

# The Former Harris Warehouse Building, Farr's Lane, Bristol

## Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment



on behalf of

**Farr's Lane Developments  
Limited**

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

Bristol: June 2012

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Frontispiece: part of the roof structure, which is probably original, within one of the surviving historic warehouse units of the Harris building.

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## ABSTRACT

*Avon Archaeological Unit Limited was commissioned by Farris Lane Developments Limited to undertake an archaeological desk-based assessment of a site occupied by a warehouse belonging to the company of Harris and Co., on the southern side of Farr's Lane, off the eastern side of Narrow Quay, Bristol.*

*The site, centred on NGR ST 58594 72491, is rectangular in shape, with its long axis aligned WNW/ESE. It is bounded on its northern side by Farr's Lane, to its south by the main Bristol Youth Hostel, to the west by Narrow Quay, and to the east by another commercial building fronting onto Prince Street. The ground floor footprint of the plot representing the study site occupies a total of roughly 345m<sup>2</sup>. There are no statutory designations, of any description, affecting the study area itself, although it falls within the City and Queen Square Conservation Area, and the surviving stone-built westernmost half of the building fronting onto Narrow Quay, is described in the relevant Conservation Area Character Appraisal as an "unlisted building of merit".*

*The site on which the warehouse stands was until at least the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, completely undeveloped, and was a part of the so-called Marsh, an area of low-lying ground forming a peninsula at the confluence of the River Frome to the west, and the Avon to the east. Further to the north, towards the northern ends of Narrow Quay and Prince Street, substantial stone-built dock walls of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> date were excavated on the site of the former Co-Op building; and at Dundas Wharf, just under half a km away to the NE, on the E bank of the former course of the Avon just below Bristol Bridge, an important sequence of medieval wharves, some of them perhaps of pre-Conquest date, and complete with timber structural work, have been located. Early maps indicate that the banks of both the Frome and the Avon close to the city were lined with mud docks and stranding areas in the post-medieval period.*

*By the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, a bowling green had been established on the marsh, and there were buildings in irregular, intermittent blocks on the Narrow Quay frontage, which by the early 18<sup>th</sup> century was heavily built up. The construction of Queen Square itself from about 1700, resulted in the total reclamation of The Marsh, which thereafter ceased to exist, although the study site itself at around that time appears still to have lain open, and was perhaps used as a shipbuilding yard. The earliest certain evidence of the existence of the warehouse building itself comes from the late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when it is seen to be a three-storey structure in multiple occupation, and consisting of four smaller units towards the west, and a larger unit, subdivided into two, at the eastern end. The date of the surviving part of the original warehouse cannot be earlier than 1710, and is likely to be considerably later. Documentary evidence suggests that the firm of Harris and Co., Rag Merchants, did not actually occupy the building until 1900, although it had by then been well-established, having previously held premises at Redcliffe Back, and prior to that in the Cathay district, not far from St Mary Redcliffe. The warehouse was badly damaged by a fire in the 1950s, resulting in the rebuilding of the rear (easternmost) two units. Only the westernmost two units represent the original stone structure.*

*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

Avon Archaeological Unit Limited wishes to acknowledge the assistance given by the following in the production of this report: Julian Nuttall of SRC Management; Peter Insole, HER Officer for Bristol City Council; Roger Bareham, of Hydrock Structures 1; the staff of the Bristol Record Office; and Mr Brian Harris, a direct descendant of the original founder of Harris and Co.

## 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

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Avon Archaeological Unit Limited was commissioned by Farr's Lane Developments Limited to undertake an archaeological desk-based assessment on the site of the former Harris and Co. warehouse at Farr's Lane, Narrow Quay, Bristol. The site, centred on NGR ST 58594 72491, is rectangular in shape, with its long axis aligned WNW/ESE. It is bounded on its northern side by Farr's Lane, to its south by the main Bristol Youth Hostel, to the west by Narrow Quay, and to the east by another commercial building fronting onto Prince Street (**Figures 1 and 2**). The ground floor footprint of the plot representing the study site occupies a total of roughly 345m<sup>2</sup>. There are no statutory designations, of any description, affecting the study area itself, although it falls within the City and Queen Square Conservation Area, and the surviving stone-built westernmost half of the building fronting onto Narrow Quay, is described in the relevant Conservation Area Character Appraisal as an "unlisted building of merit" (CACA 2009). It is proposed to use the building for conversion, under a variety of possible options, to retail space at ground floor level, and a small number of residential units on the upper floors; at the time of writing, some 13 of the latter form the core of the residential element of the plan.

The building as originally constructed, and as contemporary records show, represented the northern end of a block of warehouses and workshops which extended further to the south, and which are shown on plans of Bristol Corporation property of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The part of this complex which came ultimately to be occupied by Harris and Co, and which represents the modern study site, consisted originally of four smaller units of three storeys towards the western end, and on the southern side of Farr's Lane. Eastwards, towards the Prince Street end of the site, there was also a larger unit, not occupied by Harris, which was split into two premises. Harris and Co. occupied two of the four smaller units from 1900 onwards, and had expanded into the other two probably between 1930 and 1952. The two easternmost units were destroyed by fire in the 1950s and were rebuilt, leaving only the two westernmost units of the original stone building in place. The study site consists therefore of both modern, and original historic elements. At the time of writing, the entire study site is unoccupied.


There are several buildings of historic significance in the immediate vicinity, as well as the major surviving historic landscape of Queen Square itself. Previous archaeological exploration in the vicinity, most notably at Dundas Wharf at the northern end of Redcliffe Street, about 450m NE of the study site, has revealed a complex of medieval wharves, at least of early 12<sup>th</sup> century date, which are certainly of regional, and possibly even of national importance. The study site is, therefore, in an area with already well-proven archaeological potential.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

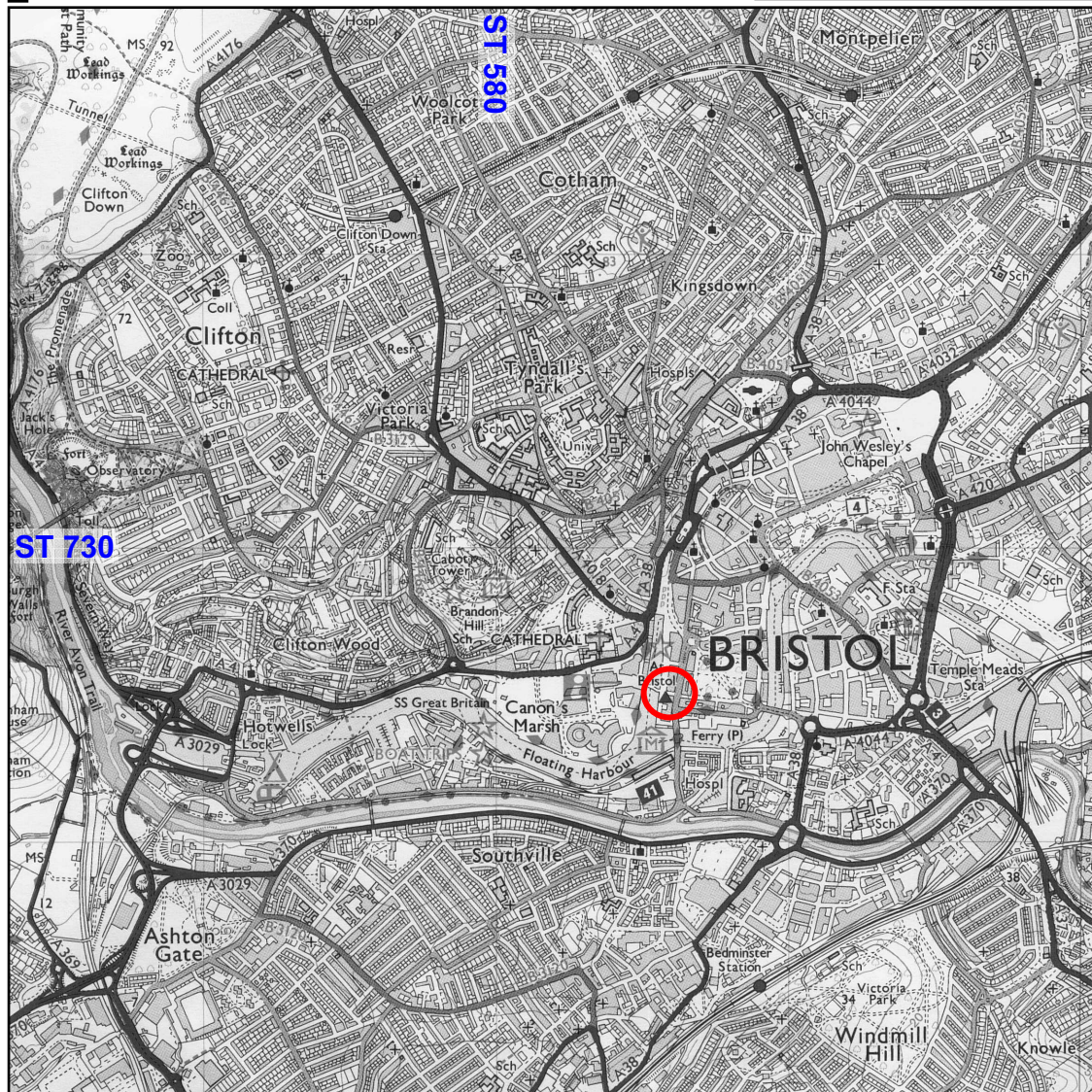
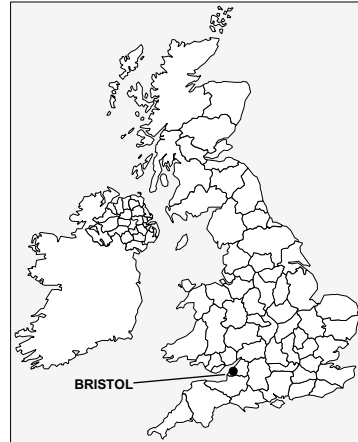
Searches were made of the indices of the collections of the Bristol Record Office, the Bristol City Library, and the University of Bristol Library. Some of the historic maps reproduced here were consulted at the City of Bristol Museum

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.



