

Archaeological Watching Brief  
at  
**THE OLD GAOL STABLES,  
CUMBERLAND ROAD, BRISTOL.**  
for  
Wapping Wharf (Umberslade) Ltd.



Report No. 2554/2012  
BHER No. 25064

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at  
**THE OLD GAOL STABLES,  
CUMBERLAND ROAD, BRISTOL.**

Centred on  
N.G.R. ST 58434 72096

Client: Wapping Wharf (Umberslade) Ltd.  
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### Abbreviations

AD	Anno Domini	BRO	Bristol Record Office
aOD	Above Ordnance Datum	c.	Circa
BaRAS	Bristol & Region Archaeological Services	EHA	English Heritage Archive
BC	Before Christ	Km	Kilometre
BCC	Bristol City Council	m	Metre
BCL	Bristol Central Library	NGR	National Grid Reference
BCMAG	Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery	OS	Ordnance Survey
BHER	Bristol Historic Environment Record		

### NOTE

Notwithstanding that Bristol and Region Archaeological Services have taken reasonable 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.

July, 2012.

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## **SUMMARY**

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks associated with the redevelopment of the Old Gaol Stables, Cumberland Road, Bristol.

The groundwork uncovered part of the perimeter wall of the New Gaol and structural remains of the Old Gaol Stables, comprising two internal partition-walls, a brick-lined drain, and a possible water trough or drainage gully.

No evidence was found for significant activity on the site prior to the construction of the New Gaol in 1816-20. The Old Gaol Stables were built between 1855 and 1869, and appear to have remained in use as stables until at least 1930.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS) at the Old Gaol Stables, Cumberland Road, Bristol (NGR ST 58434 72096) (**Fig.1**).
- 1.2 The archaeological work was commissioned by Touchstone Consult Ltd. on behalf of Wapping Wharf (Umberslade) Ltd. in order to comply with a planning condition for the redevelopment of the Old Gaol Stables as a restaurant, entailing alterations to the existing building, associated temporary landscaping, car parking and drainage works (Bristol Application Number 09/00011/F).
- 1.3 The archaeological work took place between the 3rd December 2011 and the 10th of July 2012.
- 1.4 The project archive will be deposited with Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery under the Accession Number 2012/31 and a copy of the report will be lodged at the English Heritage Archive. The project has been entered in the Bristol Historic Environment Record as BHER 25064 and in the OASIS Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations as: bristola1- 112250.

## **2. THE SITE**

- 2.1 The site (centred on NGR ST 58434 72096) is situated to the south of the Floating Harbour near Bristol City Centre, in and around a mid-19th century building known as the Old Gaol Stables. The site boundaries are defined by Cumberland Road to the south, waste ground to the west and car parks to the north and east. The site is near level at a height of approximately 14m aOD.
- 2.2 The site is situated in Bedminster parish, in the City Docks Conservation Area. There are no designated heritage assets on the site although it could be argued that the portion of the New Gaol perimeter wall is within the curtilage of the nearby Grade II listed Gaol entrance gateway.
- 2.3 According to the British Geological Survey (2012) the underlying solid geology is Triassic Redcliffe sandstone.

### **3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 There have been a number of archaeological investigations in the vicinity of the site (Bryant 1995 & 2003; Burchill 2001; Cotswold Archaeology 2004; Leech 2003a-c & 2004; Roper 2008); reference should be made to these documents for specific detail of the historical and archaeological background. The main points are summarized in the following paragraphs.
- 3.2 There is no evidence of any prehistoric, Roman, Anglo-Saxon or medieval activity within the development area, and it appears that the site remained in agricultural use until the early 19th century.
- 3.3 Development of the site appears to have begun soon after the New Cut was dug to allow the creation of the Floating Harbour in 1804-9. Seven years later work began on a new prison known as the New Gaol, the perimeter wall of which followed the north-west boundary of the site. The New Gaol opened in 1820, but was ransacked and severely damaged during the Bristol Riots of 1831. After the riots, the gaol was rebuilt to a design by W.S. Pope, and remained in use until it was replaced by more modern facilities at the newly-built Horfield Gaol in 1883. The disused gaol soon became ruinous and the majority of the complex had been demolished by the turn of the century. The 1903 Ordnance Survey map shows that much of the former gaol had by then been destroyed by the construction of a goods yard for the Bristol Harbour Railway, and by 1909 only the gatehouse and a small section of the perimeter wall on the corner of Cumberland Road and Wapping Road remained standing; both structures are now Grade II listed (LBS No. 901-1/42/1295 & 901-1/42/1296). The truncated remains of the New Gaol perimeter wall survive as a retaining wall that defines the north-east boundary of the site (Fig.2).
- 3.4 The Old Gaol Stables was built sometime between 1855 and 1869, with a courtyard and outbuilding to the north and access from Cumberland Road. With the exception of the ruinous wall and gatehouse, the Old Gaol Stables is the last surviving building of the New Gaol.
- 3.5 In 1895 the Old Gaol Stables were acquired by the Great Western Railway Company and appear to have continued for use as stables until at least 1930. At some point after 1930 a brick-built extension was added to the rear of the stables; this extension was recently demolished.



