noted. These included two cellars now represented by room 4 of the NW cellars and rooms 4 and 5 of the SE cellars, area C.
- 7.2** The majority of the fabric of the cellars dated to 1825. However, the full suite of cellars (not all of which were recorded) includes properties to either side of The Plough, and it is possible that some are of a different date. In particular, there is an anomaly in the position of openings between SE cellars, areas B and C, and it is likely that areas C and D are of a different date to areas A and B.
- 7.3** Other than the ceilings, which were originally either arched brick vaults or supported on wooden beams, few architectural features were visible or survived. The most intact features were a series of wine bins in rooms 5 and 6 of the SE cellars, area B. Elsewhere, features included fireplaces, arched openings and in one room, the original stone and brick floor surfaces.
- 7.4** The cellars had been altered over time, with partitions added and (sometimes later) removed, and new staircases added. Many of the ceilings, particularly the vaulted ceilings were also replaced.

## **8. ARCHIVE AND OASIS ENTRY**

- 8.1** The paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd at 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon EX5 4LQ, and will be deposited at the Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum.
- 8.2** An OASIS entry has been completed under the unique identifier 166419.

## 9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

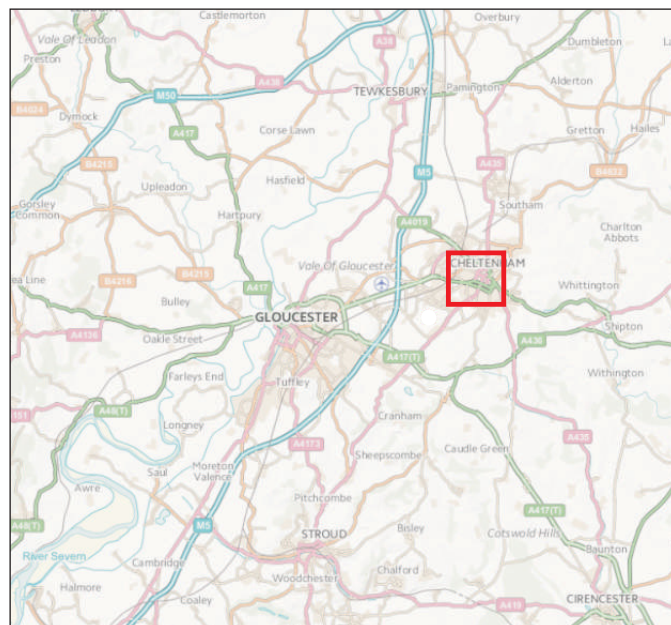
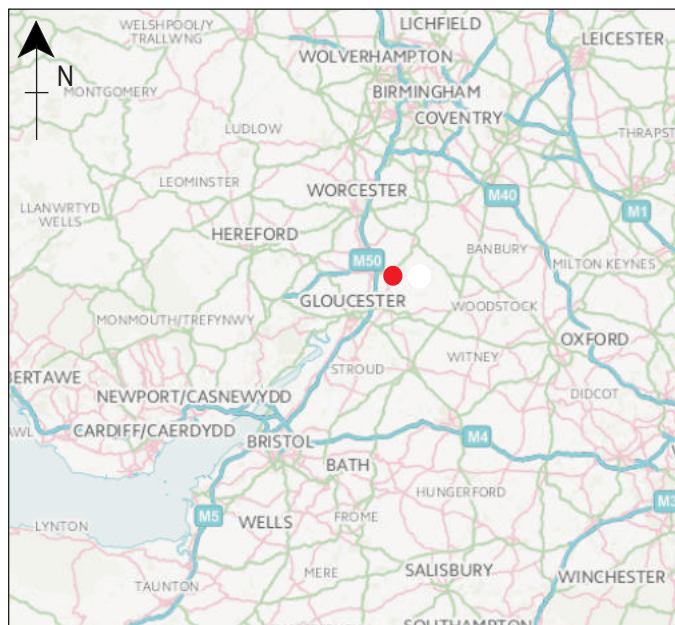
- 9.1 The survey was commissioned by Norman Rourke Pryme LLP, and managed for AC archaeology by John Valentin. The survey and recording was carried out by Paul Jones. The report was prepared by Andrew Passmore with the figures produced by Elisabeth Patkai.