Scale 1:25000

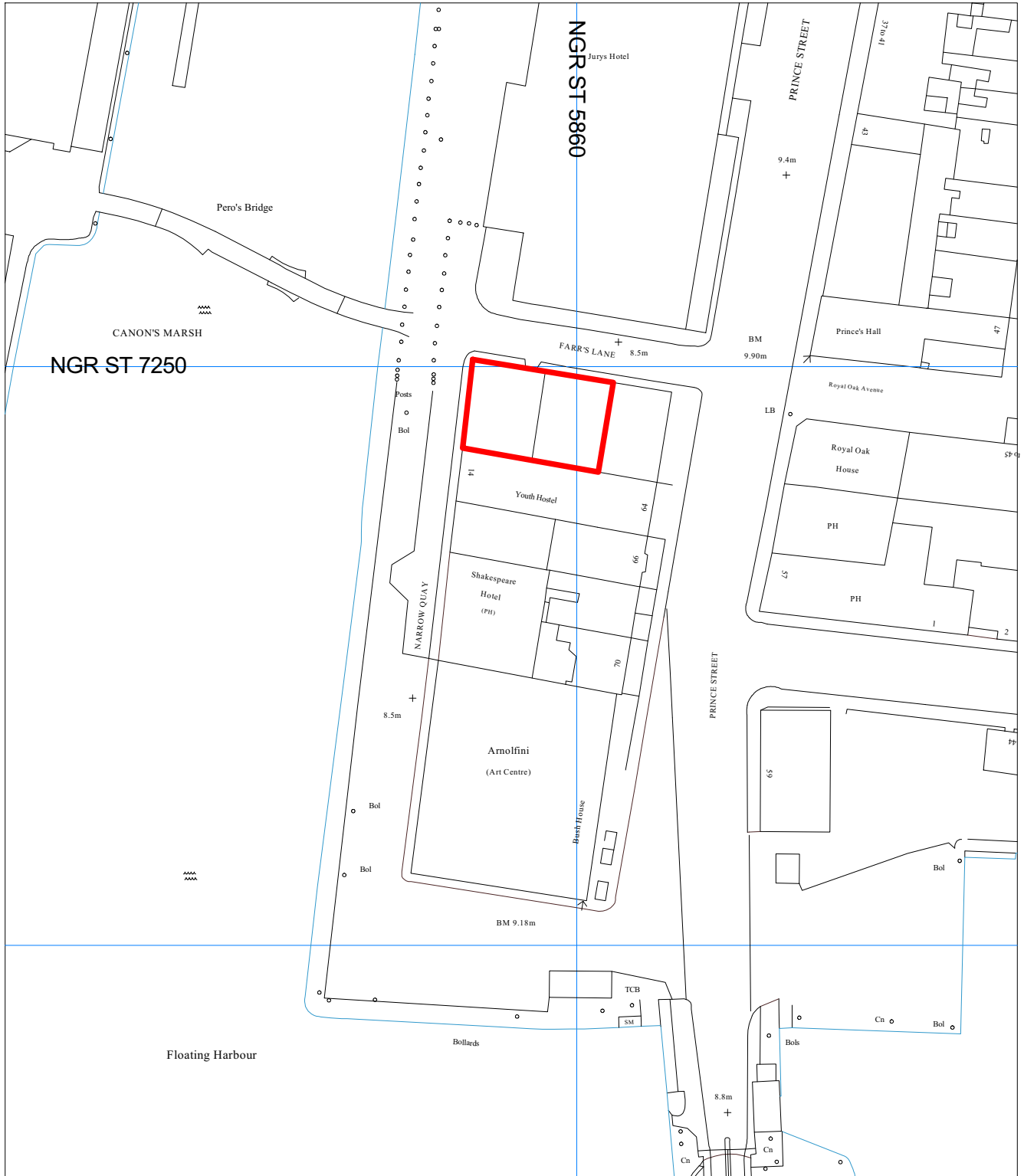
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Figure 2



Site Location Plan and Boundary of the Study Area



0 50m

and Art Gallery. 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<sup>1</sup>. In addition, a trawl of the local authority HER was carried out on behalf of AAU by Peter Insole, HER Officer for 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 Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2012, and a digital photographic record was made (**Cover**, **Frontispiece** and **Plates 1 to 7**).

### 3 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

Perhaps not surprisingly, the geological basis of the study site itself, sitting as it does at the confluence of two rivers, one of them tidal, consists of tidal flat and riverine alluvial deposits, the existence of which gave rise to the so-called Marsh from which Queen Square was eventually carved. The alluvium itself is, however, underlain by rock strata, consisting of the Redcliffe Sandstone series of Triassic age, which lie unconformably on sandstones and mudstones of Late Carboniferous age (BGS). In terms of its local topography, the site is effectively level, with, if anything, a very slight upward slope to the east. On the pavements around the building on the Narrow Quay frontage, heights centring around 8.20m aOD are recorded, and these rise to around 9m aOD at the eastern entrance to Farr's Lane, over a distance of about 40m. To all intents and purposes, therefore, the local gradient is negligible.

### 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup> [www.copac.ac.uk](http://www.copac.ac.uk); [www.biab.ac.uk](http://www.biab.ac.uk); <http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/>;  
[www.scholar.google.com](http://www.scholar.google.com)

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 11<sup>th</sup> century, is testimony itself to its importance as a centre of trade 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 11<sup>th</sup> 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 11<sup>th</sup> century (Moore 1982)<sup>2</sup>.

The construction of Bristol castle probably from the late 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and then through successive rebuildings and expansions well into the 14<sup>th</sup> 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 11<sup>th</sup> century, and completed around the mid-13<sup>th</sup> 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 interventions, and chance

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<sup>2</sup> 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>

observations, over many years (Sivier 2002, 82-99)<sup>3</sup>. 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, although it is also clear from the archaeological investigations carried out at Dundas Wharf (see further below, **Archaeological Background**), that at least in parts of the waterfront areas close to the town centre, substantial dock construction works were under way by the early 12<sup>th</sup> century at the latest, using large structural timbers, some of which seem certainly to have come from sources representing woodland which was growing in the late Anglo-Saxon period (Sivier 2002, 135-142). Historically, this part of Bristol lay in the parish of St Stephen. This church appears to have been founded at least by the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century (Lobel and Johns 1975, 6, n41), but the extent of its parish at that date is problematic. It is not generally noted that the *western* side of the historic parish boundary as it emerges in the medieval period follows the arm of the River Frome which at its southern end runs SSW/NNE as it discharges into the river Avon, the confluence forming the SW corner of the 'Marsh' peninsula. But at this end of its course, the Frome has been in this position only since the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century, when a major project was undertaken to divert it from its original course, by which it met the western bank of the Avon at a position roughly halfway between the eastern ends of the modern Baldwin and King Streets (Lobel and Johns 1975, 7, and Map 7). By definition therefore, the western arm of the St Stephen's parish boundary can date *only* from the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century, so that it must either have been re-positioned from a different alignment, or was only newly-established at that date, the latter of which seems inherently unlikely. The eastern boundary in this area, which divides the parishes of St Stephen's to the west, and St Nicholas to the east, runs pretty much north-south, through the middle of the Marsh, and out to the middle of the Avon, which forms a common boundary for many of the central Bristol parishes (Lobel and Johns 1975, Map 8)<sup>4</sup>. This raises the question of where the St Stephen's boundary lay before the course of the Frome was altered, but in any event it is possible that this arrangement was related to the equal division of early parochial rights in the Marsh, perhaps for grazing stints for stock such as sheep and cattle; it is likely that the Marsh was merely one of a series of extramural meadows which were used for this purpose, and some of which may have sustained some woodland<sup>5</sup>.

In the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Marsh seems still to have been completely open and undeveloped, but a century later, its northern side was lined with houses outside (ie immediately to the south of) the course of the city wall, the line of King Street had been established, and the waterfront area on the eastern bank of the Frome, now called Narrow Quay, was also being built up with houses. Also, a bowling green occupied the SW corner of the marsh by that date, having

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<sup>3</sup>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.

<sup>4</sup>Large-scale historic OS maps indicate that marks showing the line of the St Stephen/St Nicholas parish boundary through Queen Square, were inscribed on the stonework of the small enclosure originally surrounding the early 18<sup>th</sup> century equestrian statue of William III which forms the central focus of the square. The enclosure has long since been removed.

<sup>5</sup> Palaeoenvironmental evidence suggests that this certainly seems to have been the case, for example, at Lewins Mead, on the northern side of the city; Sivier 2002, 135.

probably been established in the period immediately after the Civil War, and the little house and its associated outbuildings that were attached to it, seem to have represented among the very first, permanent, residential occupation of the Marsh (although see below, **Historic Map Evidence**, for houses depicted on the Marsh in 1581). A grant of 1687 describes the site as

All that plot or p[ar]cell of ground and bowling greene heretofore taken out of the marsh.....and the dwelling house lodge stable and other buildings thereon erected and built as the same are inclosed in with [a] stone wall.....(BRO 00948/1)<sup>6</sup>.

The area of the study site itself seems not, however, to have been built on at this date, but rather may have been used for shipbuilding. The construction of Queen Square between about 1700 and 1727 was made possible only by a massive project involving the wholesale reclamation of the Marsh (Foyle 2004, 161-165). While development on this scale must inevitably have had some knock-on effect in its immediate environs, it is clear that by the very early years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, most of the southern end of Narrow Quay had already become almost fully developed, although by that date, the map evidence still suggests that the study site itself functioned as open and undeveloped shipyards. By the middle of the century, however, the entire block of which the study site is part, that is, southwards from Farr's Lane to the Avon/Frome confluence, was built up. It is certainly possible that the warehouse of which only the western units now survive, dates from the second quarter of the century; maps of this time *appear* to show that the land fronting onto the western side of Prince St, for virtually its entire length, was occupied by houses, with what appear to be open plots stretching behind (ie to the west), all the way down to the Frome waterfront. But this cannot have been the case, because the quayside area would certainly have needed the usual wharfage and warehousing facilities that one would expect of a busy port.

