Land at John Wesley's New Room Chapel, The Horsefair, Bristol

Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

BHER 25110

on behalf of

Purcell Miller Tritton LLP

Nick Corcos BA, MA, PhD, AIFA
Avon Archaeological Unit Limited

Bristol: May 2012

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Frontispiece: Looking into the southern courtyard from the Broadmead access. View to north.

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Southern courtyard, from close to the Broadmead access. View to NNW.

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ABSTRACT

Avon Archaeological Unit Limited was commissioned by Purcell Miller Tritton LLP to undertake an archaeological desk-based assessment of a site lying between The Horsefair and Broadmead, in the City of Bristol. The site, centred on NGR ST 59082 73403, is a long, narrow plot oriented NNW/SSE. It is particularly sensitive in heritage terms as it contains, towards its northern end, the site of John Wesley's New Room, reputedly the earliest purpose-built Methodist chapel in the world, established in 1739, and in its present form largely the result of a rebuilding carried out in 1748. The chapel itself is a Grade I Listed Building, but other elements of the site directly associated with it are also separately listed. Apart from these listings, there are no statutory designations affecting any other part of the site, it is not in any of the Bristol conservation areas, and there are no scheduled ancient monuments either on the site itself or in the immediate vicinity. The site lies amidst an extensive area of overwhelmingly modern, and aesthetically undistinguished post-war retail development. Previous studies, including a very recent (2010) Heritage and Design Statement, have dealt at length with the architectural history of the standing building, although there has been less emphasis on the site's archaeological context, and most notably, of the nature of the site before the establishment of the chapel.

The main element of the development proposal as currently framed involves the use of existing courtyard space at the northern end of the chapel building, to provide a new building, with piled foundations, housing administration, education, and ancillary functions. The construction would require the demolition of a 1930s lavatory block, and a lean-to kitchen attached to the NW corner of the chapel.

The study has found that the site, although lying outside, and to the north of Bristol's medieval wall, was nonetheless part of an early suburban borough closely associated with the foundation of the Priory of St James, and that the major elements of the street pattern, notably Broadmead and The Horsefair, may have been in existence in some form or another by the late 12th century at the latest. Development continued throughout the medieval, post-medieval, and into the early modern period, and the first reasonably reliable map of Bristol, from the late 17th century, shows that at least the street frontages in the area of the study site were completely built up by that time. John Wesley's original chapel, built in 1739, occupied a plot which had been formed by combining two separate garden areas attached to properties fronting The Horsefair and Broadmead. The site continued to develop thereafter, with the chapel itself subject to virtually complete rebuilding in 1748. In the first half of the 20th century, cottages of unknown date both on and behind the site's Horsefair frontage were demolished, and later changes saw access opened up to create free passage between the northern and southern courtyards. The underlying fabric of the New Room is now covered with concrete render, and its archaeology, in terms of its constructional phases, is therefore completely unknown, although has been much speculated upon.

A trawl of the local authority HER revealed that there have been surprisingly few archaeological interventions in the vicinity of the study site, although extensive buried deposits associated with medieval and post-medieval occupation and activity have been found on the site of the Quaker's Friars Registry Office, a little further to the east. Notwithstanding this fact, it is quite clear from historical evidence alone that Wesley's chapel lay in an area which, although extra-mural in the medieval period, had by the early 18th century become densely occupied. Despite extensive redevelopment in the 1960s and 1970s, this area, then, is characterised by a lack of knowledge of the extent of surviving buried archaeology.

In conclusion, and on the basis of the documentary and other evidence reviewed for this project, the study area is considered to offer a moderate to high potential for the survival of significant buried archaeological deposits and structures.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

Whereas Avon Archaeological Unit Limited have taken all care to produce a comprehensive summary of the known and recorded archaeological evidence, no responsibility can be accepted for any omissions of fact or opinion, however caused.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAU	Avon Archaeological Unit
aOD	Above Ordnance Datum
NGR	National Grid Reference
NMR	National Monuments Record
OS	Ordnance Survey
HER	Historic Environment Record
BRO	Bristol Record Office
NRA	New Room Archive

1 INTRODUCTION

Avon Archaeological Unit Limited was commissioned by Purcell Miller Tritton LLP to undertake an archaeological desk-based assessment of the site currently occupied by John Wesley's New Room Chapel, on a long, narrow plot which runs NNW/SSE between the southern street frontage of Broadmead, and the northern frontage of The Horsefair in central Bristol. The site is centred on ST 59082 73403, and extends in length just under 80m, and in width, at its widest point, which is in the northern half of the site, about 15m. The formal address of the chapel building itself is number 36 The Horsefair (**Figures 1** and **2**). The chapel is a Grade I Listed Building, and is of considerable historical significance not only in its own right, but also because it stands on the site of a rather earlier structure which was the earliest purpose-built Methodist chapel (or 'conventicle') in the world, erected at the instigation of John Wesley himself. It is therefore, by definition, an extremely sensitive site. It is also one of only a relative handful of buildings of historic and/or architectural interest which survives in this part of the city, the historic building stock of which was devastated, firstly, by second world war bomb damage, and subsequently, and arguably on an even more appalling scale, by insensitive, large-scale clearance and redevelopment in the late 1950s, 1960s and 1970s[1].

The proposals for the site as currently framed are best outlined by an overview provided by the developers themselves, who are acting on behalf of the Church Trustees, and they can be briefly summarised as follows:

> Purcell Miller Tritton have been exploring the possibility of providing a new building within one of the existing courtyards on the site to provide much needed admin, education and ancillary facilities for the site. The provision of additional space will enable the current admin & ancillary activities to be relocated from the second floor of the existing building and allow for the museum/exhibition area to be expanded. At ground floor level the axial route from the Horsefair Arch to the New Room entrance is being maintained and will be used as a multi-use exhibition/circulation/informal social/meeting area monitored by a manager's office, and serviced by a small kitchen. A meeting room will open off this space providing further flexibility. Glass roofed lightwells are provided at both ends of the courtyard to maintain daylight to windows in adjacent buildings and allow a 'breathing space' between new and existing buildings. At first floor level, the new building will accommodate WCs (to minimise use by general public on the street) as well as admin offices & a seminar room. Windows in these spaces look into the lightwells to provide natural light and views. At second floor level, the building will accommodate a new library, further offices, and a bridge link to the existing building and [the chapel] museum (which is not currently wheelchair accessible). The foundations for the new building will be piled……which in turn would support reinforced concrete ground beams/slab. Above ground the building is steel framed

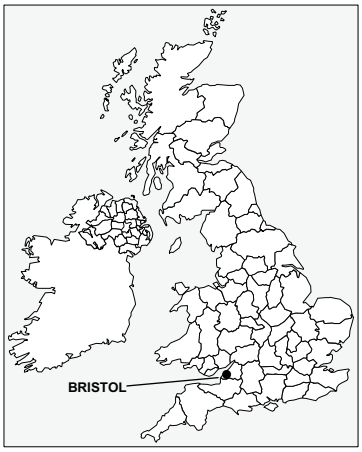
[1]The litany of destruction in this area is sobering. Of a total of some 26 separate items of historic and/or architectural interest recorded in the course of a trawl of the local authority HER within a 100m radius of the study site, only 7 remain as standing structures. Most, although by no means all, of the remainder were either destroyed or damaged by bombing, or were removed to make way for the Broadmead shopping centre, including, in the latter category, one designated Scheduled Ancient Monument (Ridley's Almshouses, of early 18th century date, HER 233M). It should also be borne in mind that this figure (26) represents only those structures which have subsequently come to the attention of the HER; the *actual* number of buildings which might today be considered of historic and/or architectural interest occupying the Broadmead/Horsefair area immediately prior to the Second World War, would of course have been far higher.

Figure 1

Location of the Study Area

The Study Area

Plans and maps based on the Ordnance Survey Sheets are reproduced by the permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.



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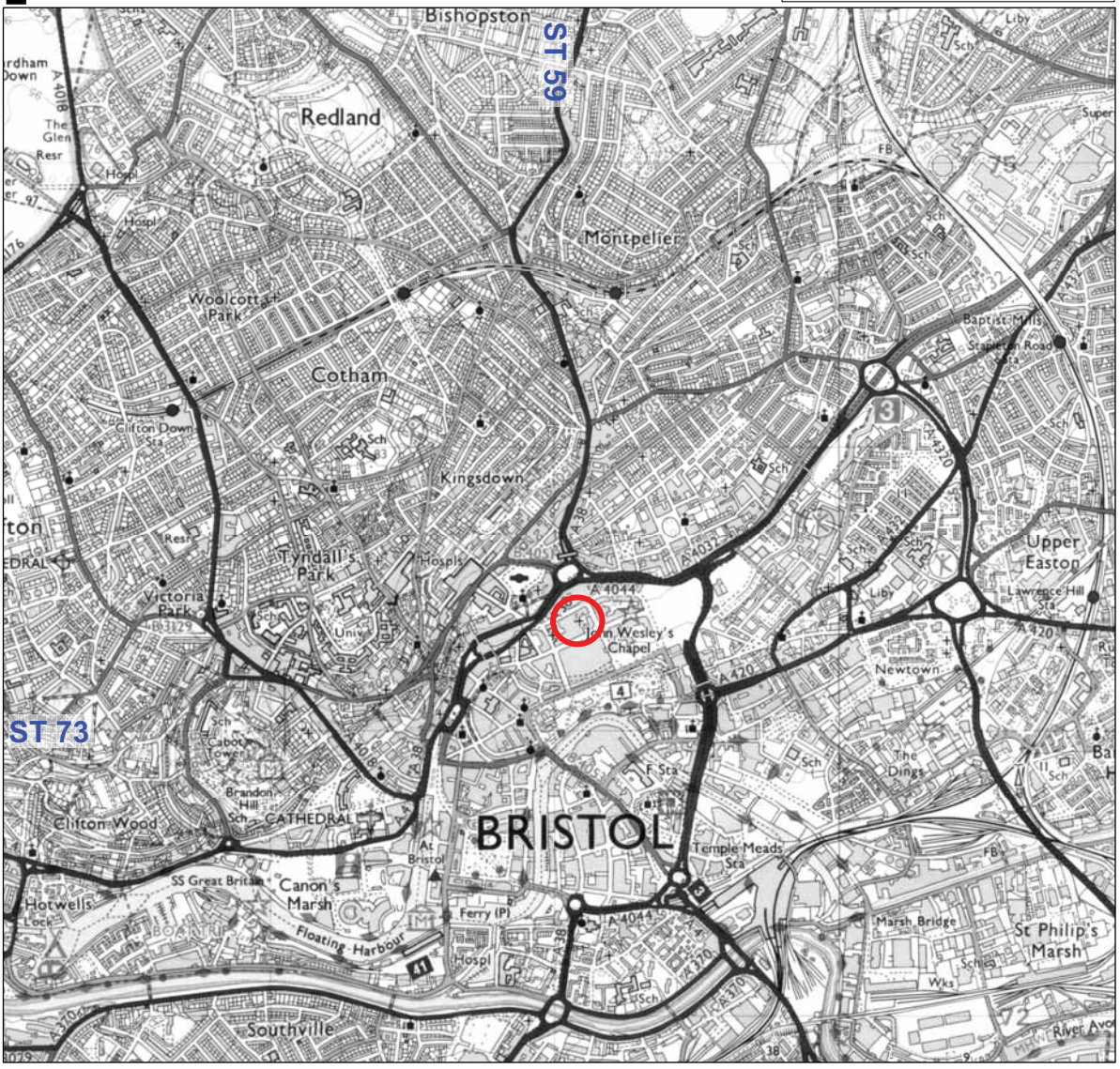

Scale 1:25000

Figure 2

Site Location Plan and Boundary of the Study Area

0 25m

> with perhaps heavily insulated timber infill with self coloured render. The proposal also requires the demolition of the existing WC block……as well as the removal of a lean-to kitchen/store (with cellar/boiler room) (*pers comm* Ben Freeston).

The 'existing courtyard' referred to here is that on the *northern* side of the chapel building, just back from The Horsefair street frontage, and as present arrangements stand the chapel is the only building of any size or importance occupying the site. Open courtyards extend to its north and south, with the southern one, stretching to the Broadmead street frontage, rather long and narrow, in contrast to the almost square courtyard lying to the north. The shape of the plot is completely explicable in its origin as gardens behind properties fronting Broadmead and The Horsefair, and such a site may well, in turn, have originated as a medieval burgage plot (see further below, **Historical Background**). It should also be noted that it is a legal element of the listing regulations, as currently framed, that the protection extends to *any* structure which is *physically attached* to the building carrying the primary listing; this provision would, therefore, cover the lean-to kitchen which stands against the NW corner of the chapel, such that Listed Building Consent would usually be required for its removal[2].