## 10. SOURCES CONSULTED

Cox, P., 2004, *Proposed Redevelopment of the Regent Arcade, Cheltenham: Archaeological and Cultural Heritage assessment*, AC archaeology document no. **3804/1/1**

Valentin, J., 2011, *Regent Arcade, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, NHR SO 95038 22393, Method Statement for historic building recording and an archaeological watching brief, Planning ref. Cheltenham Borough council 10/1850/TIME*, AC archaeology document no. **ACD45/1/0**

Verrey, D., and Brooks, A., 2002, *The Buildings of England. Gloucestershire 2: The Vale and Forest of Dean* (third edition).



0 100m

Scale 1:1500@A4

PROJECT

Regent Arcade, Cheltenham

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TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location



### Location of site

## Groundworks observations



AC archaeology

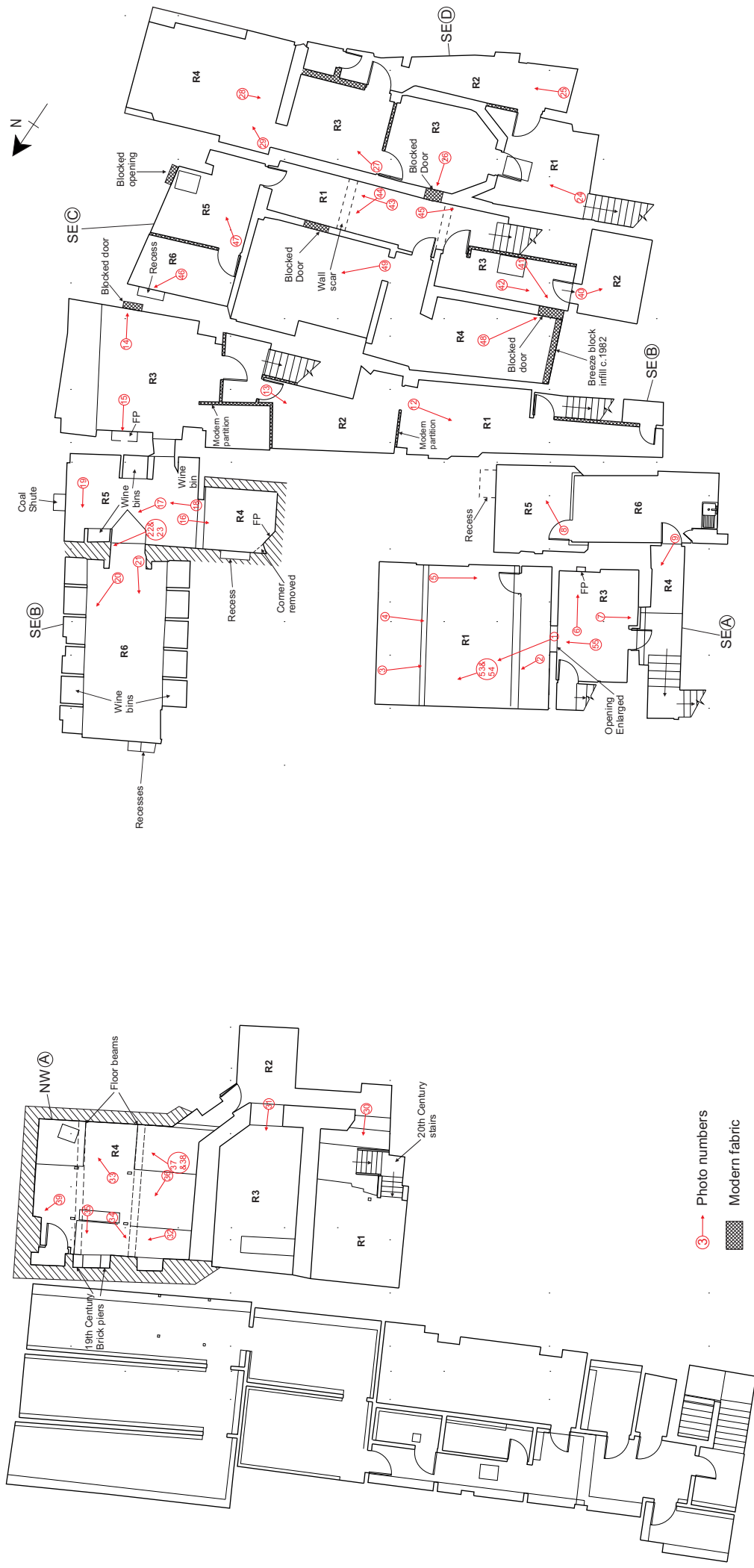




Plate 1: SE cellars, area B, room 6: vaulted ceiling and wine bins, viewed from the southeast (scale 1m)



Plate 2: NW cellars, room 4: pre-Plough fabric showing recesses, viewed from the southeast (scale 1m)



Plate 3: NW cellars, room 4: 19th-century flooring showing bridging beams showing empty mortices, viewed from the southwest



Plate 4: SE cellars, area B, room 6: vaulted ceiling and wine bins, viewed from the southeast (scale 1m)



Plate 5: SE cellars, area A, room 3:  
enlarged lower section of opening to room 1,  
viewed from the southwest (scale 1m)



Plate 6: SE cellars, area C,  
room 1 showing the splayed wall  
of room 3, viewed from the west  
(scale 1m)



Plate 7: SE cellars, area C,  
room 4: brick and flagstone floor,  
viewed from the northeast  
(scale 1m)

# Appendix 1

Digital photographic register



Archive No	Site Photo No	Description	Scale	View from	Photo by	Date
001	1	SE cellars, area A, room 1: scar of former vaulted ceiling	1m	SW	PJ	31/10/2011
002	2	SE cellars, area A, room 1: scar of former vaulted ceiling	1m	S	PJ	31/10/2011
003	3	SE cellars, area A, room 1: enlarged lower section of opening to room 3	1m	NE	PJ	31/10/2011
004	4	SE cellars, area A, room 1: enlarged lower section of opening to room 3	1m	NE	PJ	31/10/2011
005	5	SE cellars, area A, room 2: scar of former vaulted ceiling		NE	PJ	31/10/2011
006	6	SE cellars, area A, room 3: blocked fireplace	1m	NW	PJ	31/10/2011