It is striking that none of the early small scale maps note Farr's Lane by name, although its existence is apparent at least as early as 1742, as a narrow passage from Prince Street through to Narrow Quay, running between the southernmost block on Narrow Quay, and its neighbour immediately to the north. It seems first to receive formal cartographic recognition only in 1828, and its first appearance in the Bristol directory comes only in 1835 (Matthews 1835, 7); but it had been named at least as early as 1794, since it appears in Bristol leases of that date (BRO 795/1 and 2). The warehouse which is the subject of this report seems certainly to have been built by 1800 at the latest, as it appears in various of the Bristol Corporation Plan Books of around that date, and these indeed represent the first large-scale depictions of the various floor plans, although they consist only of wall outlines, and there is no internal detail (BRO Bristol Corporation Plan Book B)<sup>7</sup> (for this whole paragraph, see below, **Early Map Evidence**). A lease of 1794 seems very likely to refer to *one* of the four

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<sup>6</sup> The Marsh bowling green is noted on the Bristol HER as record 675M.

<sup>7</sup> It is very fortunate that the land on which the warehouse was constructed belonged to the Corporation, which is why the site is included in the Plan Books. Dating, however, is problematic, as many of the *individual* plans are undated, and this can usually only be done in relation to other, dated plans in the same volume, which is not always possible.

units which later came to comprise the entire Harris property on Farr's Lane, given the measurements involved, and most particularly the width of the unit which is specified:

.....All that the said warehouse with the lofts over the same, situate in the said avenue leading from Prince Street to the Key, called Farr's Lane.....now in the possession of Messrs. Bush Elton and Bush Hoopers, and contains in Front next the said lane seventeen feet and five Inches, and in depth backwards from the said lane to a messuage in the possession of Samuel Span Esquire, Fifty feet and nine Inches, bounded on the east by a messuage or tenement in the possession of Ashfield Hunt, Mariner, and on the west by other warehouses and lofts in the possession of the said Messrs Bush Elton and Bush together.....(BRO 795/1).

The various editions of the Bristol directories record the company's trade as 'rag merchants', and it is quite clear that the firm's close association with various harbourside locations, springs directly from its primary business, which was the recycling of sailcloth and ships' rope<sup>8</sup>.

While there is no record of Harris and Co under that trade before the directory of 1864, and no indication of any obvious predecessor concern, this of course should not be taken to demonstrate that it had not been operating before then; and indeed the company itself claimed a foundation date of 1855. As far as the directories are concerned however, it first appears in that year, as plain "S J Harris", occupying premises on Redcliffe Back (Matthews 1864, 349). The company apparently remained at Redcliffe Back until 1888 (Wright 1888, 427), and in the following year, 1889, were listed as occupying premises in Harford Street, in the Cathay district of the city not far to the SE of St Mary Redcliffe church (Wright 1889, 436)<sup>9</sup>. The firm did not, however, stay long at Harford St, its last occupation there being recorded in 1892 (Wright 1892, 503), and in 1893, it was in premises listed only as being at "Narrow Quay" (Wright 1893, 520). It is *possible* that this may indeed be a reference to the Farr's Lane premises, which seems often to have been referred to as Farr's Lane "off Narrow Quay"<sup>10</sup>.

However, there is an indenture in the Bristol Record Office which seems strongly to suggest that Harris did not take formal possession of the Farr's Lane building until 1900 (BRO 1671/3b). In that year, Samuel John Harris received from one Stewart Fripp the rights to a warehouse which Fripp himself had, in his turn, received some seven years earlier, in 1893, from the Corporation of Bristol. The premises themselves are described in the indenture as

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<sup>8</sup> I am very grateful to Mr Brian Harris for his guidance on this point. Mr Harris further advised that in the case of any future, more detailed documentary work that may be necessary on the history of the company's occupancy of the Farr's Lane warehouse, a series of private deeds survives, and is held by the estate agents retained by the present Harris family.

<sup>9</sup> Harford St no longer exists. It ran SE/NW, its southern end forming a junction with Clarence Road, which follows the north bank of the Avon at this point; its line is now covered by the modern Cartwright Building, and the St Mary Redcliffe and Temple C of E School. The northern end of the street lay a little south of the SE side of the modern Somerset Square.

<sup>10</sup> Indeed well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the company referred to its Farr's Lane premises in these terms; see BRO 43207/35/2/7. This is a company enquiry card to a supplier of raw materials, dated 1939, with part of the printed letterhead proclaiming that Harris and Co was "Established 1855".

All those two warehouses and premises situate on the south side of an avenue leading from Prince Street to the Quay called Farris Lane.....then [ie in 1893] in the occupation of Richard Henry Lambert Merchant and containing in front next the said avenue thirty-nine feet or thereabouts and in depth backwards from the said avenue fifty-one feet or thereabouts which said premises thereby demised were more particularly delineated in the plan endorsed thereon and therein colored [sic] pink were demised unto the Vendor [ie Stewart Fripp] for the term of forty years from the twenty-fourth day of June one thousand eight hundred and ninety-two.....

In the preamble to this document Harris is explicitly called “the purchaser”, and is described as being of “Narrow Quay”. Note, however, that the sale bargain involves only *two* warehouses, and *not* the four of which the company was later possessed; the much earlier Corporation Plan Books show that the internal widths of the three rear warehouses were measured at just over 17ft (5.2m), while the unit on the Narrow Quay frontage was 19ft (5.8m) wide; however, the ‘depth’ as given in the Plan Books, backwards from Farr’s Lane, at 50ft 9in, was the same for all four units and ties in very well with the 51ft (15.6m), depth as given in the 1900 indenture. This suggests that they certainly, and the easternmost much larger fifth unit possibly, were all constructed as a single entity. One would not, anyway, expect an exact correlation, but either way the measurements clearly show that in 1900 Harris was acquiring only two of the four units which the company clearly had later; and in fact it is clear from a plan attached to the lease of 1893 that it was the warehouses formerly numbered 1 and 2 (ie the easternmost block of the four units) that Harris initially took over, and subsequent map evidence further proves that the two westernmost units, 3 and 4, were not added to the Harris premises until after 1930<sup>11</sup> (see further below, **Historic Map Evidence**).

## 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 Bristol City Council 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 the local authority. 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.

Having said this, it is extremely important to note that one of the most significant archaeological discoveries which has a bearing on the present work, occurred on a site which falls strictly *outside* the HER sweep, but the findings of which have potentially far-reaching implications for present purposes, which cannot be ignored. The work carried out in the early 1980s at Dundas Wharf, on the east

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<sup>11</sup> One may further wonder, in this respect, whether it is entirely coincidence that the date of the earlier indenture by which Stewart Fripp acquired two warehouses from the Corporation, in 1893, seems exactly to tie in with that at which Harris and Co first appear on Narrow Quay; but far more detailed research than would be appropriate for present purposes would be required to address this question. The evidence of the Corporation Plan Books is dealt with in more detail below, **Historic Map Evidence**.

bank of the Avon 150m south of Bristol Bridge, has already been noted, and the main technical accounts are to be found in Nicholson and Hillam 1987, and Good 1991. The main findings from the site are conveniently summarised by Sivier:

While the pottery finds.....suggested the late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century, the dates obtained from the tree rings were considerably earlier. From these, the earliest structure, a post-pit, was built around 1123-33.....some of the oak used may even have been considerably older. The last ring on one sample.....dates from 1050, indicating that it was felled some time after 1060, while that of another.....similarly dates from 1066.....several of the samples of wood taken from Dundas Wharf show signs of re-use from earlier, possibly more prestigious structures, so it is indeed quite possible that the wood in some of the early 12<sup>th</sup> century revetments may well have come from timber felled perhaps 60 years or so earlier. It now appears that the early twelfth century saw the construction of timber revetments along large sections of the Redcliffe riverbank (Sivier 2002, 135-136).

While the Dundas Wharf site is some 450m away from Farr's Lane, nonetheless, the waterfront nature of *both* sites should invite comparison and give pause for thought, particularly since it is known that ships were being moored along at least the upper reaches of the Frome by the late 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>12</sup>.

The 100m radius HER trawl around the study site captured some 17 records in the 'monuments' category of the database, and these relate chiefly to buildings, sites or features considered to be of historic and/or architectural interest, whether listed or not, and also whether still standing or not; there are, anyway, none identified on the study site, and they therefore have little bearing on the *archaeological* implications of the proposed development, although of course the extant structures are extremely significant both in their own right, and for the contribution which they make to the general architectural rhythm of the built landscape in the immediate vicinity (CACA 2009)<sup>13</sup>.

There is rather more that is relevant in the 'events' category of the HER, relating to work that has actually been carried out in the area, of any description. 29 records of this type were recovered, most of which are irrelevant for present purposes since they do not deal with matters which may directly inform our understanding of the *archaeological* implications of the proposed development. For example, the closest record to the study site, HER3403, relates to the block which bounds the eastern end of the study site, and which forms the corner of Prince St and Farr's Lane. It deals with the discovery, in 1936, of a supposed 18<sup>th</sup> century wall-painting. It is unlikely that such a feature would turn up in the context of a highly functional and austere warehouse, although the possibility can never be discounted. Of rather more relevance is HER4074, a record of a watching brief carried out within the Arnolfini Gallery, formerly the Bush Warehouse, which lies less than 50m south of the study site. This found only 19<sup>th</sup> century wall footings and, from beneath them, part of a major structural timber from a ship. Another, earlier excavation in the same building carried out

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<sup>12</sup> William Smith's bird's eye view of the city in 1568, shows ships riding at anchor below the Frome Bridge and Frome Gate.