2 METHODOLOGY

Searches were made of the indices of the collections of the Bristol Record Office, and the main City of Bristol Library. A variety of online bibliographic resources, most notably COPAC, BIAB, the Archaeology Data Service, and Google Scholar, were used to identify potentially useful sources of information, whether published or otherwise[3]. In addition, a trawl of the local authority HER, encompassing a radius of 100m around the study site, was carried out on behalf of AAU by Peter Insole, HER Officer Bristol City Council, and the most salient results of that search have been incorporated in this report. A visit to the site was made by the author on Friday, 4th May, 2012, and a digital photographic record was made, of which the **Cover**, **Frontispiece** and **Plates 1** to **4,** form a part.

3 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The geological context of the study site is relatively straightforward. It sits astride extensive outcrops of Early Triassic Redcliffe Sandstone, which here lie unconformably on strata of Late Carboniferous age, and which extend eastwards to encompass large areas of the suburbs on that side of the city, and south-westwards in rather more limited outcrops around Southville, Bedminster, and Clifton. It is this stratum the distinctive colour of which gave rise to the suburb name 'Redcliffe', where its outcrops have been cut through by the river Avon to form notable river cliffs. The topography of the site itself is effectively

[2] I am very grateful to Kingsley Fulbrook, Conservation Officer for Bristol City Council, for his advice on this point.
[3] www.copac.ac.uk; www.biab.ac.uk; http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/; www.scholar.google.com

level, with benchmarks recorded on the historic large-scale OS maps in both The Horsefair and Broadmead centring around 9m aOD.

4 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

As may be imagined, the sheer quantity of both primary and secondary material which is available for historical studies of the City of Bristol, is vast, and a review such as this can do no more than summarise in the briefest terms, those aspects which bear most closely upon the site for present purposes; which is to say, specifically those which may have archaeological implications.

There are few references to Bristol before the Norman Conquest, although it is significant that one of the earliest occurrences of the place-name appears on a late Anglo-Saxon coin. Unusually for a place that had not been a Roman town, nor seems to have had any notable importance before the 10th century at the earliest, Bristol's rise to prominence was both late and relatively rapid. The site is a superb defensive position, on a slight bluff at the confluence of the Rivers Avon and Frome, and at a convenient crossing point of the former; indeed the crossing point probably represents the site's fundamental *raison d'être*, and explains the place-name of 'the place at the bridge' (Smith 1964, 83-85). Evidence even of late Anglo-Saxon activity or occupation in the central part of the city, around the northern bridgehead, is extremely scarce, although given the intensity of subsequent occupation and development, this is hardly to be wondered at. Sivier, however, makes the important point that

> Bristol is not mentioned in the *Burghal Hidage* of c.919, listing the *burhs* then extant in England…..and the earliest dating evidence for the city is a coin of Aethelred II issued sometime between 1009-1016. Despite this the city was almost certainly in existence long before then. Its status as a *burh* is incontrovertible, however, given the strong similarities between the City and other late Saxon burhs mentioned in the Burghal Hidage (Sivier 2002, 17).

Indeed slightly later on, Sivier also remarks that the very existence of Bristol-minted coins by the early 11th century, is testimony itself to its importance as a centre of trace and commerce half a century before the Norman Conquest (*ibid*, 36).

Bristol emerges in the pages of the Domesday survey for Gloucestershire as a relatively modest holding of only 6 hides, and even then is noted only, as it were, in passing, as part of the then royal manor of Barton Regis. The owner before 1066 is not specified but if the usual practice was followed then it is probable that what had been a royal manor in the late Anglo-Saxon period passed without a break of ownership straight to King William, and indeed the royal credentials are reinforced by the manorial suffix 'Regis' (Moore 1982). Although archaeological evidence is, as already noted, extremely scanty, it is an accepted orthodoxy that the late Anglo-Saxon and early post-Conquest settlement was centred just north of the Avon bridgehead, at the meeting point of the later High Street, Wine Street, Broad Street and Corn Street. This location lay towards the western end of the river bluff defined by the Avon and Frome, and is enclosed by a closed contour at 15m aOD. Bristol's urban

affinities by the late 11th century seem very clear, attested, apart from anything else, by the record of houses in Domesday Book, attached to rural manors: the Gloucestershire folios note two houses belonging to the manor of Westbury (on Trym), and the Somerset DB lists no fewer than ten houses attached to the manor of Bishopsworth, which lies about 3.5km SSW of the Bristol Avon on its course through the city centre (Thorn and Thorn 1980). Domesday Book also explicitly uses the term 'burgesses' in relation to the inhabitants of Bristol, a fact usually ascribed to borough status by the late 11th century (Moore 1982)[4].

The construction of Bristol castle probably from the late 11th century onwards, and then through successive rebuildings and expansions well into the 14th century, had a major impact on the topography at the eastern end of the main river bluff, and some houses were certainly swept away during the earliest phases of fortification, which initially may have comprised only of a ringwork, a circular bank and ditch, which only slightly later was reworked into the more 'usual' Norman motte and bailey. Also beginning in the late 11th century, and completed around the mid-13th century with the inclusion of the Marsh, Temple Fee, and Redcliffe suburbs within the circuit, Bristol was provided with a full circuit of stone walls, complete with projecting bastions, and the line of which has been proven by numerous archaeological and interventions, and chance observations, over many years (Sivier 2002, 82-99)[5].

This said it is extremely important, however, to make the point that the area of the study site always lay well *outside* the town defences; specifically, Wesley's New Room lies about 230m north of the line of the town wall, as it ran WNW from the NW corner of the castle fortifications, before joining the line of the original course of the old River Frome, flowing westwards past the northern side of the castle, and then turning through bends to the north, west, and south respectively, before flowing into the Avon just north of St John's chapel (Lobel and Johns 1975, Map 6). This area, which must clearly have lain outside the main locus of Anglo-Saxon and early post-Conquest settlement, comes into rather sharper historical focus in the 12th century, and its emergence is very much tied up with the foundation, by Robert of Gloucester, of the Priory of St James, in the first half of the 12th century, and before 1137 (*ibid*, 5)[6]. The Broadmead/Horsefair area has, ever since, fallen within the parish of St James. St James's churchyard and burial ground extended south of the priory buildings, and was bounded, on its southern side, by The Horsefair. It remained open after the Dissolution, and although progressively encroached upon, it nonetheless

[4] Full references to all the known historical documentation relating to Bristol's status as a borough, and to grants of markets and fairs in the city in the medieval period, can be found in the *Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs in England and Wales to 1516*, part of the website of the Centre for Metropolitan History, University of London. The direct url for Bristol is: http://www.history.ac.uk/cmh/gaz/gloucs.html#Bris

[5] The practice of town fortification in England in the medieval period is very usefully placed in its general social, archaeological and economic context by Creighton and Higham 2005, who discuss, *inter alia*, the fortification works at Bristol.

[6] The most extensive and recent account of the history of St James's Priory is that by Jackson, which also contains reports of the results of both modern and earlier archaeological investigations on the site, and attempts an overall synthesis of much of the available historical and archaeological material relating to the site; Jackson 2006.

continued to provide an increasingly rare open space in the centre of the city well into the 19th century (Mason 1957; Burchill 1997).

The medieval street pattern in this area north of the castle, had, in its original form, a very regular, grid-iron appearance, framing rectangular blocks of development, and which is strikingly brought out in the Bristol historic atlas (Lobel and Johns 1975; see esp Map 7, Medieval Street Names); and the morphology of this area, which includes, of course, the study site, becomes explicable in the light of developments there which were clearly closely associated with the foundation of St James:

> Between the Priory and the Castle lay a broad, open meadow, and here a 'new borough of the meadow'……..was founded, with the Priory church for its parish church, probably by Earl Robert or by his son William, who succeeded him in 1147; the first actual record of it is in a charter of Earl William (Lobel and johns 1975, 5).

The 'Broadmead' seems, then, to have been at least intended to function as a small borough in its right, and to which the highly regular plan, centred on the later medieval *Brodemedestrete*, may in part attest. Lobel and Johns (1975, 8) remark how in the 13th century,

> Deeds…..point to a land market in the 'new borough of the meadow' north of the town……..shops and houses sprang up in Broad Mead, Irish Mead, and around the Priory…….by the end of the 13th century, Bristol's medieval street plan, as it appears two centuries later in William of Worcester's *Itinerary*……..was fully developed.

It is regrettable that there is as yet for the Broadmead/Horsefair suburb no detailed, plot by plot analysis of the development of the medieval streetscape, such as Dr Leech has already carried out for both the central area of the medieval town, within and immediately adjacent to the city walls, and the University precinct around St Michael's Hill (Leech 1997 and 2000).

Smith notes the first recorded appearance of the name Broadmead in about 1240 (as *la Brodemede*). *Horstrete* appears by 1350 (Smith 1964, 87 and 88), but it is by no means certain that this should automatically be equated with The Horsefair; indeed it seems clear from the street relationships given by William of Worcester that medieval *Horstrete* cannot have been The Horsefair, and this appears to be confirmed by Millerd's late 17th century map of Bristol (see further below), which reveals the modern Host Street to be Horse Street.

Although the name Broadmead appears to have remained unchanged since the medieval period, that is not the case for some of the other street names in the area. The Horsefair has been known by that name since at least the early 17th century (BRO 26166/261), but in both the medieval and post-medieval periods it, appears to have been used interchangeably with *Kyngestrete*[7]. The King Street name subsequently became transferred to the N/S street bounding the

[7]That King Street and The Horsefair were indeed regarded as one and the same, is attested by a lease and release of 1661 involving a tenement in "King Street *alias* The Horsefair" (BRO 11109/4). King Street appears to be first mentioned in a documentary source as *vico regali* in 1307 (Smith 1964, 89).

eastern side of the block in which the New Room lies. The medieval name *Marchaunte strete* persisted into modern times as Merchant Street, and what was Rosemary Street (formerly Rosemary Lane) until the time of the post-war redevelopment, running E/W off the E side of the southern end of King (*Marchaunte*) Street, and effectively continuing the line of Broadmead eastwards, was called *Iryshmede* in the medieval period, hinting strongly about the origin of the community settled there at that time[8].

In the late 15th century, William of Worcester, himself a native of Bristol, provides us with what is in places a vivid word picture of extensive parts of the central area of the city, but regrettably he provides no real detail of the houses or other buildings in the street itself; saying only that

> The width of the street called Broadmead measures 30 steps. The length of the Broadmead measures 300 steps as far as King Street, to the wall of the Friars Preachers (Neale 2000, 161).

Interestingly however, William Worcester also notes, in other parts of the city centre, the very extensive practice of construction of underground vaults and cellars, and there is no reason to suppose that late medieval properties in The Horsefair/Brodmead area would have been any less well provided in this respect; and indeed the very last item in Worcester's long list of such features, is described thus:

> In the way of Broadmead, one stone vault built at his own expense, by William Botoner……..in the year of Christ 1428 (Neale 2000, 41-43; the quote is at 43).

Lobel and Johns remark that in William of Worcester's day, Bristol was

> Little different in size and lay-out from…..the late 13th century. The main streets, many of them newly-paved, were those that had been familiar two centuries earlier, when the physical expansion of the medieval town had reached its fullest extent; the town plan was basically such as it had been then and such as it was to remain for some time to come…..the suburbs beyond the walls were still comparatively thinly populated. There were indeed shops and houses there, but more in evidence were gardens, orchards, pastures, dovecotes and barns (Lobel and Johns 1975, 13).

It seems, then, as though the Broadmead/Horsefair area round about the year 1500, would have had a distinctly semi-rural appearance. And indeed, even some two and a half centuries later, in the mid 18th century, open spaces were by no means uncommon, for

> Even in the heart of the densely built up walled city north of the Avon, there were still dwellings with large gardens; there was a bowling green, large churchyards planted with avenues of trees so as to make pleasant walks for the citizens, gardens in the Castle Precinct, and the busy quays on the Frome, with their tall houses and shops, were still spacious and beautiful (Lobel and Johns 1975, 23).