007	7	SE cellars, area A, room 3: blocked doorway to room 4	1m	NE	PJ	31/10/2011
008	8	SE cellars, area A, room 5: partially-visible recess	1m	NW	PJ	31/10/2011
009	9	SE cellars, area A, room 4: scar of former vaulted ceiling	1m	SE	PJ	31/10/2011
010	10	Principal NE façade along Regent Street		SE	PJ	31/10/2011
011	11	Principal NE façade along Regent Street		SE	PJ	31/10/2011
012	12	SE cellars, area B, room 1: primary fabric with 20 <sup>th</sup> -century brickwork on top	1m	E	PJ	31/10/2011
013	13	SE cellars, area B, room 2: primary fabric and 20 <sup>th</sup> -century inserted partition	1m	E	PJ	31/10/2011
014	14	SE cellars, area B, room 3: blocked doorway	1m	NW	PJ	31/10/2011
015	15	SE cellars, area B, room 3: fireplace in NW wall	1m	SE	PJ	31/10/2011
016	16	SE cellars, area B, room 4: truncated corner fireplace	1m	NE	PJ	31/10/2011
017	17	SE cellars, area B, room 5: storage bins	1m	SW	PJ	31/10/2011
018	18	SE cellars, area B, room 5: storage bins	1m	W	PJ	31/10/2011
019	19	SE cellars, area B, room 5: storage bins	1m	SE	PJ	31/10/2011
020	20	SE cellars, area B, room 6: vaulted ceiling and storage bins	1m	SE	PJ	31/10/2011
021	21	SE cellars, area B, room 6: vaulted ceiling and storage bins	1m	SE	PJ	31/10/2011
022	22	SE cellars, area B, room 5: pre-hotel fabric	1m	S	PJ	31/10/2011
023	23	SE cellars, area B, room 5: pre-hotel fabric	1m	S	PJ	31/10/2011
024	24	SE cellars, area C, room 1: canted bay	1m	W	PJ	31/10/2011
025	25	SE cellars, area C, room 2: general view	1m	SW	PJ	31/10/2011
026	26	SE cellars, area C, room 3: blocked doorway	1m	SE	PJ	31/10/2011
027	28	SE cellars, area C, room 3: primary fabric	1m	NW	PJ	31/10/2011
028	29	SE cellars, area C, room 4: brick and flagstone floor	1m	NE	PJ	31/10/2011
029	30	SE cellars, area C, room 4: general view	1m	W	PJ	31/10/2011
030	31	NW cellars, area A, room 1: vaulting truncated by 20 <sup>th</sup> -century staircase		SE	PJ	31/10/2011
031	32	NW cellars, room 2: vaulted cellar		SE	PJ	31/10/2011
032	33	NW cellars, room 4: 19 <sup>th</sup> -century flooring with bridging beams showing empty mortices		SW	PJ	31/10/2011
033	34	NW cellars, room 4: 19 <sup>th</sup> -century flooring with bridging beams showing empty mortices		W	PJ	31/10/2011
034	35	NW cellars, room 4: 19 <sup>th</sup> -century flooring with bridging beams showing empty mortices		E	PJ	31/10/2011