<sup>13</sup> And indeed, of the 17 records retrieved during the trawl, no fewer than nine relate to buildings or features which no longer exist.



in 1973, and to which HER437 refers, recorded only late post-medieval deposits and features, with no finds earlier than about 1730. These two records represent the only archaeological interventions on any scale that were recovered by the HER trawl.

It is, however, worth noting, that just outside the area of the trawl, a major excavation was carried out in 1978-79, on the site of the former Co-Op Building, at the northern end of Narrow Quay and only about 200m north of the study site in Farr's Lane. This work is noted on the HER as record 442, but is also fully published as Good 1987<sup>14</sup>. The work was in part prompted by unpublished observations made in the 1950s, when the Co-Op building was being extended, and it resulted in the identification, by the later campaign, of what were believed to be substantial, stone-built dock structures of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, which could be related to contemporary documentary evidence, and even, in the case of the earlier dock, with its use by a specific ship the name of which appears in the documentary record. It is not known whether structures of this date and nature extended as far south as the later Farr's Lane, but their existence at a location relatively close to the study site must give us pause that we should at least be open minded about the possibility of survival of similar features in its immediate vicinity.

It is worth adding that the construction of the new building after the fire of the mid 1950s will inevitably have had an impact on sub-surface levels, although since it occupies the footprint of the earlier warehouse, the extent of any additional damage caused in this respect, would be a matter for assessment. However, a large weighbridge installed on the ground floor of the new building (**Plate 2**) is likely to have required a fairly deep excavation at the time of its installation, and it is known that the entire footprint of unit 2 of the new build, and a small part of Unit 1, is underlain by a steel-reinforced concrete slab a total of some 5ft 6in (1.7m) thick, the laying of which would itself have required excavation<sup>15</sup>. There nonetheless remains the potential for preservation of *in situ* archaeological deposits beneath these modern intrusions.

## 6 HISTORIC MAP EVIDENCE

Apart from the usual run of large-scale Ordnance Survey maps, there is a range of historic manuscript maps and plans accessible in the Bristol Record Office and City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, which depict the study site, although the earlier maps are at relatively small scales and tend to be those well-known surveys which show the entire city of Bristol. This limits their usefulness somewhat, as some of the depictions are clearly rather schematic, but they nonetheless give a general impression of the approximate extent of development in the area of the study site. The earliest even partly useful map is Joris Hoefnagle's view of Bristol which is dated 1581, and which presents a

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<sup>14</sup> I am very grateful to Peter Insole for supplying me with additional information relating to this site outside the strict remit of the initial HER trawl.

<sup>15</sup> Contemporary plans and sections of the new build were very kindly supplied by Julian Nuttall of SRC Management. We are also very grateful to Roger Bareham of Hydrock Structures 1 for his detailed guidance on the exact structural nature of this foundation slab, and its likely depth.

semi-isometric perspective of the city. An extract from it, showing the area of the Marsh, is reproduced here as **Figure 3**. The Marsh is identified by name, and the line of the city wall is depicted, but the position of the study site as shown here, outlined in red, must be regarded as very approximate, as the positions of even the major features recorded, both relative to each other and in an absolute sense, are unlikely to be completely correct<sup>16</sup>. The map does, however, indicate that in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, apart from 'colonisation' by a few dwelling houses outside the walls, the Marsh was completely undeveloped.

Almost exactly a century later, in 1673, James Millerd produced a survey of the city which shows that, as already noted (see above, **Historical Background**), a bowling green, complete with its lodge house and ancillary buildings, had been established in the SW corner of the Marsh (**Figure 4**). In the intervening period, blocks of what are presumably houses and warehouses had also been established fronting the quay on the east side of the realigned River Frome, and the southern end of the quay, later, of course, known as Narrow Quay, is identified as a shipbuilding area by the depiction of an anchor, as, indeed, is the main area of the Marsh itself. However, the schematic nature of this map is such that it is not possible to be completely certain about the position of the study site within it, without reference to Millerd's later revision dating to about 1710 (**Figure 5**). This is far more helpful because by this date, Queen's Square had been laid out, building had extended around all four sides, and at least the line of Prince Street, although not identified by name, had been formally established, so that relative positions are far easier to judge. The part of the quay opposite (ie to the west of) Queen Square had by now become very built up, and included a small talsey or 'Corne Market' building, elevated on pillars with trading space beneath, and constructed, according to the map, in 1684. As with the earlier edition of the map, however, it seems as though the perspectives have been massively foreshortened, and the buildings shown on the quay are in fact much further to the north than we might judge from this view alone. Indeed, from the positions of the roads surrounding Queen Square, it is clear that the southern end of the quay, where the study site lies, remained open at this date, and its use is explicitly stated as 'Building Yards', now surrounded by a permanent boundary, and with an anchor showing that this was a shipbuilding yard.

John Rocque's map of the city of Bristol, dated 1742, in some respects actually contains rather less detail than the later Millerd, and its usefulness is therefore not all it could be (**Figure 6**). Rocque shows only that the entire eastern frontage of Prince Street was by this date built up, but shows no detail whatsoever to the west, on the Narrow Quay frontage; the latter must by now have been completely developed with warehousing and other dockside buildings, but Rocque shows only five amorphous blocks of buildings, decreasing in size from south to north; it *is* though, significant that a narrow passage in exactly the correct position to be the later Farr's Lane is depicted, and it is therefore perfectly possible that the study site buildings were in existence by this date; Rocque's map is, at least, the first survey about which it

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<sup>16</sup> The church of St Stephen, numbered 11, can be seen in its enclosure, just intruding into the frame.

is possible to be pretty certain about the position of the study site, since it is non-schematic and takes a conventional vertical perspective of the city. It is also worth adding that Rocque's appears to be the first survey which shows the quayside on the eastern bank of the Frome as a hard-edged line, with the title 'The Key' written along it at the southern end, and the passage that later became Farr's Lane framed between the two words. This suggests very strongly that a fully-operational, and probably structurally substantial dockside wall of some kind had indeed been established along the full length of Narrow Quay by the date of this map. This is in marked contrast to Rocque's depiction of the western bank of the Frome, where he uses stippling to depict what was still, presumably, merely an unreinforced mud bank or strand at this date.

It is only at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that we get confirmation that the study site warehouses were certainly in existence, in the form of plans bound up in the former Bristol Corporation's Plan Books, and held at the BRO<sup>17</sup>. Most of the material covering Farr's Lane that relates to the buildings on the study site, is in Plan Book B, which contains records covering the period 1791-1815. **Figures 7** and **8** show extracts from two of the several plans showing the later Harris warehouse, and they present, together, rentals, names of occupiers, and crucially, the sizes of the individual units. The plans confirm not only that, as later successors to the company of Bush, Elton and Bush, it was the two easternmost units which Harris later acquired, but also that as constructed, the warehouses were of three storeys – that is, a ground floor and two upper floors. As far as we can find, these plans represent the earliest surviving, large-scale depictions of the study site buildings.

Thereafter, throughout most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we are again thrown back on rather generic, small-scale map representations of the study site, all of which are well-known and well-used. The first of these is Plumley and Ashmead's map of the city of Bristol, the first edition of which was published in 1828, although John Plumley had begun the work many years earlier (**Figure 9**). Regrettably it tells us very little that we did not know already, and even property boundaries between adjacent premises are shown only as short, incomplete lines, and there is effectively no detail in the depiction of the properties themselves. In 1855, Ashmead alone published a revision of the earlier map, but again, detail is rather lacking; there has, though, been an improvement to the extent that the new survey distinguishes between industrial and commercial buildings, with a grey wash, and residential properties, in pink (**Figure 10**)<sup>18</sup>. It is noticeable that, with regard to the study site buildings themselves, the map does not show a subdivision between the two easternmost units, recording it as a single block, but this is presumably only intended to convey that the two units were, at that date, under single tenure. A final revision of Ashmead's map appeared in 1874, but it shows no change in the state or disposition of the study site buildings, or those immediately surrounding it, and so has not been reproduced here.

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<sup>17</sup> There are five Corporation Plan Books, A to E, and overwhelmingly they cover the period from 1791 to 1885.

<sup>18</sup> On the two later, larger-scale editions of the Ashmead map, the study site is split across two sheets: 67 (north) and 75 (south).

Less than ten years later, in 1885, the OS published the First Edition of its large scale, 1:500 plan, the survey for which had been carried out in 1883 (Bristol Sheet 75.4.4; **Figure 11**). The BRO copy of this plan series carries colour wash and a numbering system, clearly for identification purposes, but the significance of this has now been lost (BRO staff). The OS map, in fact, does not show any change to the study site from the Ashmead map of 1855, and although neither does it depict any internal detail, that was not its purpose. A major source for the study site comes, however, eight years later, in 1893, with a plan attached to a lease of that date by which a part of the warehouse passed from the Corporation into the tenancy of one Stewart Fripp (BRO 1671/3a). It was this same property which Samuel Harris subsequently acquired in 1900 (see above, **Historical Background**), and the plan, reproduced here as **Figure 12**, confirms, as already noted, that initially Harris occupied only the easternmost two units of the warehouse building.

There follow two editions of the relevant OS 1:2500 sheet (published in 1903 and 1918 respectively; Gloucestershire 75.4), which impart very little useful information, being self-evidently at too small a scale for a detailed examination at the level of individual buildings; again however, this was not their purpose. Far more useful for present purposes are two examples of the large-scale maps produced for the major English cities for insurance purposes by the London company of Charles Goad. The series held by the BRO run from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and carry revisions into the early 1960s, and two are of particular interest<sup>19</sup>. The plan reproduced here as **Figure 13** shows that in 1930, Harris and Co. still occupied only the two easternmost of the four units comprising the study site, that is, exactly those premises which it took over in 1900 and which were depicted on the plan attached to the lease of 1893 (BRO 35033/1, Sheet 10, 1930; and see **Figure 12**). The two westernmost units were occupied at that date by a company called James and Robert Bush, which may well have been the successor to Bush Elton and Bush who were recorded in the same premises in the late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Interestingly, the Goad plan identifies the two Harris units as three storey, the easternmost of the two Bush units as four storey, and the westernmost as three and a half storey. The Harris building is described as a 'Rag, Rope and Metal Warehouse', with an office on the first floor.