This picture seems to be confirmed to some extent by the earliest reliable, and relatively large-scale, map evidence (see further below, **Historic Map**

[8]Irish Mead was in existence by the 1160s at the latest; BRO 5139/451.

Evidence), and it seems clear that although by the late 17th century, much (although by no means all) of the street frontage space in The Horsefair/Broadmead was built up, many properties were still at that late date possessed of gardens, yards and orchards tucked away behind the frontages, and forming surprisingly extensive areas of secluded open space[9].

This, then was the context in which John Wesley made his earliest appearance in Bristol, and in which he constructed his first purpose-built chapel, in 1739. It should be stated here from the outset that it is *not* the remit of this report to dwell in minute detail on the history or architectural affinities of the building itself, which have been covered elsewhere at considerable length (see, most recently, Foyle 2004, 174-175; Stell 1986, 66-68; Pedlar 2010)[10]. Likewise has the history of John Wesley's involvement in the life and work of Bristol's dissenting community been extremely well studied, and reference can be made to more recent reviews of this subject which will provide appropriate guides into the wider background literature (see especially, for example, Edwards 1972; Morgan 1990). What we are concerned with here, is the *archaeological* context of the building, and the briefest survey of the orthodox historical narrative will be sufficient to set the scene for present purposes, while at the same time highlighting the evidence of material which may cast a slightly different perspective on the orthodox accounts of events.

There was an active dissenting community in Bristol long before John Wesley's arrival there in 1739, and indeed, James Millerd's map of 1673 explicitly identifies a site which he calls 'The Meeting Houses', on the northern bank of the Frome river, in the stretch where it runs east-west, just to the east of Merchant Street[11]. The 'conventional' narrative is that Wesley brought together a disparate group of dissenting meetings into a single community, and the New Room was founded as a place for it to worship as a more unified entity. His own journal records, on 9th May 1739, that

> We took possession of a piece of ground near St James's churchyard, in the Horsefair where it was designed to build a room large enough to contain both the societies of Nicholas and Baldwin Streets, and such of their acquaintance as might desire to be present with them……..

And three days later, on May 12th,

[9] Stell himself makes the point that the chapel "stands on a site formerly concealed by surrounding buildings"; Stell 1986, 68.

[10] Because the New Room is a Grade I Listed Building there is also, of course, a formal listing description of the structure, its fabric, and some of the internal fixtures and fittings. The listing was first established in 1959, and can be found as Appendix B in Pedlar 2010, or on the English Heritage online National Heritage List; the direct url is http://list.english-heritage.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=1202025

[11] This is in fact the site of Quaker's Friars, which had been used by the Society of Friends for open-air meetings since the mid 1650s, in an orchard belonging to the former Dominican Friary. The slightly later meeting house, with its lantern roof, was clearly constructed before 1673, and was rebuilt by George Tully 1748-49 at exactly the same time as he was also, according to orthodox accounts, involved in the rebuilding of Wesley's New Room; HER241M.

> The first stone was laid, with the voice of praise and thanksgiving (Tablets 2010, 7)[12].

An inscribed foundation stone, dated no more closely than 1739, now sits high up in the north-facing gable end, at the NE corner of the New Room building, but whether it is the *actual* stone laid by Wesley in May 1739, must be regarded as problematic (**Plate 4**), and this introduces one of the several inconsistencies which attach to orthodox accounts of the New Room and its foundation, when one looks rather more closely at the evidence[13]. It is known that the New Room underwent extensive rebuilding in 1748, for the dual purpose of providing more room for an expanding congregation, but also because the original building was already, even after only nine years, in such a bad state of repair that, in Wesley's own graphic description,

> There was no small danger of it falling on our heads (Tablets 2010, 7).

Edwards describes how

> The building was extended to Broadmead through the purchase of a second plot of ground. Henceforth the entrance was from the Broadmead side, and a stable for the horse was erected. But business premises filled what now is the forecourt (Edwards 1972, 3-4).

Presumably Edwards in fact means that the New Room was extended *towards* Broadmead, ie to the south. Certainly the little stable block is on the southern side of the building, and it is this end of the chapel itself which Stell considers to have been extended (**Plate 3**; and see further below). Interestingly however, the additional piece of land acquired was *not* on the southern, Broadmead side, but on the *northern*, Horsefair side of the chapel:

> Tenement and garden next to the New Room; piece of land formerly part of garden, 67ft long, from Horsefair to New Room (BRO 41407/22; lease of 1748).

At present, and without far more detailed work than is possible for present purposes, it is not possible to reconcile these conflicting accounts. As far as is known, this was the last major *structural* change to the building itself, although extensive work was carried out in the early 20th century on the internal spaces, and remedial work on the elevations (see further below).

In any event, the apparently dire state of the original building by 1748 becomes more explicable when it is realised that, the foundation stone having been laid on May 12th, the first formal meeting was held in the New Room, albeit then only still a shell, on June 3rd. A building erected in such a short space of time, three weeks or less, cannot have been of the highest quality construction, and indeed was probably something of a bodge job. What appears to be at issue, however, is the precise *extent* of the rebuilding. The orthodoxy appears to be that it was pretty much complete, and indeed if Wesley's own account is to be taken at

[12] This work contains selected extracts from Wesley's personal journal, and I am very grateful to David Worthington, present Manager of the New Room, for his kindness in providing AAU with a copy for the purposes of the present report.
[13] It is also highly unlikely that the inscribed stone, which incidentally misspells Wesley's name, is in its original position.

face value, this is exactly what might be expected. The entire upper floor of the present structure is, for example, attributed to the work carried out in 1748. However, while apparently accepting this, and remarking that

> The present structure is almost entirely of [1748],

Andrew Foyle (2004, 174) also adds a crucial footnote to the effect that

> Recent studies have made conflicting deductions as to which parts pre-date 1748 (*ibid*).[14]

Be this as it may, Stell (1986, 66-68), following but also developing a much earlier survey made in 1944, reproduces a ground plan of the New Room which seems to suggest that pretty much the entire northern two-thirds of the building represents the original build, and it is only in his text in which Stell explains that only

> Parts of the N and E walls probably remain from the earlier structure……..the building was extended to the S in 1748. A segmental arched doorway at the centre of the N wall with a similarly-arched window above may be part of the original design; an attenuated window in the E wall may also relate to the earlier building (Stell 1986, 68).

Pedlar takes his cue directly from Stell in attributing areas of the N and E walls to the original work (Pedlar 2010, 4), but Stell's plan is misleading to the extent that it appears to extrapolate from what may be individual surviving *elements* of the original building, to the actual *walls* in which they are now set. This is an unwarranted inference which cannot be sustained *at the present state of knowledge*, and it is unlikely that this issue will ever be satisfactorily resolved as it is now impossible to 'read' the building archaeologically, due to the concrete render with which it is now covered[15]. It is worth adding that Stell, as again inferred from his plan, clearly also considers that the little stable block attached to the chapel's SE corner, dates from the time of the 1748 rebuild, and this may be borne out by the documentary evidence (see above), although it is noteworthy that the stable is brick built whereas the body of the chapel is of stone[16]; also, a superficial examination suggests that the stable actually butts against the chapel wall, although this would need to be confirmed by removal of paint and render at the joint (see further below, **Conclusions**).

There are also matters relating to the site of the New Room itself which need briefly to be reviewed. Richard Pedlar (2010, 10, Para. 4.1.2.1.) remarks that

[14] I am very grateful to Andrew Foyle for his advice on the detail of these references.
[15] This is in fact a very major obstacle to a full understanding of the building in an archaeological sense. It is possible, however, that modern techniques of remote sensing may well provide a way forward in this respect, most notably infra-red tomography, and impulse radar survey. I am extremely grateful to Alison Henry, Senior Architectural Conservator for English Heritage, for her advice on this point. These techniques are outlined in a major new series of building conservation guides recently published by English Heritage; see especially Henry and Wood 2012, and Odgers and Henry 2012.
[16] Although note that there are also clearly, intermittent elements of rubble stonework within the stable fabric, such as that which can be seen running down the left-hand side of the door.

> Evidence is…..required to verify the plot of the 1739 building,

and although there is, regrettably, no known surviving ground plan of the original building or its plot, there *is* well-referenced documentary evidence which gives some idea of the immediate topographical context of the original building, and presents intriguing questions about the sequence of events relating to its construction, as those are generally understood.

The Bristol Record Office holds a file of deeds, leases and other documents relating specifically to the plot on which the New Room came to be constructed, and the earliest of which dates to the late 16th century (BRO 41407)[17]. The provenance of these documents as a coherent collection is unknown but they appear to have come from a single source, and it is likely they represent part of a group of archives which at some unknown date was deposited with the Record Office from the New Room itself. It is neither possible nor appropriate to give a detailed account here of the entire series of documents contained within this group, and it will be sufficient to focus on a small number of key records dating from the time at which the New Room plot was acquired by Wesley, and in the half century thereafter.

The series of 'early Wesleyan' documents is rather formulaic, but they establish an evidential trail for the nature of the plot on which the New Room eventually came to stand. An initial lease, dated 28th June 1739, and which was followed in quick succession by release and then by mortgage agreements, will serve to illustrate this point – it describes the plot, at the time of the agreement in the possession of one William Lyne, in the following terms:

> All those two garden grounds lately converted into and used as one garden and whereon lately stood a little tenement or lodge with all and singular the appurtenances thereunto belonging or in any wise apperteining formerly the estate of Anthony Bassett of the city of Bristoll taylor deceased……..situate lying and being within the parish of Saint James within the said city of Bristoll between a garden formerly in…….severall tenures…..…on or near the north parte forward into a garden formerly in the tenure or occupation of Alexander North backward……on a near the south parte together with a certain way for him the said John Wesley…….to have free ingress egress and regress through a messuage or tenement [tenures given]…….in as large and ample manner as heretofore hath been accustomed and as [has been] enjoyed……all which serverall premises were lately purchased by him the said William Lyne…….(BRO 41407/17)[18].

We learn several things of interest from this description: that a small building of unknown nature had previously stood on the site, although use of the word 'lately' may suggest that it had gone by 1739; that the site had originally consisted of two gardens which had been brought together into one, and

[17] All the quotations used here have been taken from the original texts, but the BRO also holds two pamphlets containing transcriptions of a selection of the most important documents from this group; BRO Pamphlets 779 and 780. I am grateful to Anne Bradley, Archivist for the BRO, for her advice concerning these sources.

[18] The scribe who drew up this document has added two superscript notes, in a very small hand, to this part of the text, one of which reads "on or toward the west parte and extendeth in length from three gardens formerly in the……"; regrettably however, he has not made it clear where exactly in the main text this key clause ought to be inserted.

although, again, the agreement does not *explicitly* state that this had been done with a view to using it as a building plot for the New Room, that must always be a possibility; and that even with the newly-converted single garden 'earmarked' for building, the site *remained* bounded to north and south by other gardens, attached to properties fronting Broadmead and The Horsefair. It seems also that access to this particular plot (from the street frontage?) had been long established, and Wesley, as new owner, was to continue to enjoy these rights. Also interesting, however, is the date of this document, for it was, apparently, drawn up on 28th June, 1739. As we have already noted, this is nearly a month *after* Wesley himself says that the New Room, still then just a shell, was first used for a formal meeting, on June 3rd 1739 (Tablets 2010, 7), and all we can suggest is that the existing documents are merely formal codifications of rather more informal understandings in principle which allowed Wesley to proceed as soon as possible with construction, with the formal, legal instruments transferring the site into his ownership to follow later. This, however, is speculation, and it cannot be imagined that Wesley was cavalier with his journal dates.

Rather more detail is provided by a slightly earlier document, from November 1737, which in a short note endorsed on the outside of the membrane, gives information about the physical size of the plot which, two years later, came into the possession of John Wesley:

> Mem[oran]dum the garden within granted contains in length on the east 60 Foot bounded with a tenement of the widow [illegible] on the west contains in breadth backwards 60 Foot bounds a yard and tenement now of William Clark on the north contains in breadth towards the Horsefair forty Foot and on the south contains in length forty Foot bounded with land of Colonell Tyrrell and Thomas Winstone Esqr. (BRO 41407/16).