Date downloaded to office: 2 November 2011  
Received by: Paul Jones

035	36	NW cellars, room 4: blocked recess	1m	SE	PJ	31/10/2011
036	37	NW cellars, room 4: pre-hotel fabric	1m	SE	PJ	31/10/2011
037	38	NW cellars, room 4: pre-hotel fabric	1m	W	PJ	31/10/2011
038	39	NW cellars, room 4: pre-hotel fabric	1m	W	PJ	31/10/2011
039	40	NW cellars, room 4: pre-hotel fabric	1m	S	PJ	31/10/2011
040	41	SE cellars, area C, room 2: vaulted ceiling with primary hooks		NE	PJ	31/10/2011
041	42	SE cellars, area C, room 3: blocked doorway	1m	E	PJ	31/10/2011
042	43	SE cellars, area C, room 3: doorway to room 2	1m	NE	PJ	31/10/2011
043	44	SE cellars, area C, room 1: general view	1m	SW	PJ	31/10/2011
044	45	SE cellars, area C, room 1: blocked doorway in N wall	1m	SW	PJ	31/10/2011
045	46	SE cellars, area C, room 1: scar of former wall	1m	N	PJ	31/10/2011
046	47	SE cellars, area C, room 6: arched recess	1m	SW	PJ	31/10/2011
047	48	SE cellars, area C, room 5: primary fabric	1m	NW	PJ	31/10/2011
048	49	SE cellars, area C, room 4: blocked doorway	1m	NE	PJ	31/10/2011
049	50	SE cellars, area C, room 7: general view	1m	SW	PJ	31/10/2011
050	51	NE principal elevation (central bay) to High Street		NE	PJ	1/11/2011
051	52	NE principal elevation (central bay) to High Street		NE	PJ	1/11/2011
052	53	NE principal elevation (NW bay) to High Street		NE	PJ	1/11/2011
053	54	SE cellars, area A, room 1: scar of former vaulted ceiling	1m	SW	PJ	1/11/2011
054	55	SE cellars, area A, room 1: scar of former vaulted ceiling	1m	SW	PJ	1/11/2011
055	56	SE cellars, area A, room 3: enlarged lower section of opening to room 1	1m	SW	PJ	1/11/2011
056		General view of groundworks		NW	PJ	30/07/2012
057		General view of groundworks		NE	PJ	30/07/2012
058		General view of groundworks		W	PJ	30/07/2012

Date downloaded to office: 2 November 2011

Received by: Paul Jones

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