The second Goad plan shown here carries revisions *up to* 1961, but unfortunately the individual revisions are not always dated – as can be seen from **Figure 14**, slips of paper bearing the revised plan elements are merely pasted over the earlier document. However, note that the easternmost of the two study site units is now shown as 4=5 storeys, and the roof of this section of the building is described as 'steel truss'; so that this part of the map must have been revised *after* the fire of the mid 1950s, and the subsequent rebuilding<sup>20</sup>. All that can be said, then, is that at some point between 1930 and 1961, and in fact (from other internal evidence within the volume) *probably* between 1930 and

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<sup>19</sup> The Goad plans are bound into several large volumes at the BRO, with the references 35033, 40904 and 43885.

<sup>20</sup> The sign '=' in the Goad insurance plans indicates, as in this case, four full storeys and an attic or 'loft' storey above.

1952, Harris and Co. expanded to take over the two westernmost units as well, which were used, according to the plan, as a 'Sack Warehouse' (BRO 40904/1, Sheet 10, ?1952-1961). Although the dating is unfortunately rather 'elastic', the important point from these plans is that Harris and Co. did not come to occupy all of these four units until relatively late in its presence at Farr's Lane.

## 7 SITE VISIT

The **Cover, Frontispiece** and **Plates 1 to 7** represent part of a photographic record made by Andrew Young of AAU, and accompanied by the author, during a site visit conducted on Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2012<sup>21</sup>. The descriptive captions accompanying the plates will, it is hoped, be reasonably clear and self-explanatory; however, it will be worthwhile to make a few general observations. The internal construction of the two westernmost units, which together represent the only surviving elements of the original historic building, is massive. Extremely large wooden beams, some of them reinforced with iron plates, and many tied with large iron bolts, characterise many of the ceilings. It is possible that some of these features are reused ships' timbers. On the upper floors of units 1 and 2, which represent the modern rebuild of the original structure, the modern roof has been raised well above the level of the original, and the historic roofline of the Harris warehouse can be seen preserved in the northern wall of what is now the YHA building, adjacent to the south. An original window in this wall, presumably blocked up at the time of the rebuild, clearly belongs to that building, and probably represents its fourth storey. The YHA building, also originally a warehouse, was and is a five-storey structure and therefore still overtops the historic part of the Harris warehouse by some two storeys. Indeed, the Harris building contains many features of historic interest, and apart from those already cited, there are also tubular iron columns supporting some of the upper floors, although whether these are absolutely original must await closer inspection. The roof structures, however, do appear to be exactly as one might expect of an 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> industrial/commercial building, and are notable survivals. Throughout both parts of the historic building, there is also extensive survival of what is clearly original planking in both suspended floors and some partition walls, and the stone fabric of the walls in the surviving original units contain numerous blockings of earlier openings, both doorways and windows, some of which are visible on external elevations. At least one corner fireplace survives, although it is probably not an original feature.

## 8 CONCLUSIONS

The study site lies within the City and Queen Square Conservation Area, but none of the buildings which now occupy it are protected by statutory listing. The buildings on the site are in two parts, with the two westernmost units representing all that survives of a much larger, original warehouse, of unknown date, the easternmost half of which was destroyed by fire in the mid-1950s and

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<sup>21</sup> Proper viewing and photography of some of the internal spaces and features of the building was somewhat hindered by the lack of artificial lighting.

subsequently rebuilt. The study has found that the area now occupied by the study site was historically part of the Marsh, lying outside the southern side of the medieval city wall, between the Rivers Avon and Frome. At the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Marsh was effectively undeveloped, but encroachment by houses and warehouses on the Frome waterfront was already underway a century later, and by the early 18<sup>th</sup> century the Marsh had been fully reclaimed for the construction of Queen Square; however, although the Frome waterfront had become extensively built up by that time, it is likely that the study site remained as an open area used for shipbuilding. This had changed by the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, by which time the eastern bank of the Frome seems to have been lined with a well-defined, continuous dock wall or wharf, and a passage which can be identified as the later Farr's Lane had been established. Rather further to the north along Narrow Quay, on the site of the former Co-Op building, archaeological excavations in the late 1970s revealed substantial dock structures dating to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

It is possible that the warehouse building occupying the study site may date from this time, or shortly before. It was certainly in existence by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, when it is recorded in large scale plans drawn up by Bristol Corporation. The surviving element of the original building, comprising units 3 and 4, contains numerous, *in situ* historic features, and the fabric itself attests to a whole series of modifications, especially in terms of the blocking up of original openings, both doorways and windows. The company of Harris and Co. does not seem to have moved into the premises until the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and then only occupied the two easternmost units. They expanded into the westernmost units probably between 1930 and 1952, and a fire in the mid 1950s resulted in the destruction of the easternmost two units, and their subsequent rebuilding. This work may have caused damage to previously undisturbed sub-surface deposits, but this is speculation.

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. Advice from the commissioning client states that in accordance with the NPPF, there will be minimal impact to the heritage asset and where this is unavoidable, a detailed record of the archaeological asset will be provided.

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**1581**

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**1673**

Map of the City of Bristol by James Millerd

**1710**

Map of the City of Bristol by James Millerd

**1742**

Map of the City of Bristol by John Rocque

**Bristol Record Office**

**1687**

Grant of Marsh bowling green, associated lodge house and ancillary buildings, 00948/1.

**1794**

Lease of one of the warehouse units on Farr's Lane, 795/1.



**Late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century**

Corporation Plan Books (various, but mainly Plan Book B)

**1828**

Plumley and Ashmead's Map of the City of Bristol

**1855**

Ashmead's Map of the City of Bristol, Sheets 67 (north) and 75 (south)

**1874**

Ashmead's Map of the City of Bristol, same sheet numbers

**1883**

First Edition OS 1:500 Plan, Bristol Sheet 75.4.4, published 1885

**1893**

Leasing agreement between Stewart Fripp and City and Corporation of Bristol for part of Farr's Lane Warehouse (units 1 and 2), with plan attached, 1671/3a.

**1900**

Indenture, transferring Farr's Lane warehouse units 1 and 2 from Stewart Fripp to Samuel John Harris, 1671/3b.

**1902**

Second Edition OS 1:2500 map, Gloucestershire Sheet 75.4, published 1903.

**1912**

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## Figures

Figure 3

Extract from map of the city of Bristol by Joris Hoefnagle, 1581. By courtesy of Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery. Area of study site shown here, outlined in red, is highly approximate and purely indicative. Not to scale.



Figure 4

Extract from map of the city of Bristol by James Millerd, 1673. By courtesy of Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery. Area of study site shown here, outlined in red, is approximate, and represents best fit to this survey. Not to scale.

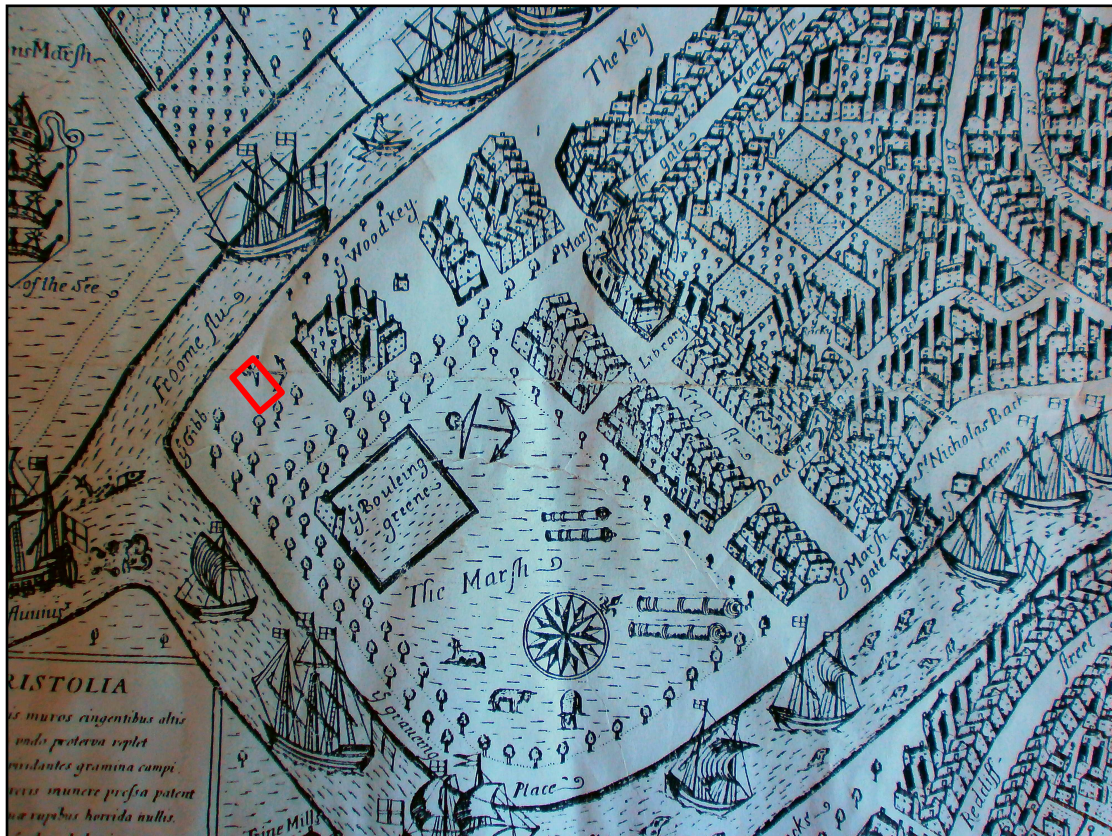


Figure 5

Extract from map of the city of Bristol by James Millerd, c.1710. By courtesy of Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery. Area of study site shown here, outlined in red, is approximate, and represents best fit to this survey. Not to scale.