The documentation also throws up occasional references to, and descriptions of parcels of land closely associated with the New Room. Such, for example, is the account given in a lease of April 1783 for the small, elongated area known as Wesley's (or 'Westley's') Court, now Wesley Place, but which in the late 19th century is marked with its original name on the large scale OS plans as a small open area extending N/S from the NE corner of the chapel, and connecting via a small 'underpass' to The Horsefair street frontage. In 1783 this plot was described as

> All that plot, piece or parcel of void ground situate and being in a place called Westley's court leaving from a street called the Horsefair in the Parish of St James in the suburbs of the City of Bristol, to a conventicle called Westley's Room, containing in breadth from east to west 26ft 6in. or thereabouts and in length from north to south 66ft or thereabouts, enclosed with a stone wall boundary, high bounded on the east with garden ground belonging to messuages in Old King Street, on the west with Westley's Room, and a tenement in the occupation of John [illegible], on the north with a tenement in the occupation of Charles [illegible], and on the south with garden ground belonging to messuages in Broadmead, which said piece of ground hereby demised is particularly described in a plan endorsed on these presents…….. (BRO P.St.J./D/12/2a-b).

It is, again, deeply frustrating that the plan which, clearly, originally accompanied this document, is no longer with it, because it is difficult to

reconcile this description even with the situation in the late 19th century, particularly in respect of the plot's relationship with the gardens of properties in Broadmead, as that would seem to require a southern boundary extending far further to the south than was later the case. The western boundary was formed by both the New Room *and* occupied dwellings (presumably bounding the eastern side of the later Pim's Court), and a dwelling likewise formed the northern boundary, presumably on the Horsefair frontage, so there is a clear sense here of the extreme 'enclosedness' of the New Room by this date, tucked in among houses, especially on its northern side, although clearly, open gardens still existed to its south[19]. It seems best to ascribe the description to an plot rather larger than the Wesley Court depicted on the late 19th century OS plan, with its SW corner bounding with the NE corner of the New Room, although unless and until the 1783 plan appears, this must be regarded as speculation.

In 1808, the building was taken over by Welsh Calvinists, in the possession of which group it remained until 1929, by which time it was in a sufficiently poor state of repair to prompt a major programme of refurbishment and restoration, under the direction of George Oatley. Many of the primary records of this work, including numerous original architectural drawings, are still held at the New Room. The details of the extensive works on the chapel building carried out by Oatley, and subsequent projects to open up the spaces north and south of the building through, among other means, the demolition of cottages abutting the north side of the chapel, and on the entrances to both the northern and southern courtyards from The Horsefair and Broadmead, are dealt with by Pedlar (2010), and need not be reiterated here. A small lean-to structure built against the NW corner of the chapel, now used as a kitchen and with a brick-built vaulted cellar beneath it, is likely to be no earlier than late 19th century in date (**Plates 1** and **2**; and see further below). Also, it is likely that the two E/W stub walls which now stand a few metres to the south of the chapel's southern end, represent the remnants of a once-continuous wall extending across the entire width of the chapel plot, and which acted as a formal boundary between the chapel and the properties in Pim's Court[20].

Oatley's records do, however, hold some archaeological value. In particular, an elevation dated 1930, and showing the original boundary wall, now removed, on the eastern side of the southern courtyard, indicates the positions of what Oatley called 'Ancient Lights', and the remnant eastern gable end and roof line of a cottage that had originally stood against this wall (**Figure 15**).

[19] The Bristol Record Office catalogue lists not a single reference, of any kind, and under any plausible spelling, to Pimm's Court. The earliest instance in which the name is recorded on a map appears to be in 1828, on Ashmead's first edition of his Bristol survey, begun in 1813 by John Plumley.
[20] I am grateful to David Worthington, Manager of the New Room, for his advice on this point.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The strict remit of this study is to consider the evidence for archaeological survival in the vicinity of the study site, based on current knowledge as expressed in the City of Bristol Historic Environment Record. This specific aspect of this review, therefore, is underpinned by the results of a trawl of the HER carried out on behalf of AAU by Peter Insole HER Officer for Bristol City Council. It should be noted at the outset that the HER trawl revealed no Scheduled Ancient Monuments within a radius of 100m of the study area.

The list of items from the trawl which relate to former standing buildings or structures, or those few of historic and/or architectural interest which yet remain, has already been covered in Fn. 1 (above), and need not further detain us here; by far the majority of records captured by the trawl have no direct bearing on the *archeological* potential of the site, because they relate overwhelmingly to buildings or structures that no longer exist, are either formally listed or are considered of architectural and/or historic interest. We may, though, observe that, within the immediate vicinity of the New Room, and excluding of course the chapel building itself, there are only three items noted, none of which in and of themselves have archaeological implications in the context of the proposed development. Two of these are the statues within the northern and southern precincts of the New Room precinct (HER 1669M and 1668M respectively). The third is the early 19th century arcade which runs N/S immediately to the west of the chapel, and which links Broadmead and The Horsefair (HER 617M). In terms of historic buildings which have now gone, however, it should be stressed in the strongest possible terms that the HER is *not* to be relied upon as the final arbiter of the extent of the potential archaeological resource in the vicinity of the New Room. On the contrary. It *does* record the former existence (HER 832M and 833M), on The Horsefair frontage immediately north of the New Room, of four houses thought to be of 17th century date, and which were probably demolished in the late 1940s. However, it does *not* record any of the buildings, cottages and tenements which are known, from historic map and other documentary evidence, to have clustered closely around the chapel building to both its north and south, and all of which have now gone. The dates of construction of most of these buildings are simply unknown, and as may be inferred from what has already been said about the growth of this area from the mid-12th century onwards (see above, **Historical Background**), it is perfectly possible that at least the site, even if not any of the actual buildings which once stood upon it, may well have medieval antecedents. Certainly this is a distinct possibility for the street frontage areas. What exactly, for example, was the nature of the "little tenement or lodge" which, as we have already seen, was either standing or had recently stood on the plot which John Wesley acquired for the New Room in 1739?

Matters are not helped by the fact that there has been a distinct paucity of archaeological interventions in the vicinity of the chapel, due mainly to the fact that the massive destruction wrought in this area during the construction of the Broadmead shopping precinct, was carried out years before the advent of formal archaeological planning controls, most notably PPG16, which was not introduced until 1990. Indeed, the trawl recovered only four such records, the

nearest of which lies some 55m ESE of the centre of the New Room as measured from the central lantern. The HER (4214) records that the work was a watching brief carried out in 2005 for the installation of a large kiosk, but does *not* record the result. HER 3496 was another watching brief, in 1999, which took place in The Horsefair, about 70m NE of the site centre. On this occasion, Pennant Sandstone walls standing to about a metre high were recorded in a trench about 2m deep, but their exact nature could not be determined. About 80m due west of the site centre, close to the entrance to Wapping Court, off the southern side of The Horsefair, HER 55 records a further watching brief which revealed a wall purportedly of 15th century date, although this attribution seems to have been made on the basis of a single sherd of pottery associated with the structure. The wall is, therefore, best regarded as effectively undated. Finally, HER 3076, marking a point about 95m NW of the site centre, records a commercial excavation which took place in the mid 1950s, during construction of the former John Lewis building at the western end of The Horsefair. The HER notes that the work

> was observed by Edward Mason to identify any burials or inhumations. None were recorded and this was interpreted as indicating that St James Churchyard marked the eastern boundary of the St. James burial ground.

The best that can be said of the likely archaeological resource in the vicinity of the New Room is, therefore, that it is pretty much an unknown quantity, but cannot be judged on the basis of the HER alone, and indeed is potentially extensive. It is worth noting, for example, that just outside the strict limits of the HER trawl, at Quakers Friars and around Broad Weir, a whole series of modern interventions and watching briefs have revealed extensive survival of medieval and post-medieval archaeology, in terms of both structures and *in situ* deposits[21].

6 HISTORIC MAP EVIDENCE

Apart from the usual run of large-scale Ordnance Survey maps, there is a range of other historic maps and plans which depict the study site, both printed and manuscript, held in the Bristol Record Office and among the New Room's own archive. It should be stated from the outset that, regrettably, there does not appear to be any large-scale *contemporary* plans of either the original building, or the 1748 rebuild; and in the case of the former, bearing in mind what has already been said about both the speed and the poor quality of its construction, it is perfectly possible that none was ever made. The earliest really useful depiction of the general area of the site is that provided by James Millerd in 1673 (**Figure 3**). Millerd's depiction of houses is of course semi-schematic and it is by definition impossible to be certain about the exact position of the New Room in relation to other buildings; nonetheless his map is instructive for the very clear impression which it gives of the almost unbroken open space of gardens and orchards which lay at the centre of the *insula* which was bounded

[21] See for example HERs 4413, 3849, 4242, 4280, and 4279. I am grateful to Peter Insole for providing me with these references over and above the standard trawl which he carried out on behalf of AAU Ltd for the purposes of this report.

north and south by The Horsefair and Broadmead, the street frontages of which were built up but not continuously so. It was clearly into one of these rear garden plots, albeit with a small house already on it or only recently gone, that the New Room was inserted.

The chapel building itself first appears on a series of well-known, small-scale 18th century maps of the city of Bristol, of which the first is John Rocque's survey of 1742, followed by his revision of 1750, and then Benjamin Donne's map first published in 1773[22]. Extracts from these surveys are reproduced here as **Figures 4**, **5** and **6** respectively, and there is, frankly, little useful that they tell us about the nature of the building itself other than its location, and its relationship to the local road pattern and to other structures nearby[23]. Initially, access was only from The Horsefair, but between 1750 and 1773, a passageway from the Broadmead Street frontage was added as well. There is, however, an observation that can be made about the way in which all of these three early surveys depict the chapel, that does not appear to have been noted by earlier commentators. In all of them, the chapel building is depicted as a rectangular structure, with its long axis oriented ENE/WSW, that is, parallel to Broadmead and The Horsefair. The building as it stands today, usually, as already discussed, attributed to a rebuild of 1748, has its long axis oriented NNW/SSE. What should be read into this is, of course, entirely problematic, and it may simply be an idiosyncrasy of maps which to some extent were probably mutually dependent, and which were certainly nowhere near the standards of surveying to be seen in later, 19th century mapping. However, if these depictions *are* to be relied upon, it rather raises the questions of exactly what was the nature and size of the original building, what exactly was done to the fabric in 1748, and whether we should rethink how the original building related to the plot in which it sat. The lease of 1737 already quoted (see above, **Historical Background**) certainly appears to involve a plot oriented roughly N/S, 60ft (18m) long by 40ft (12m) wide. It may well be, though, that we need to keep an open mind about the possible implications of these early surveys, for if they are to be taken at face value, then the entire alignment of the building has been changed, and *not* at the time of the 1748 rebuild[24]. It is, finally, also worth noting that on all of the 18th century depictions, the chapel building is shown as a single block, with no 'projecting' or associated outbuildings. Since we know that the 1748 rebuild included what may be the present stable block, this may add to the weight of argument that the form of the building as presented in this small group of maps is highly schematic.

The earliest site-specific plan which seems to survive is a drawing (in fact it is little better than a neat sketch), attached to the lease by which, in 1808, the Welsh Calvinist community in Bristol took over the New Room from the Methodists (BRO 41407/30). It is reproduced here as **Figure 7**. There is no north arrow, but the position of Broadmead is indicated and so the plan can be

[22] The version of Donne's map shown here is from a revision of 1786.
[23] All of these same maps, *except* Millerd, are also reproduced by Pedlar 2010, Historic Plans 1.
[24] The second edition of the Rocque map, of 1750, would have captured such a change, but it does not, although it must be stressed that this is to make the assumption that Rocque's surveys were reasonably accurate in the first place, and that the second edition was the result of a *true* resurvey.

correctly oriented. The 1808 plan does suggest that the New Room was indeed oriented with its long axis aligned N/S; crucially, however, it also has a scale, from which it is possible to calculate that at that date the building was measured at 80ft (just over 24m) long, and 40ft (12m) in width. The present building, as more modern surveys show, is, of course, not exactly rectangular, but is in fact slightly trapezoidal, being rather wider at its northern end (Stell 1986). The 1808 measurements, however, differ from those of Stell's, for he makes the (external) length of the building 67ft (just over 20m), and the width (also external), at the widest (northern) end, 48ft (just under 15m). It is of course possible that these differences can be accounted for by shortcomings in the early 19th century surveying, and that may be true to some extent, but they seem altogether too great for that to be the sole explanation, and it seems at least possible that unrecorded alterations have been made to the building between 1808 and the time of Stell's revision of the 1944 survey. It is also worth noting that the plan shows a block *detached* from the southern end of the chapel, and running N/S against the eastern boundary wall, labelled 'Stable & Tenement & Garden'; this suggests very strongly that the original stable was somewhere in *this* position, and that the present building called the stable, physically butted up against the SE corner of the New Room's south wall, is a later structure.