Figure 6

Extract from map of the city of Bristol by John Rocque, 1742. By courtesy of Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery. Area of study site shown outlined in red, best fit to this survey. Not to scale.

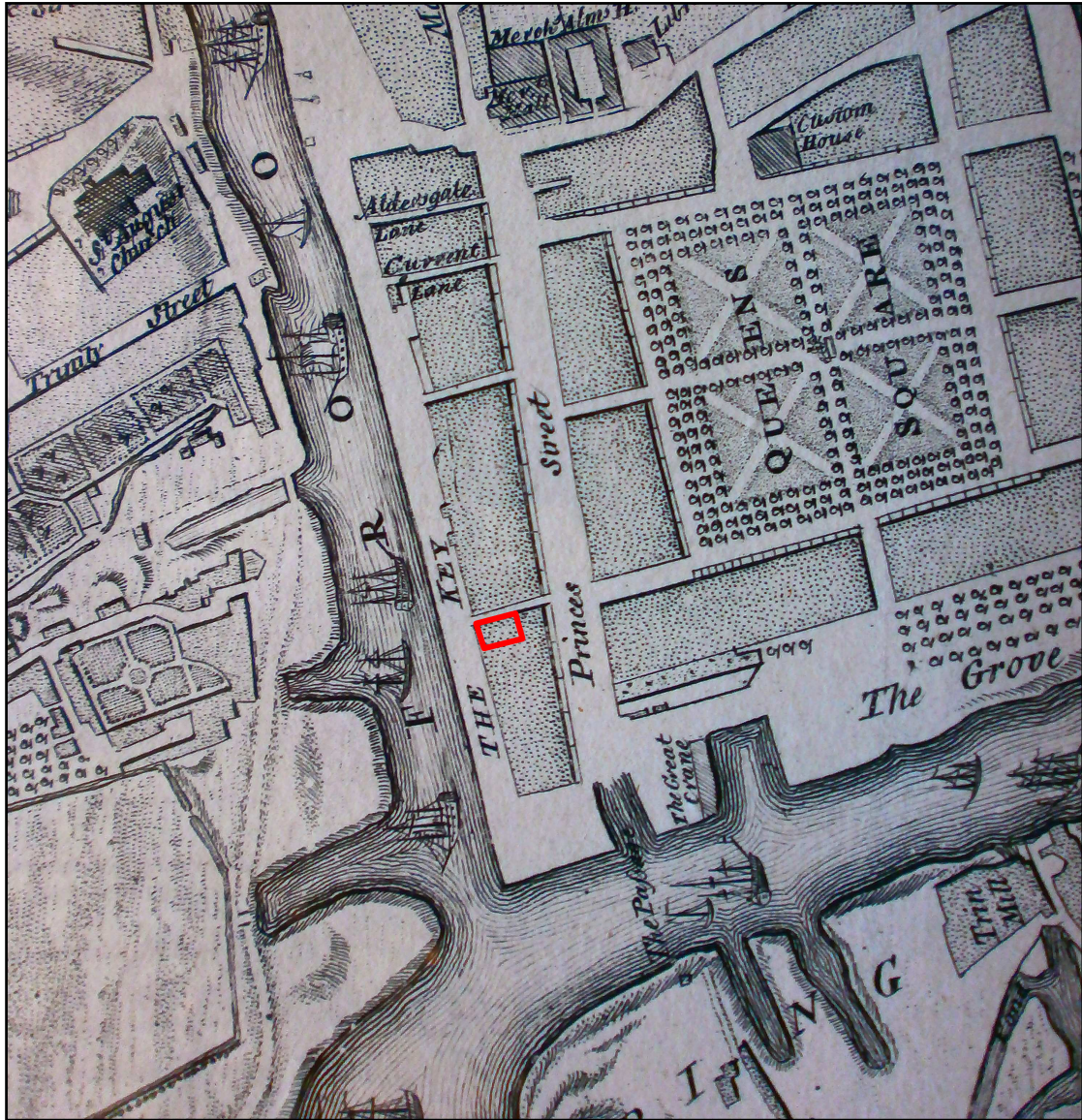


Figure 7

Extract from Bristol Corporation Plan Book B, f.22a, late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century, showing dimensions of properties. BRO. Study site outlined in red. Not to scale.

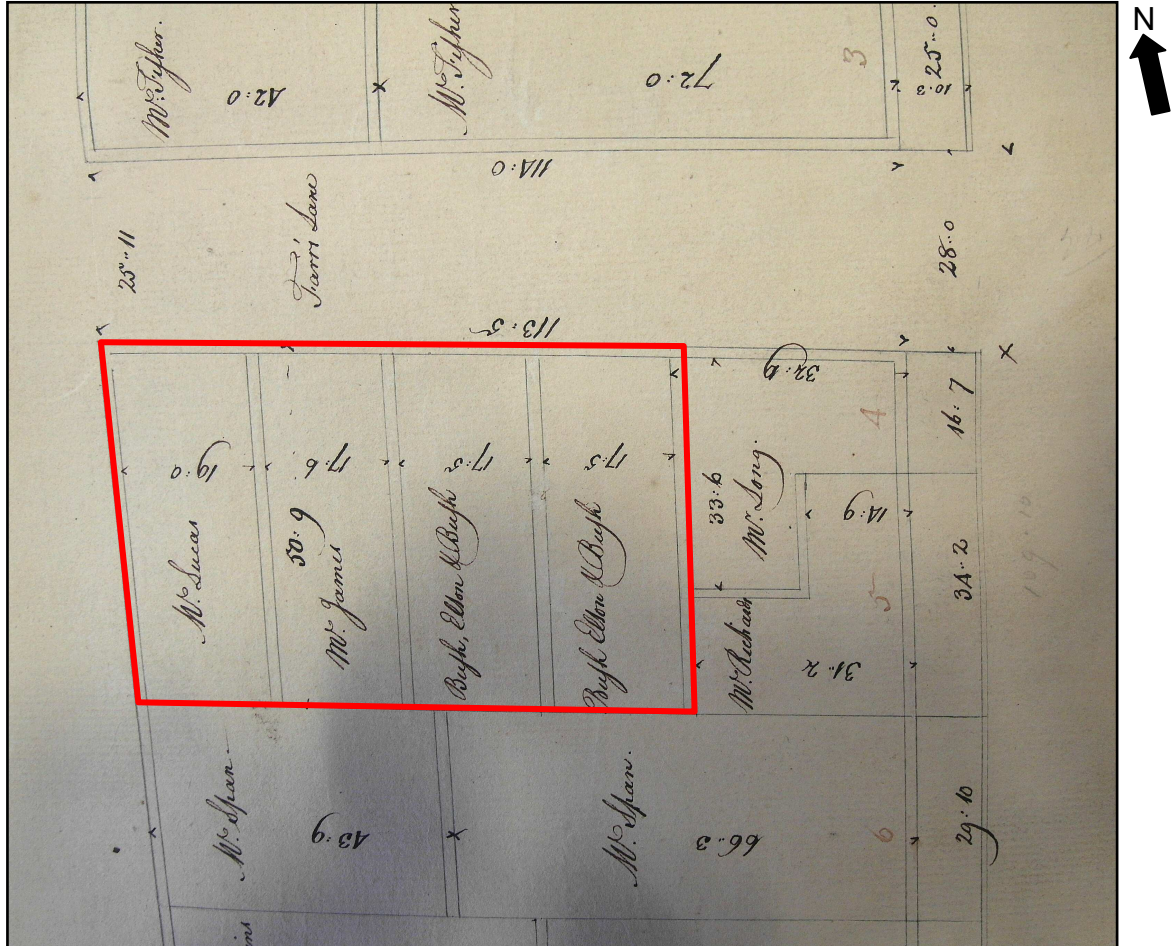


Figure 8

Extract from Bristol Corporation Plan Book B, f.23a, late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century, showing rentals. BRO. Study site outlined in red. Not to scale.

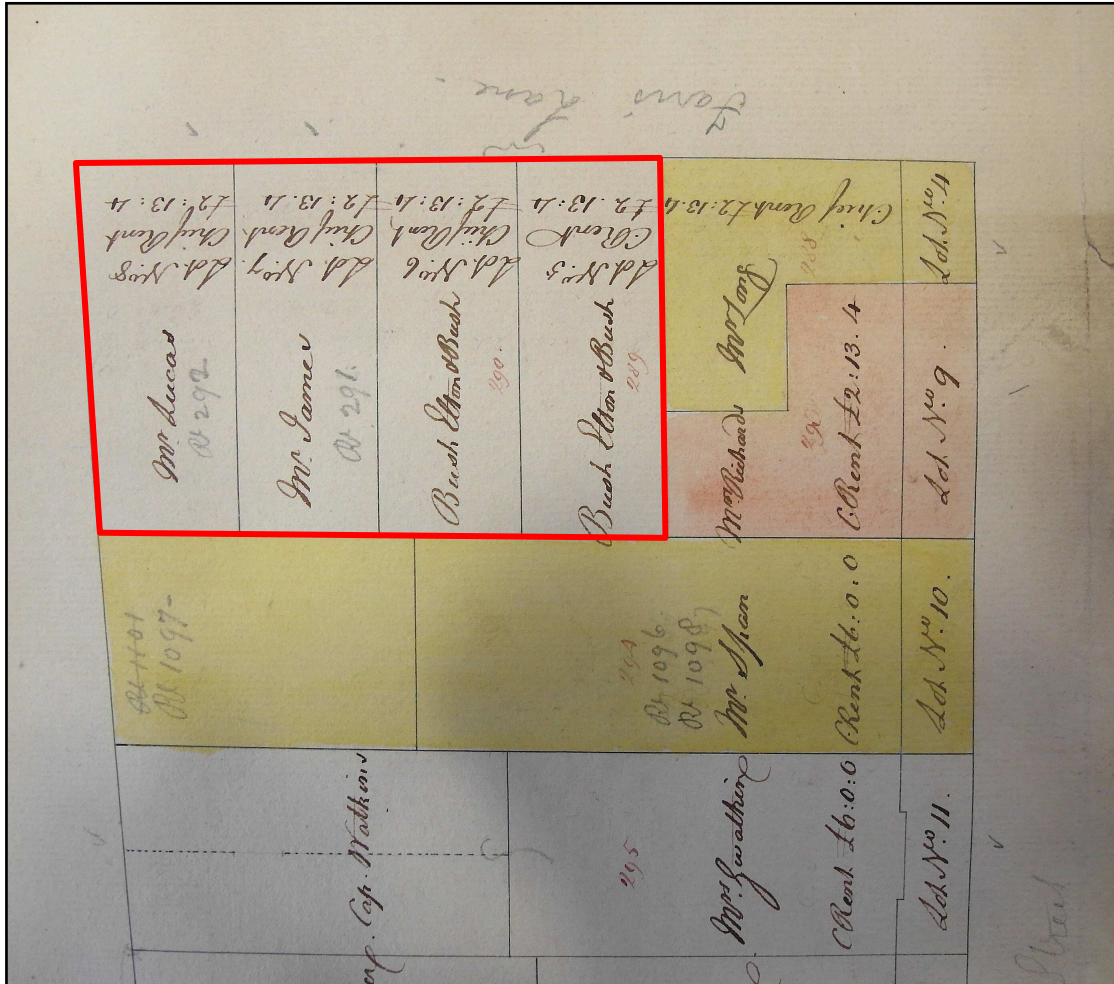


Figure 9

Extract from Plumley and Ashmead's map of the city of Bristol, 1828. Study site outlined in red. Courtesy of Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery. Not to scale.

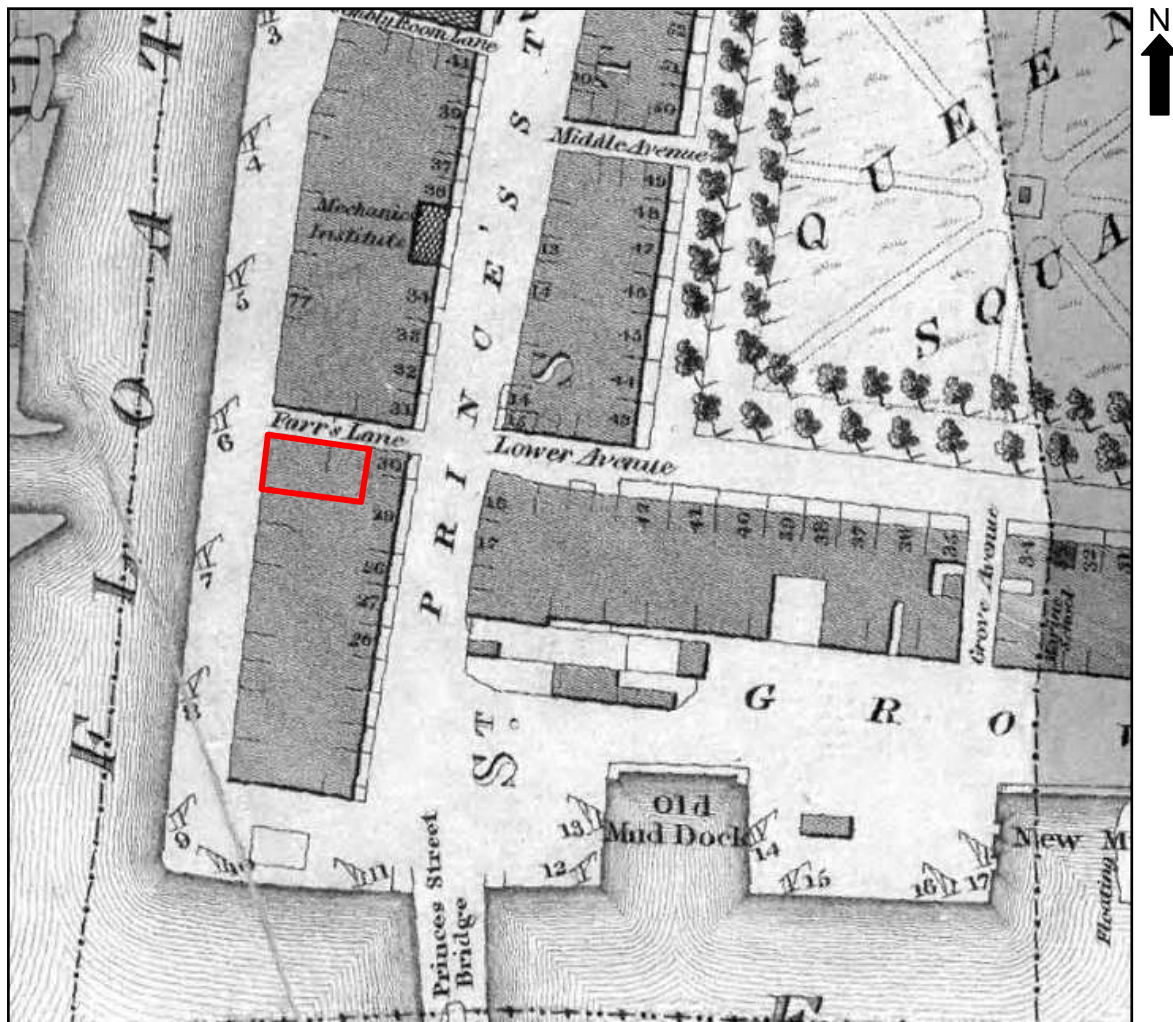




Figure 10

Extract from Ashmead's map of the city of Bristol, 1855, Sheets 67 (north) and 75 (south). Study site outlined in red. Courtesy of Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery. Not to scale.



Figure 11

Extract from OS First Edition 1:500 plan, Bristol Sheet 75.4.4, surveyed 1883, published 1885. BRO. Study site outlined in red. Not to scale.

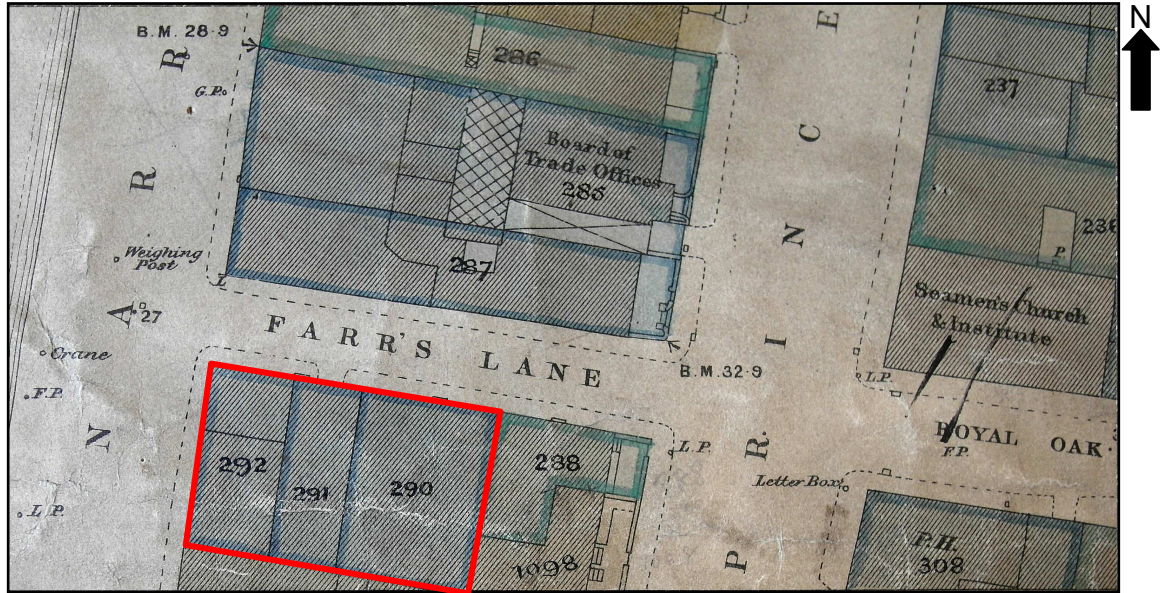


Figure 12

Plan attached to lease of warehouse units 1 and 2, 1893. BRO 1671/3a. Scale of feet as indicated. North arrow as indicated is slightly east of modern grid north. Study site outlined in red.

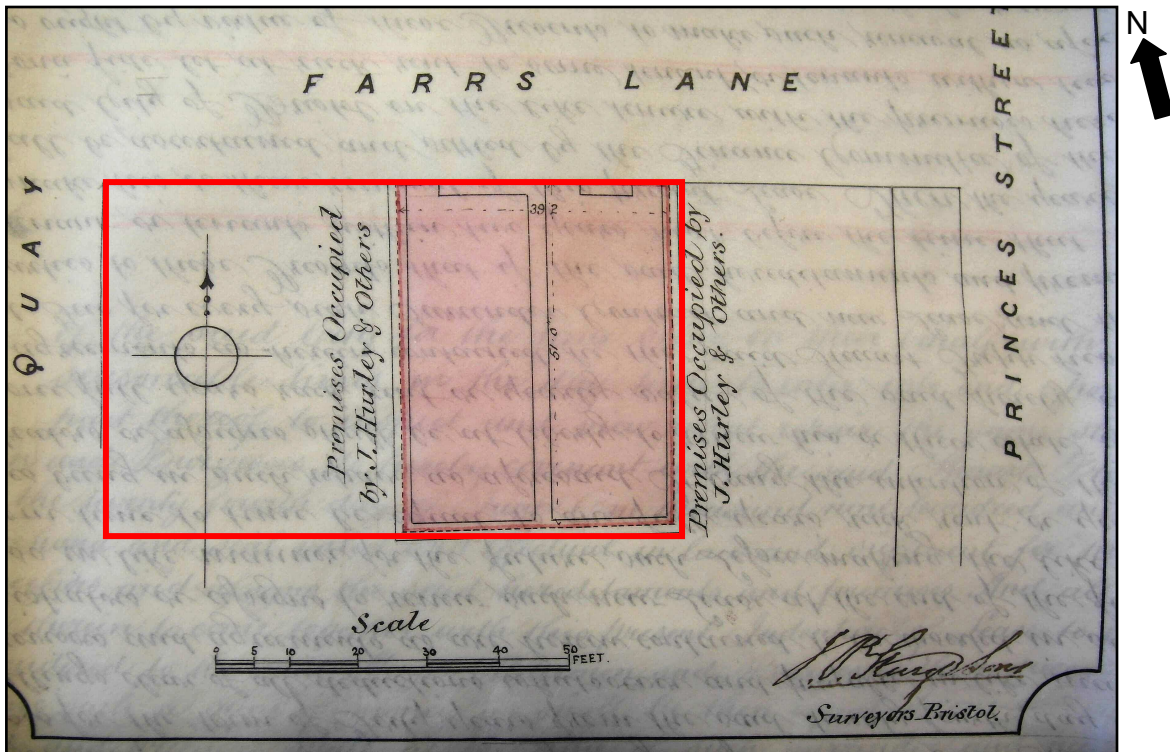


Figure 13

Extract from Goad Insurance Plan, c.1930. BRO 35033/1, Sheet 10. Study site outlined in red. Not to scale.