The first large-scale map that can be relied upon for a reasonable degree of accuracy is Plumley and Ashmead's survey of 1828. This shows the New Room pretty much as might be expected in terms of its size and orientation, in relation to the building that is known today, and it is a measure of the general accuracy of this survey that it is the first in the series examined here which allows a nigh on perfect fit with the outline of the modern study site (**Figure 8**). In view of what has already been said in relation to the 18th century small-scale surveys, it is tempting at least to suggest the possibility that the open courtyard adjacent to the eastern side of the building, may represent part of an earlier footprint of a building on an E/W alignment, but for now this would be to go beyond the bounds of the evidence. In 1828 the Horsefair access is depicted as a straightforward open passageway from the street, and likewise the access from the south, from Broadmead; at this date there was, however, no access all the way through from north to south. The Lower Arcade, built in 1824, runs N/S immediately to the west of the New Room (HER 617M), and the rear of some of the shop units on its eastern side by now form the western side of the passage which gave access to the New Room from the southern, Broadmead frontage. The key identifies the New Room by this date as the 'Welsh Chapel'. A building is shown butting against the SE corner of the chapel, in the position of what is now known as the stable, but it is rectangular, with its long axis running N/S, whereas the surviving stable block is pretty much square, raising the possibility that the present building is either a later replacement, or that it represents a truncation of a once-larger structure that originally extended further to the south. At the NW corner of the chapel, there does not appear to be any indication of the lean-to structure which now stands against the N wall, and is used as a kitchen; it is therefore very likely to date from after 1828. A short distance to the NE of the New Room, and constructed in the mid 1790s as an offshoot of the earlier chapel following a dispute within its congregation, Ashmead shows the Weslyan Methodist Ebenezer Chapel. This building stood on the west side of King Street until the mid-1950s, at which time it was demolished, yet another

casualty of the Broadmead redevelopment (HER258M).

In 1855, Ashmead produced a revision of his first map, reproduced here as **Figure 9** (Sheet 60). Wesley's and Pim's Courts are identified, as they had been on his earlier edition, and the New Room is still the 'Welsh Chapel'. This map seems to confirm that the stable block at the chapel's SE corner is either a different building to that which survives in that position, or that the present building is merely a remnant of an originally larger one. At the NW corner, on the north wall, a series of three square structures now extend to the NW, and it is possible that the one butting against the chapel building survives in the form of the present kitchen and its small cellar, in which case it can be attributed to between 1828 and 1855; but the earlier survey is not of the same standard as this later example, and this remains slightly problematic. This is, in fact, Pim's court, which was known to contain cottages, and indeed the two structures seen on the eastern side of the court are almost certainly cottages. However, if the putative original boundary wall between the chapel northern wall, and Pim's Court, is indeed marked by the present E/W stub walls, as already suggested, then it seems likely that the kitchen block was in place by 1855 – it seems unlikely that a cottage would be constructed in such a highly constricted position, and it would be unfeasibly small, but it is impossible to be completely certain – the kitchen block could originally have been a simple one up/one down, two-storey cottage. To the east, the formerly open courtyard shown on the 1828 map, and which bounded the chapel on that side, has been reduced in size by the construction of two buildings (?cottages) butting against the entire length of the New Room's eastern wall.

Ashmead produced a further revision to his survey almost exactly twenty years later, in 1874 (**Figure 10**, same sheet number), but in relation to the study site, it appears to show very little variation from the survey of 1855. It may, however, usefully be compared with the First Edition Ordnance Survey 1:500 plan of the site, dated 1882, which can be said to represent the first really accurate metrical survey available for present purposes (**Figure 11**)[25]. Buildings clustered to the north, around Pim's Court, are shown, and Wesley Court (latterly Welsey Place) appears greatly diminished from its verbal description in the lease of 1783 already noted (see above, **Historical Evidence**). It seems likely (but is unprovable) that the building butting against the NW corner of the chapel, on its northern wall, is the present kitchen block. The cluster of buildings formerly butted against the New Room's eastern wall had gone by this date, and had been replaced by an empty rectangular area in that position, but the space had not been opened back out to its former extent because a new Sunday School had been constructed running N/S from the SW corner of the Ebenezer Chapel. The access from The Horsefair has, since 1874, become covered over, but there is still no passageway all the way through from that street frontage to Broadmead.

[25]This is OS 1:500 Gloucestershire Sheet 71.16.20, surveyed in 1882, and published in 1885. This said it is notable, however, that even this survey shows the New Room as a regular rectangle, and *not* the slight trapezoid which later, detailed surveys of *just* the building itself reveal it to be.

There follows a series of large-scale maps produced by the company of Charles Goad Ltd for insurance purposes (BRO 40904/1 and 2). The site is shown on Map 20 throughout this series. The goad maps are useful because they reveal at a high level of detail the nature of buildings, their construction, and their use at the time at which they were surveyed. There is, however, a problem over dating the maps, and this limits their usefulness. **Figure 12** is an extract from a base plan of 1890, *but* it has clearly had amendments made to it up to *at least* 1948, for that date is noted among properties on The Horsefair frontage immediately north of the New Room. It certainly post-dates 1933 when the cottages in Pimm's court were removed (Pedlar 2010, 5). However, the map shows the New Room, its gallery, with 'tenements over', and immediately to its east, offices and a book warehouse, perhaps occupying part of the Wesleyan Sunday School noted on the First Edition OS plan. Numbers 24 and 25 Horsefair are still shown in place, but the they were removed in 1948 and it is likely that, as already noted, the last modification to this survey dates to that year. A further Goad plan, dated 1952 (**Figure 13**, same sheet number), shows that the major change has been the loss of the two properties on The Horsefair frontage, and the third property within the width of the New Room plot, No. 23, as 'vacant'. A 'piano warehouse' occupies the eastern side of the southern court.

A third plan, with a main date of 1954 but with selected modifications up to at least 1961[26], shows that The Horsefair frontage has been renumbered, and new properties constructed (**Figure 14**). The Ebenezer Chapel has gone, and its plot is already encroached upon by adjacent properties. Immediately east of the New Room, the former warehouse and office building has gone, leaving an open plot, and indeed, the the whole area east of the New Room has undergone a major change in it s property boundaries, with the removal of older buildings and their partial replacement by, generally, larger structures, demarcated by far fewer boundaries. The whole of the northern courtyard in front of the New Room has been opened up, so that, leaving aside the street frontage properties, the only structures within it are the kitchen building and the toilet block. This latest plan remains deficient, however, because like its predecessors it seems as though it was only ever *selectively* resurveyed; it does not show the modifications, carried out in 1953, that finally linked the northern and southern courtyards, by providing a single, continuous passageway on the eastern side of the chapel, all the way through from Broadmead to The Horsefair (Pedlar 2010, 5). There is also a series of plans kept at the New Room itself relating to George Oatley's work at the chapel in the late 1920s and early 1930s; a selection of these has already been presented by Pedlar (2010, Historic Plans 1 and 2), and they do not materially affect issues relating to the potential for the survival of buried archaeological structures or deposits on the site.

[26]As is made clear from a note written in the bottom right corner of the image, relating to a property on the Broadmead frontage.

7 SITE VISIT

The **Cover, Frontispiece** and **Plates 1** to **4** represent part of a photographic record made by the author during a site visit to the New Room conducted on Friday, 4th May, 2012. The descriptive captions accompanying the plates will, it is hoped, be reasonably self-explanatory.

8 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK, MARCH 2012

Between March 2010 and March 2012, national planning guidelines as they related specifically to the historic environment, were outlined in the document known as PPS (Planning and Policy Statement) 5, *Planning for the Historic Environment*. However, in March 2012, PPS5, and indeed all the other planning policy guidance and statements which underpinned the operation of the national planning process, was replaced by a single, greatly simplified, overarching and integrated document known as the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012). Within this document, matters relating to archaeology and the historic environment generally are dealt with in Section 12 (pages 30-32), *Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.* A detailed examination of the implications of the new framework for the specific site being reported on here, is outside the scope of this study. Section 12 of the NPPF is by definition a much shorter excursus on national planning policy as it relates to the historic environment, than was contained in its predecessor PPS5, although it is, at least in principle, underpinned by many of the same basic tenets. That said however, and of great potential significance, is the removal of any explicit reference or guidance to a presumption in favour of preservation of archaeological remains *in situ*, which was dealt with in PPS5, albeit in terms which are implicit rather than explicit, under Paragraph HE12.1 of that document[27]:

> A documentary record of our past is not as valuable as retaining the heritage asset, and therefore the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether a proposal that would result in a heritage asset's destruction should be given consent.

By far the majority of the document consists of guidance to local authorities in how they should handle matters relating to the historic environment in their own areas. It is certainly *not* the remit of the present report to attempt to second-guess how local authorities may interpret the detail of, and still less how they may actually apply in practice, the provisions set out in the new document, and each case must of course be taken on its own merits; however, an examination of the NPPF suggests that the following paragraphs may have a particular bearing on the site which is the subject of this report:

129 Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when

[27]The specific phrase 'preservation *in situ*', does not occur anywhere within PPS5.

considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

131 In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:
● the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
● the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
● the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

141 Local planning authorities should make information about the significance of the historic environment gathered as part of plan-making or development management publicly accessible. They should also require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible…….However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.

Some policy issues are dealt with by Pedlar 2010 (7-9), although quoting the now-superseded PPS5. However, the principal *local authority* guidance and policy document relating to archaeology in Bristol, is known as SPD07, and was adopted in 2006[28]; and it is understood that the provisions of the new NPPF, cited above, effectively devolve most guidance relating to archaeology down to the local level, so that in this case it would be SPD07 which would constitute the *de facto* core policy document[29].

It is not the remit of this report to review in detail the possible implications of that document for present purposes, and readers are referred directly to it as appropriate. However, since the present proposals for the New Room site involve the possibility of founding the new build in the northern courtyard on piles, the following extract may be considered relevant:

> There has been considerable research into methods of reducing the impact of modern foundation systems on fragile archaeological remains……It is now common practice for archaeologists to discuss the details of foundation design with the structural engineers appointed for development programmes. Different piling systems in various configurations can help to minimise damage to buried archaeological features and deposits. Similarly, by reducing the depth of ground beams and pile caps, possibly by incorporating the pile cap into the structural floor slab, unnecessary disturbance of important archaeological features can be minimised. The potential for the reuse of existing piles has yet to be adequately tested in Bristol although the possibility has been examined elsewhere in the UK and Europe. In many cases the new demands of a modern building, often with a different use, may make the reuse of piles impossible. However, there may be situations where the reuse of piles or other foundation systems (eg an existing raft foundation) is an economic and structural reality and the potential should be considered in each case where important archaeological remains have been recognized (SPD07, 2006, 13).

[28] *Bristol Local Development Framework, Supplementary Planning Document Number 7: Archaeology and Development*.
[29] I am grateful to Peter Insole for his advice on this point.

9 CONCLUSIONS

The study site lies in the centre of the city of Bristol, although in the medieval period it was an extra-mural area immediately to the north of the walled citadel, and appears to have been founded in the early to mid 12th century as part of a 'new borough' associated with the Priory of St James, and planned on the basis of a regular grid of streets. There was some development here in the medieval period, and it is likely that by the time of William of Worcester, in the late 15th century, the Broadmead and Horsefair street frontages were well built up, although as late as the late 17th century, the block bounded north and south by these streets still showed an extensive central core of open gardens and orchards lying behind the frontage properties. It was just such an area, complete with a pre-existing or only recently removed 'lodge', which John Wesley acquired in 1739 for the construction of his first purpose-built Methodist meeting house, which was then rebuilt, to an unknown extent, in 1748. There are no large-scale maps which show the site in any detail until the early 19th century, and although there are a series of city maps in the second half of the 18th century, the accuracy of their depictions of the site remains problematic.

Current orthodoxy would suggest that it is the later rebuild which forms by far the overwhelming part of the surviving structure, but this is in fact entirely unknown: there are no known surviving large-scale plans of either the original building, or the rebuild, and later concrete render makes the usual techniques of buildings archaeology worthless. The New Room is now a Grade I Listed Building.

There are no known sites of archaeological or historic interest, listed buildings, or Scheduled Ancient Monuments, within the bounds of the study site, and as attested by the local authority's own Historic Environment Record. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of the handful of items arising from a trawl of the HER, related to standing buildings or structures considered to be of historic and/or architectural interest; and by far the majority of these no longer exist, having been swept away by post-war redevelopment, mainly for the Broadmead shopping centre. There has been only a handful of small archaeological interventions to modern standards in the immediate area, and on a more extensive scale slightly further away, in the Quaker's Friars and Broad Weir districts; but it remains the case that the archaeology of the Broadmead/Horsefair area is most accurately characterised as badly known and poorly understood.

An important finding of this report is that in the past, far too many assumptions have been made about the nature of the New Room building itself. While some of the early documentary material may be open to interpretation, and must be treated with caution, there are areas in which its witness does not seem even to have been noted – for example, over the question of the orientation of the early building, and the antecedent nature of the plot on which it stands. Most significantly however, it is the case that the above-ground archaeology of the building, in terms of its fabric and structural phasing, remains an almost complete unknown. While this is understandable in view of the cement render which now covers the greater part of the structure, it is nonetheless astonishing

for a building of its historic, archaeological and architectural importance. The plan published by Stell, for example, showing the rebuilding of the southern third of the New Room, simply cannot be taken at face value; under the present circumstances it is just not possible to make that judgement, a point already strongly implied by Andrew Foyle (reference cited above). Under these circumstances then, it might be considered desirable, if possible, to undertake a programme of relatively minor, and highly selective and targeted work on the building fabric itself. This would involve investigation at specific locations (**a** and **b** below) to clarify explicit aspects of the fabric and structural phasing of the New Room chapel:

a The render to be stripped along selected narrow, vertical stretches of the western and eastern elevations, at points coinciding with the constructional interface suggested by Stell's plan, with the aim of proving or disproving at least this element of the 'orthodox' phasing.

b Stell's plan seems clearly to imply that the stable building, and the south chapel wall, are of one build, but for a variety of reasons, this seems highly unlikely. We therefore suggest that the relationship between these two structures should be definitively established.

In conclusion, and on the basis of the documentary and other evidence reviewed for this project, the study area is considered to offer a moderate to high potential for the survival of archaeologically-significant buried deposits and structures.

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1737

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1739

BRO 41407/17. Lease of garden plot to John Wesley.

1742

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BRO 41407/22. Lease of garden extending from The Horsefair frontage to the New Room.

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1773

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1783

BRO P.St.J./D/12/2a-b. Lease of Wesley's Court.

1808

BRO 41407/30, lease of Wesley's New Room by the Welsh Calvinists, with endorsed plan.

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Plumley and Ashmead's map of the city of Bristol.

1855

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1874

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1882

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Figures

Figure 3

Extract from map of the city of Bristol by James Millerd, 1673. BRO.
Area of study site outlined in red, best fit to this survey. Not to scale.

Figure 4

Extract from map of the city of Bristol by John Rocque, 1742. BRO. BRO. Area of study site outlined in red, best fit to this survey. Not to scale.

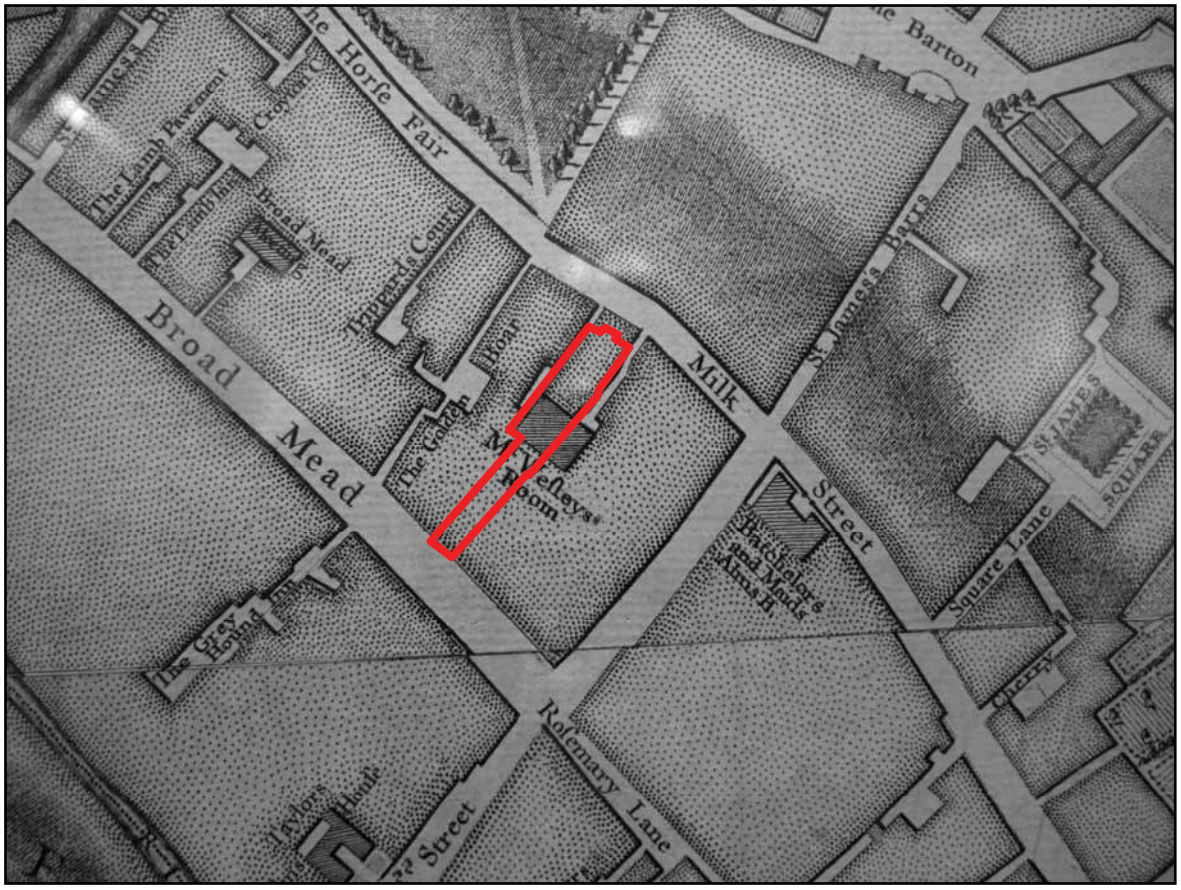


Figure 5

Extract from map of the city of Bristol by John Rocque, 1750, with amendments to 1786. BRO. Area of study site outlined in red, best fit to this survey. Not to scale.

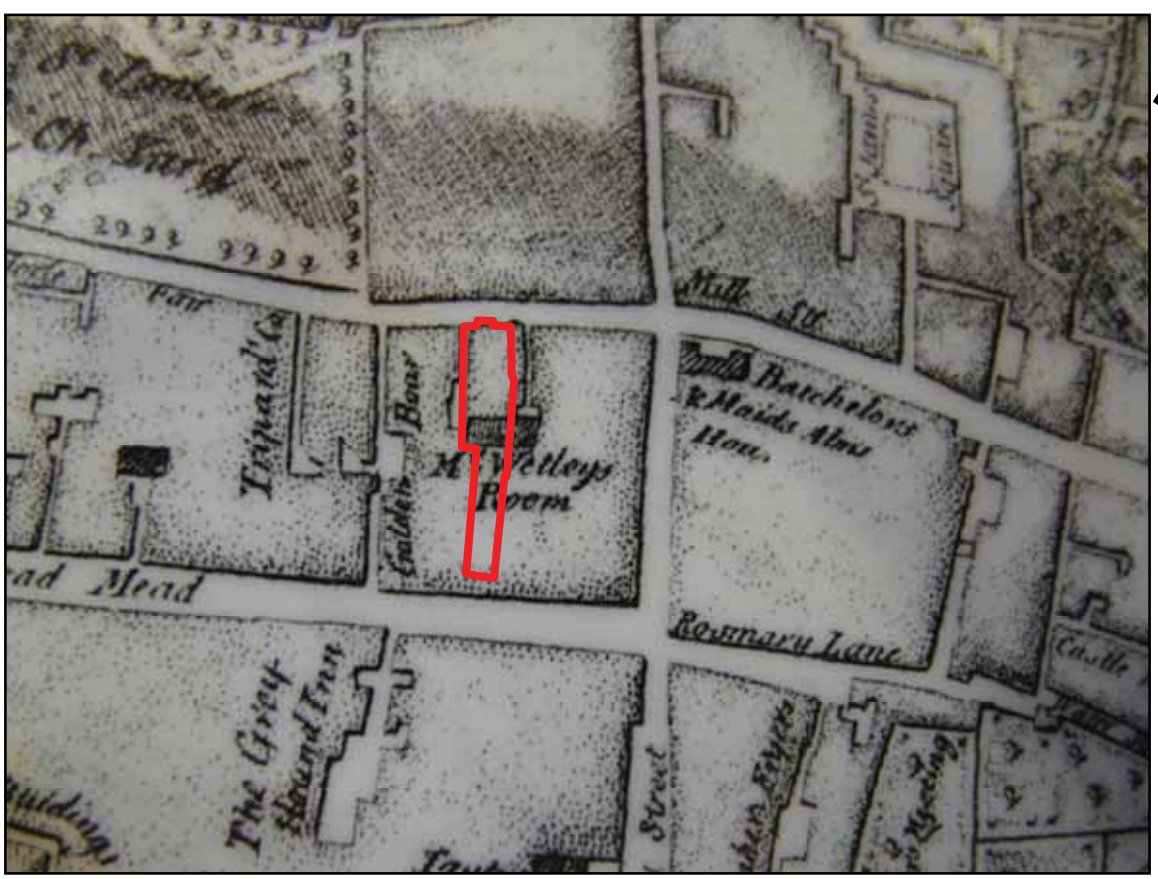


Figure 6

Extract from map of the city of Bristol by Benjamin Donne, 1773. BRO. Area of study site outlined in red, best fit to this survey. Not to scale.

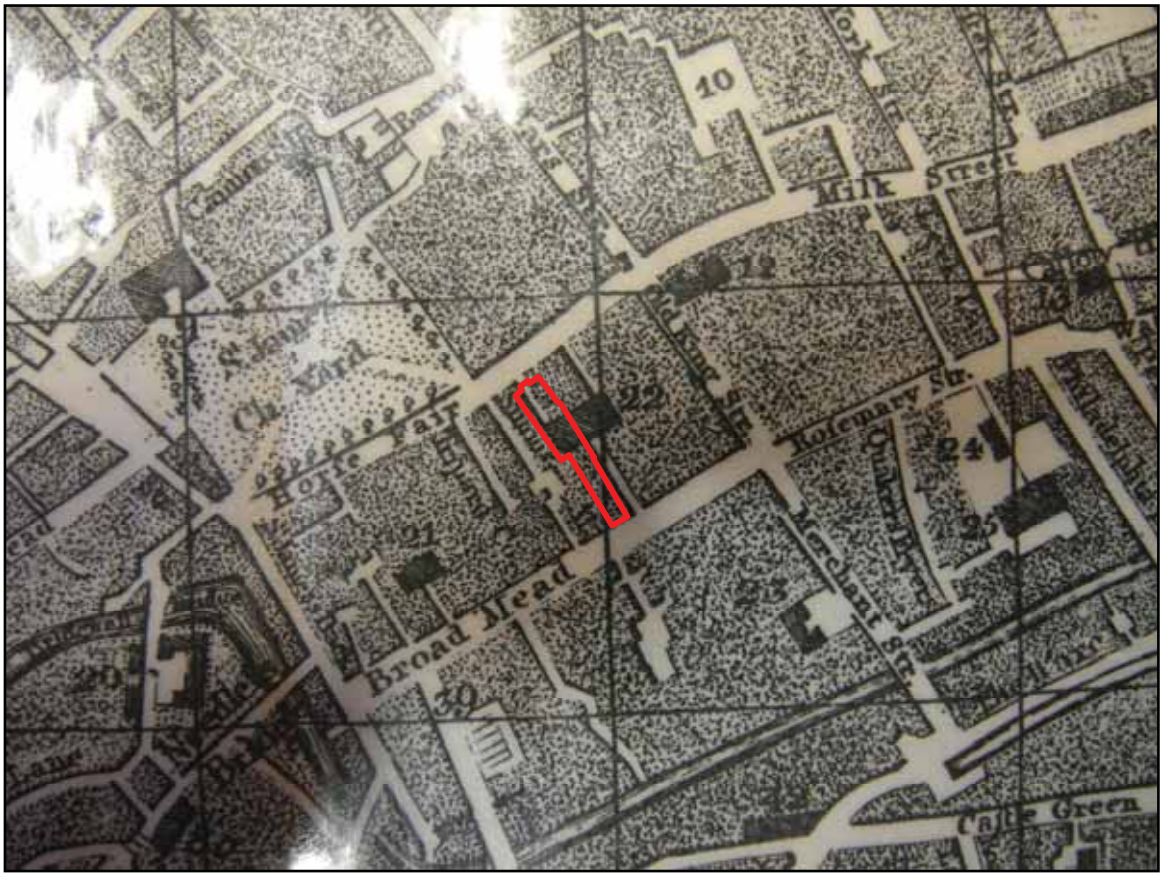


Figure 7

Scaled plan endorsed on a lease of the New Room and associated plot to the south, and showing the Broadmead street frontage. 1808. Scale in feet. BRO 41407/30.