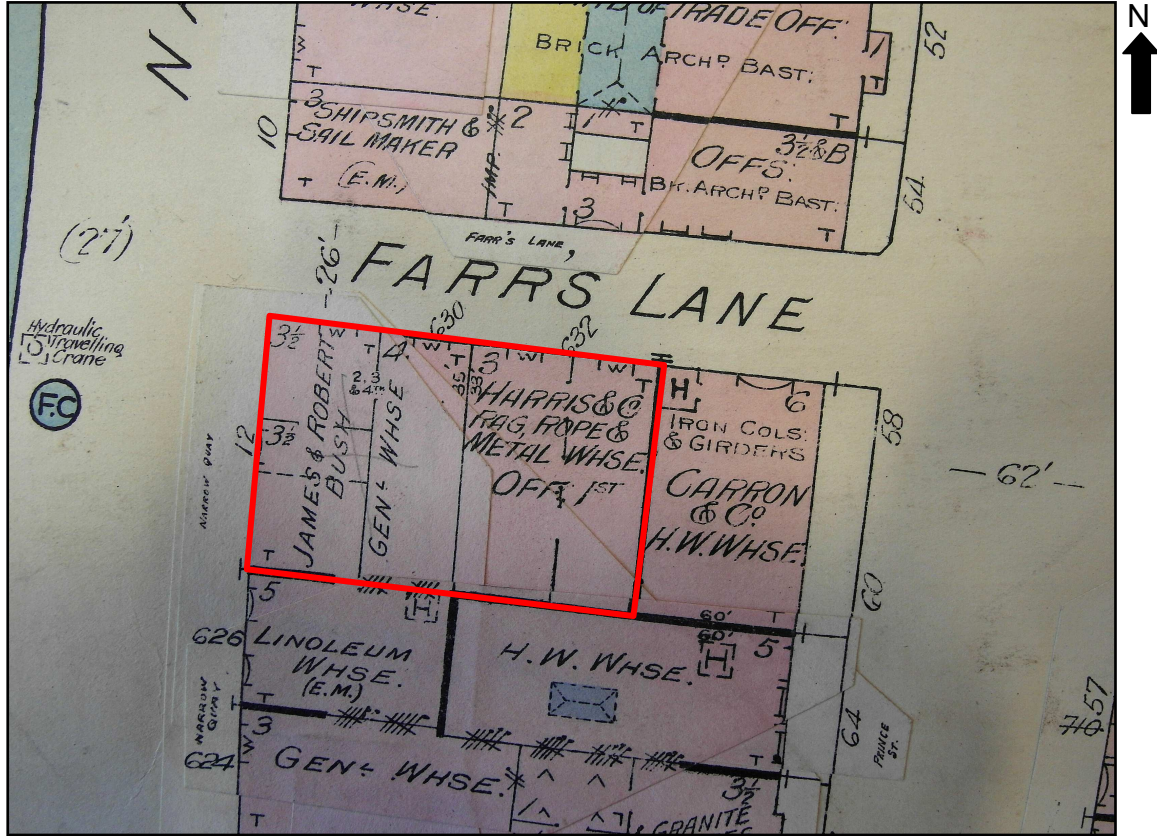
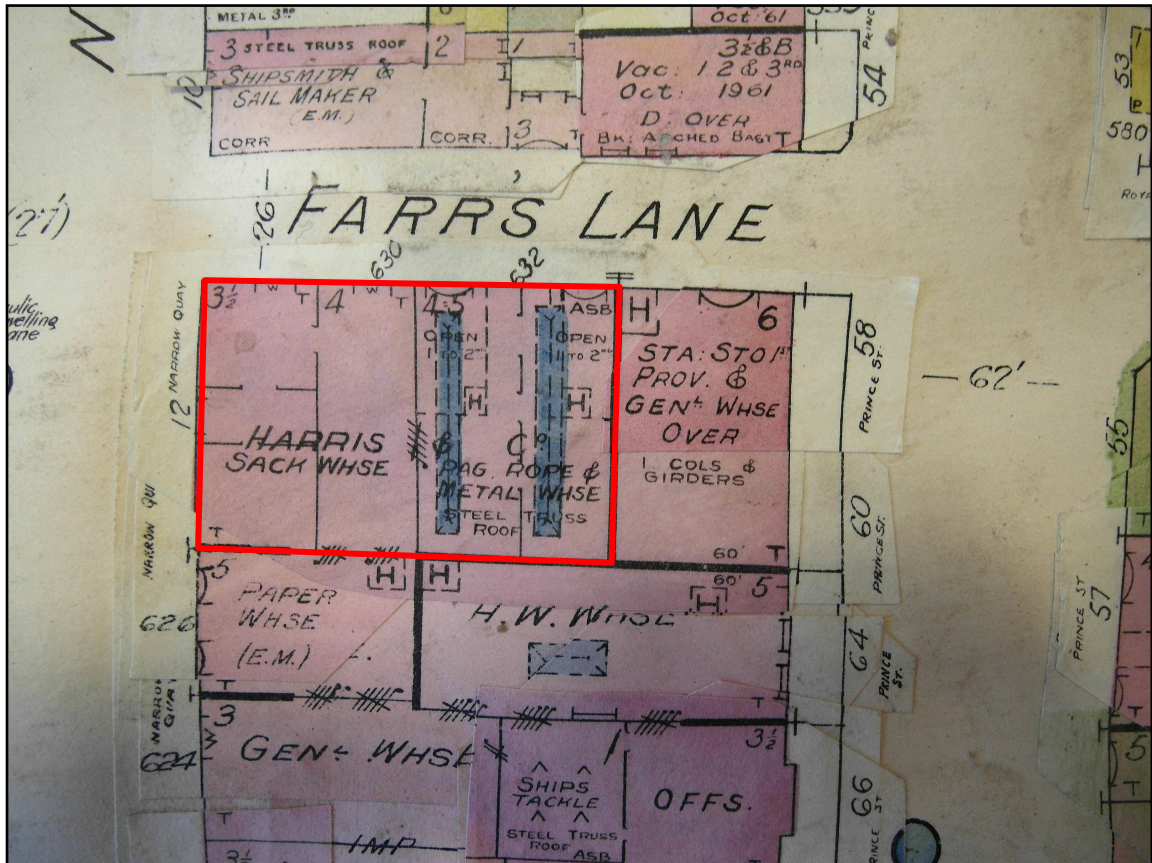


Figure 14

Extract from Goad Insurance Plan, with selected amendments to 1961. Plan shown here clearly postdates fire of the mid 1950s. BRO 40904/1, Sheet 10. Study site outlined in red. Not to scale.



## Plates



1. Impression of the roof line of the southern end-gable wall of one of the original units (1 and 2), preserved on the third storey within the rebuilt section of the warehouse following the fire of the mid 1950s. View to SW.



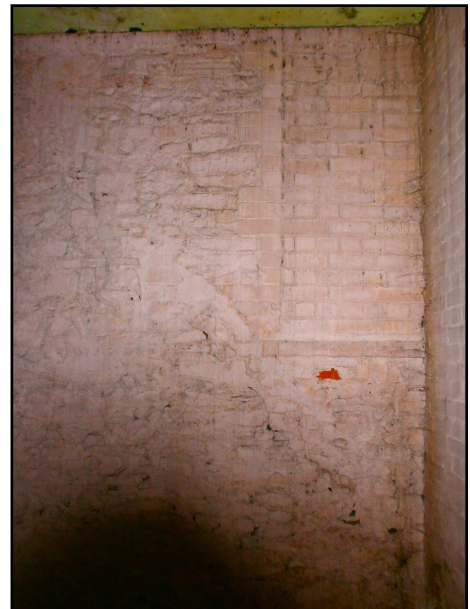
2. The weigh-bridge installed in the ground floor of the rebuilt warehouse units 1 and 2 after the fire of the mid 1950s. The large folding doors in the background open out onto Farr's Lane. View to north.



3. One of the many massive timbers, this one tied with iron bolts or nails, acting as floor joists within the surviving historic parts of the warehouse, units 3 and 4. The appearance of some of these features suggests that they may be reused ship's timbers.



5. External northern elevation onto Farr's Lane of the historic elements units 3 and 4, showing at least one blocked opening, a defunct lintel, and other clear indications of structural sequence. View to SW.



4. Sequence probably indicating a doorway inserted into an earlier wall, and then blocked,, along with other structural phasing. Upper floor, modern block units 1 and 2, view to south.



6. Iron columns and possibly original floor planking in upper storey of Units 3 and 4. View to S.



7. Indications of blocked up openings showing in upper internal wall fabric of Units 3 and 4.