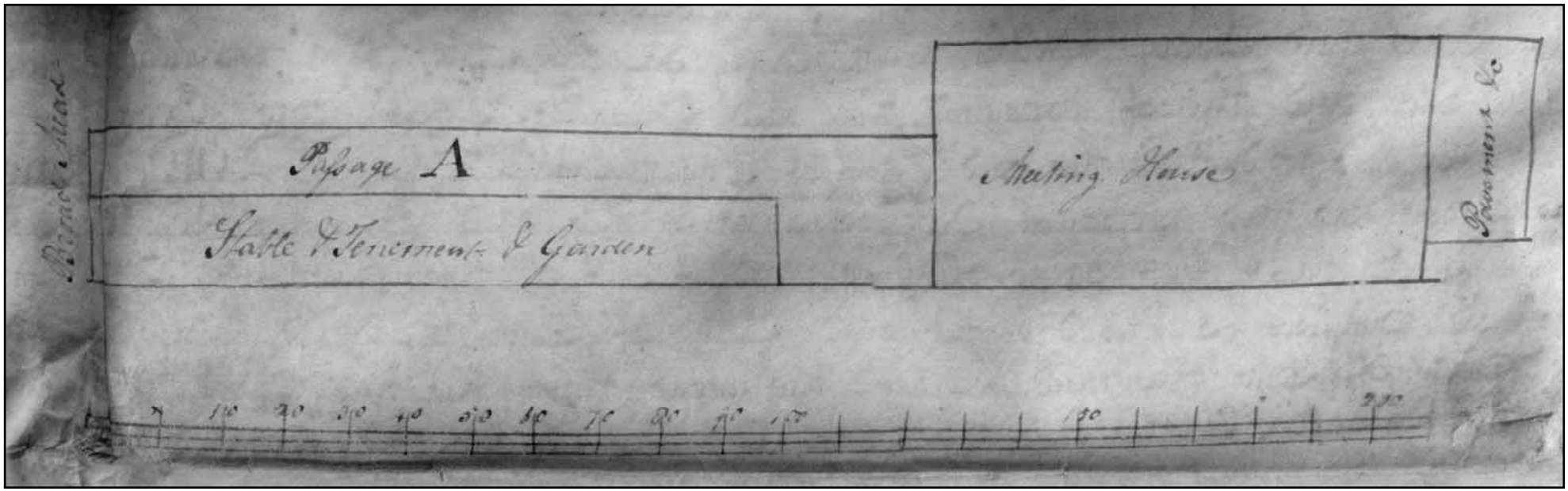


Figure 8

Extract from Plumley and Ashmead's map of the city of Bristol, published 1828. BRO. Study site outlined in red, outline of Rocque's survey of 1742 (see Figure 4) shown in white for comparison. Not to scale.

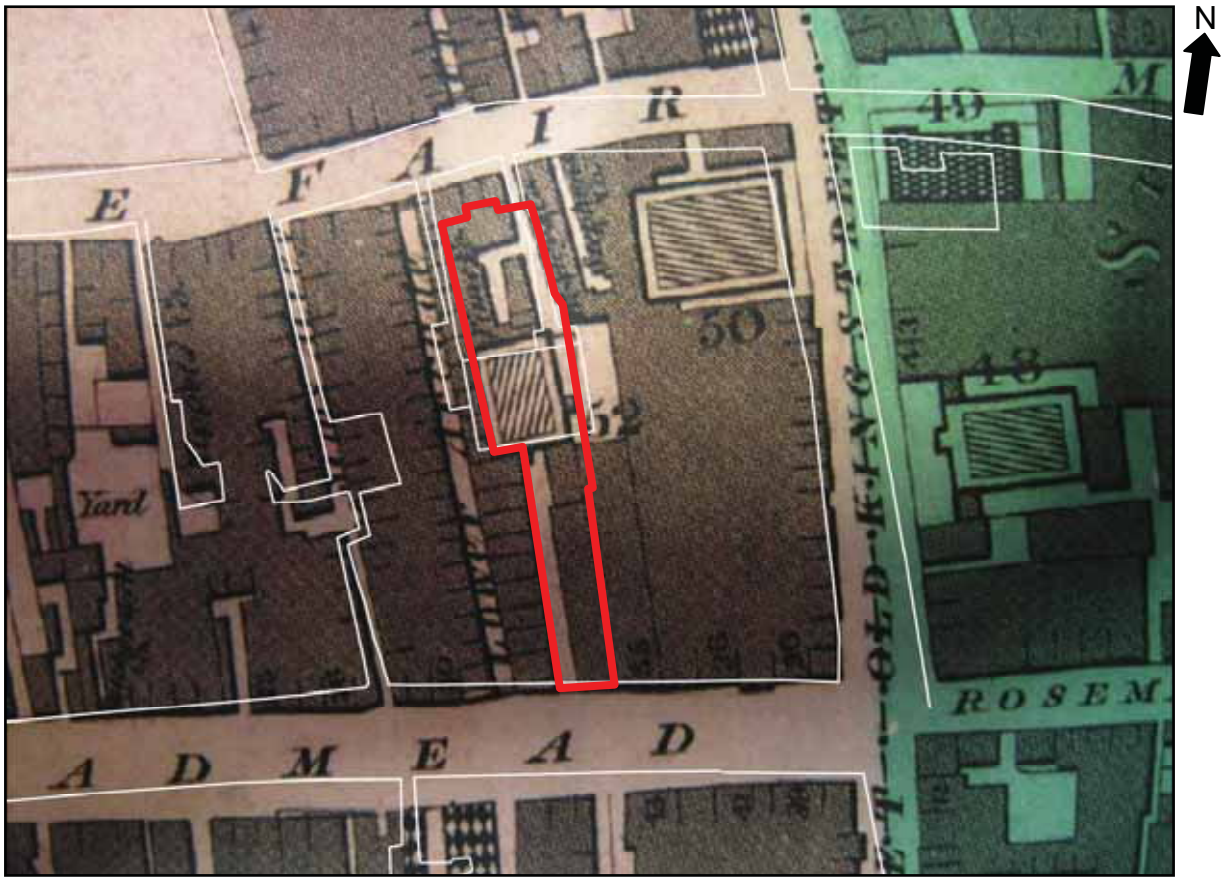


Figure 9

Extract from Ashmead's map of the city of Bristol, 1855. Sheet 60. Study site outlined in red. Not to scale. Reproduced by courtesy of City of Bristol Museums and Art Galleries.

Figure 10

Extract from Ashmead's map of the city of Bristol, 1874. Sheet 60. Study site outlined in red. Not to scale. Reproduced by courtesy of City of Bristol Museums and Art Galleries.

Figure 11

Extract from First Edition OS 1:500 Plan, Gloucestershire Sheet 71.16.20, surveyed 1882, published 1885. BRO. Study site outlined in red. Not to scale.

Figure 12

Extract from Goad Insurance Plan, date of base plan unknown but with selected amendments up to 1948. BRO 40904/1, Sheet 20. Study site outlined in red. Not to scale.

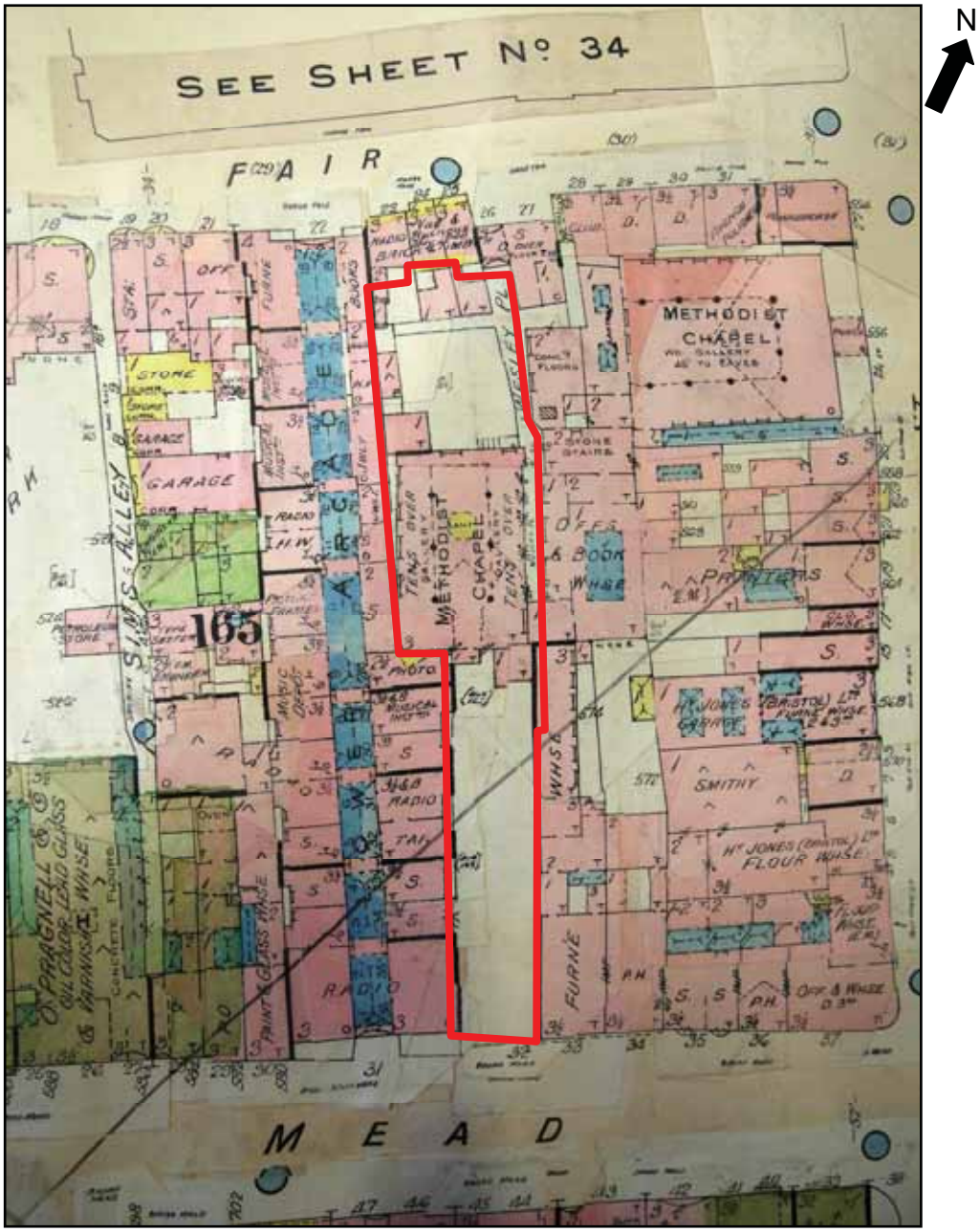


Figure 13

Extract from Goad Insurance Plan, date of base plan unknown but with selected amendments up to 1952. BRO 40904/1, Sheet 20. Study site outlined in red. Not to scale.

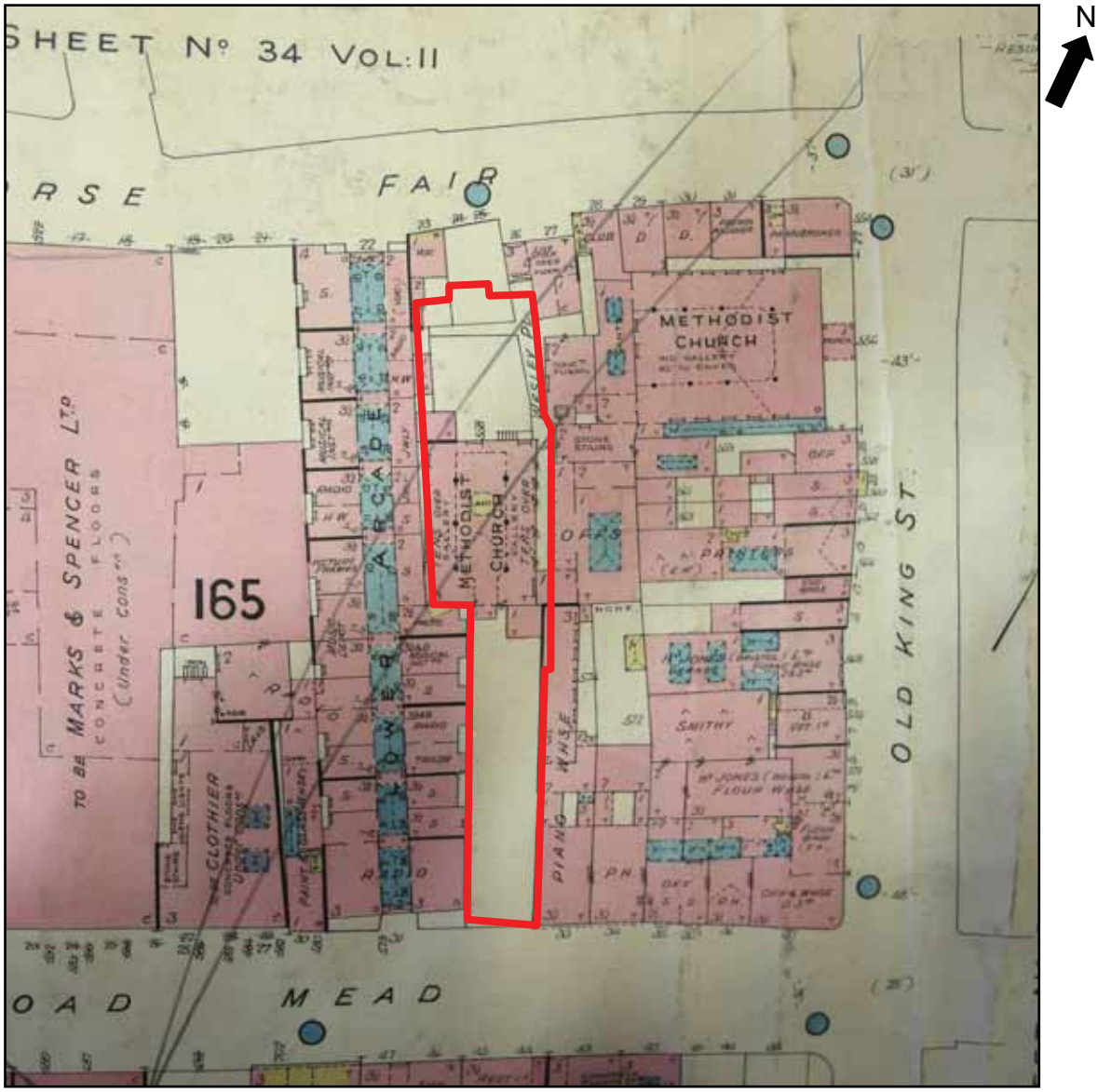


Figure 14

Extract from Goad Insurance Plan, date of base plan unknown but with selected amendments up to 1961. BRO 40904/1, Sheet 20. Study site outlined in red. Not to scale.

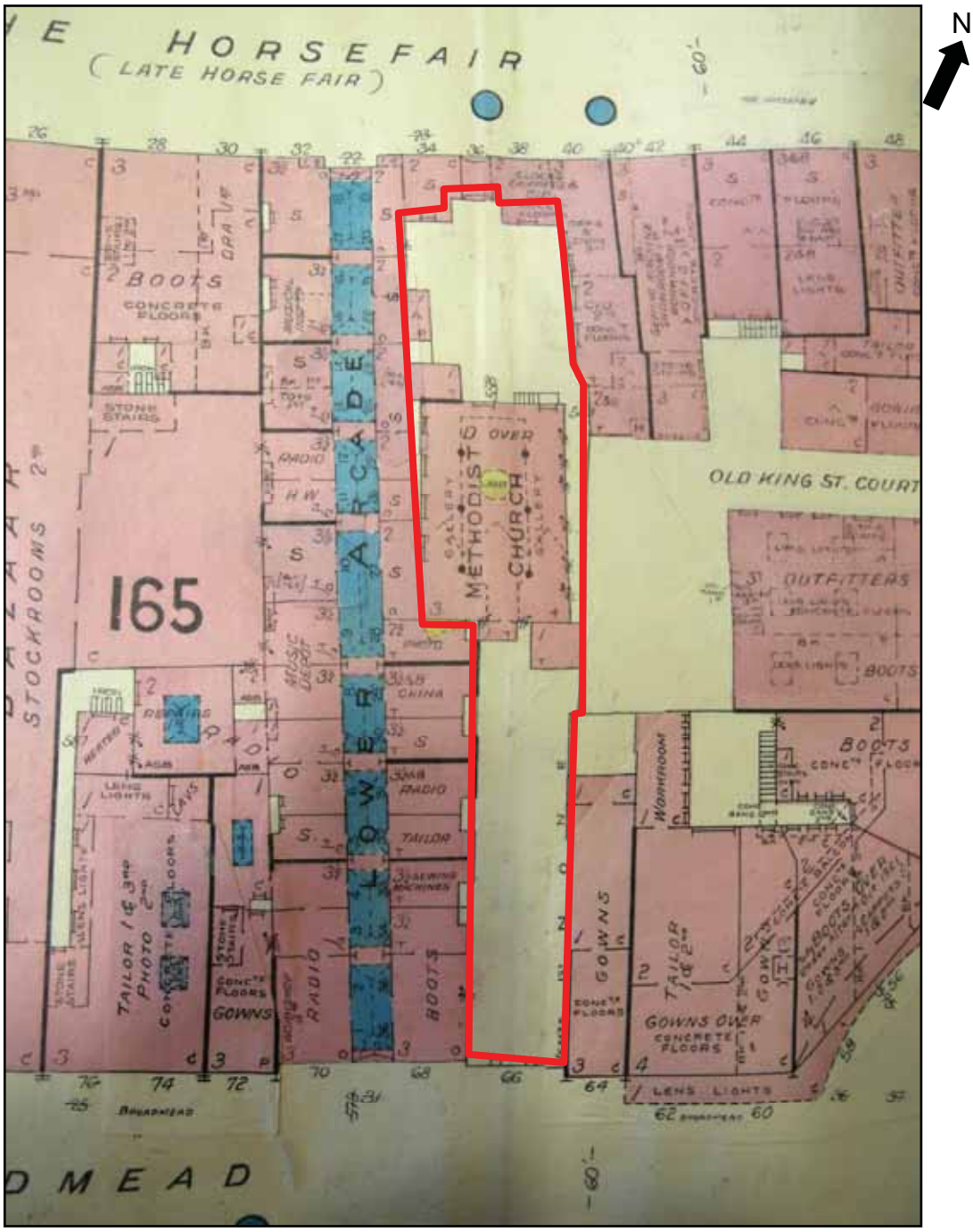
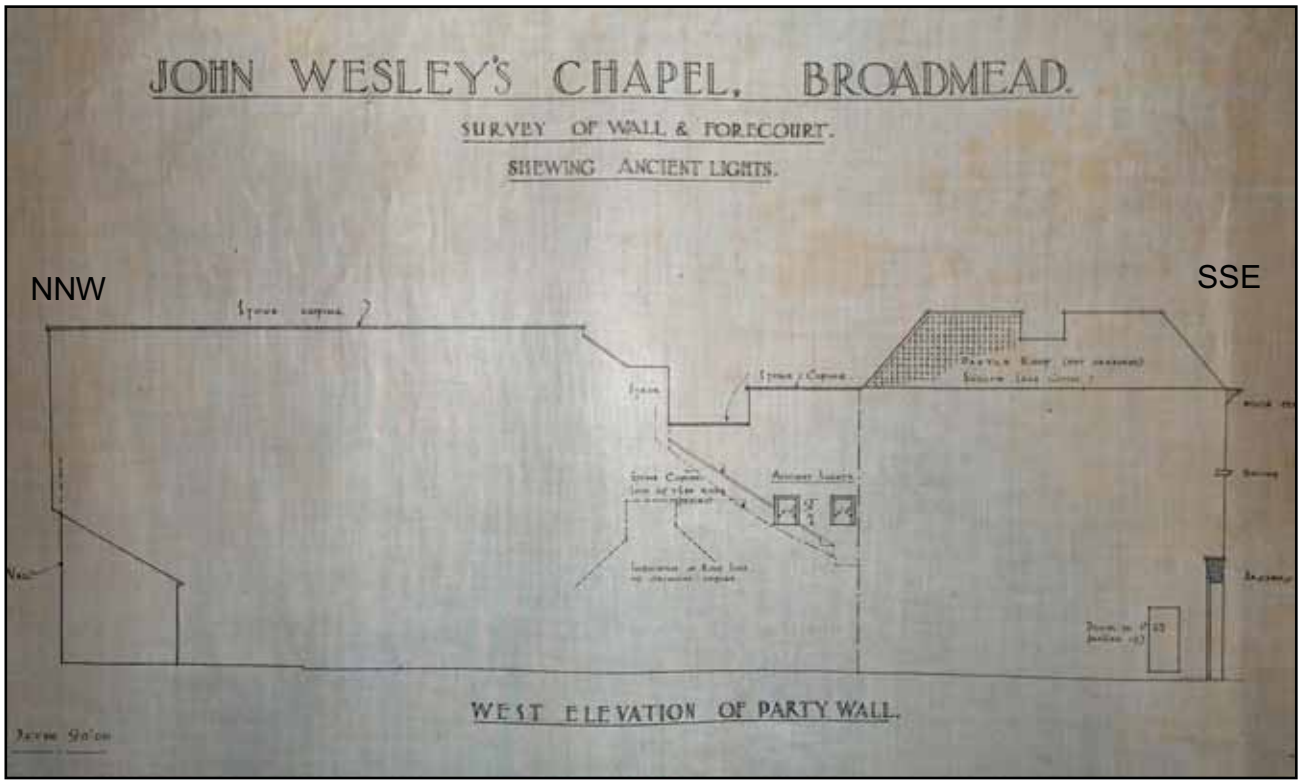


Figure 15

Survey of old 'lights' and remnant building traces in west-facing elevation of former party wall in the southern courtyard, now removed. George Oatley, architect, March 1939. NRA.

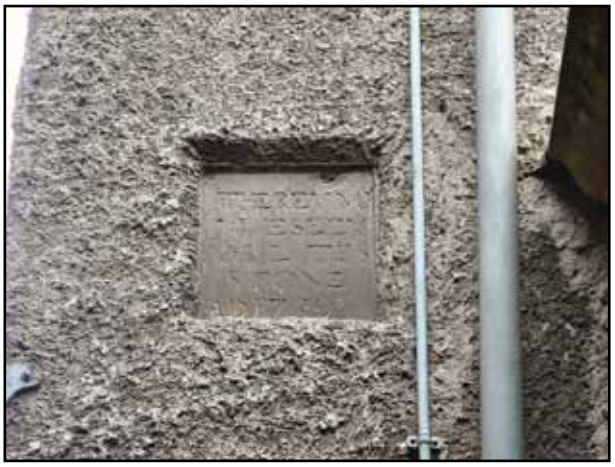


Plates

1. The small kitchen block attached to the NW corner of the chapel's northern wall, with cellar entrance beneath window. Note the stub wall marking its northern side, which may once have stretched the width of the northern courtyard, and marked the New Room's boundary with Pimm's Court beyond.

2. Vaulted brick cellar underneath the kitchen block. View to NNW.

3. The stable block attached to the SE corner of the chapel's southern wall; this is almost certainly not the original stable building. The narrow passage to the right of the stable links the northern and southern courtyards, and Broadmead to The Horsefair. View to NW.



4. The inscribed foundation stone of the New Room, almost certainly no longer in its original position, but now placed high up at the NE corner of the northern wall. It seems to read: "The Rev M: J: Weseey [*sic*] MA [or AM] L[ai]d this stone 1739". Note the depth of the concrete render as revealed by the insetting of the stone into the underlying fabric of the wall.