#### **4. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1 The fieldwork was carried out in accordance with the methodology set out in a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (Mason 2012), *BaRAS Site Manual* (2009) and complied with the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (IfA 2008). The aim of the archaeological work was to record any archaeological features or deposits revealed during the course of construction work.
- 4.2 The watching brief involved the monitoring of mechanical excavation for new-service trenches and limited areas of ground reduction in and around the Old Gaol Stables.
- 4.3 Excavation work was undertaken either by hand or carried out using a mechanical excavator fitted with either a toothed bucket or grading bucket.
- 4.4 Archaeological features were recorded on a site plans at scales of 1:20 and 1:50. A photographic record of all features was made using 35mm monochrome and digital colour photographs.

## 5. RESULTS

- 5.1 The archaeological work revealed a series of post-medieval and modern features and deposits, full descriptions of which are provided in the context summary (**Appendix 2**), and indicated on the site plan (**Fig.2**).
- 5.2 The natural geology of the site comprises Redcliffe sandstone, the upper surface of which was weathered into a firm reddish-orange sand (103)/(122). Bedrock was encountered approximately 2.5m below the surface of Cumberland Road.
- 5.3 Natural sand (103)/(122) was overlain by an extensive layer of 19th-century made ground (105)/(108) up to 0.38m thickness. Layer (105)/(108) was cut by the construction trenches of the Old Gaol Stables [123] and [1in 25-7].
- 5.4 A portion of the perimeter wall of the New Gaol (101) (**Plate 1**) was uncovered in a drainage trench in the north-east corner of the site. The wall was 1m in width and constructed with squared stone blocks bonded with a hard grey ashy-mortar. Wall (101) was cut into the underlying natural sand, and was abutted and overlain by modern made ground (100). The relationship between wall (101) and layer (105)/(108) remains unclear.
- 5.5 The foundations of the Old Gaol Stables (109-10)/(116) were constructed with random uncoursed stone rubble bonded with a hard grey-mortar (**Plate 2**). The remains of two internal partition-walls (114) and (119-20) (**Plates 3 & 4**), constructed in a similar manner to the external walls, were observed in a new-service trench. The area between walls (114) and (119-120) (**Plate 5**) appears to have been some sort of water trough or drainage gully, the northern edge of which was defined by a row of stone slabs set on edge (118); the west side was defined by pitched brickwork (115). A brick-lined stone-capped drain (113)/(117) (**Plate 4**) was recorded beneath wall (114) and structures (115) and (118); this feature probably drained the trough between walls (114) and (119-120). It is unclear if the drain and trough were original features of the stables, or later alterations.
- 5.6 A brick surface (111) was recorded to the north of the stable building; it is unclear if this is an original feature or a later addition.
- 5.7 Ground reduction along the western edge of the site revealed the base of a large steel-tank (128) (**Plate 6**), situated immediately to the west of the truncated remains of a 20th-century brick wall (129). The tank measured 3.1m in length and 0.8m in width. The top had been cut off with an oxyacetylene torch. The exact date and function of the tank remains unknown, but it probably post-dates the 20th-century wall (129).

## 6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The work uncovered part of the perimeter wall of the New Gaol and structural remains of the Old Gaol Stables, comprising two internal partition-walls, a brick-lined drain and a possible water trough or drainage gully.
- 6.2 No evidence was found for any significant activity on the site prior to the construction of the New Gaol in 1816-20. The Old Gaol Stables were built between 1855 and 1869, and appear to have remained in use as stables until at least 1930. The presence of part of the gaol's main perimeter wall on this site suggests that other portions of the gaol may survive where the ground has not been removed to railway wharf level.

## 7. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES CONSULTED

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## **8. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

- 8.1 BaRAS would like to thank Wapping Wharf (Umberslade) Ltd. for funding the project. We would also like to thank Simon Hateley (Touchstone Consult Ltd.) for his assistance throughout the project, and Bob Jones (Senior Archaeological Officer, BCC) for his advice.
- 8.2 The archaeological work was managed by John Bryant (Acting Manager BaRAS). Plans, figures, and plates in this report were prepared by Ann Linge (Design and Production Officer BaRAS). The archaeological work was undertaken by Cai Mason, Simon Roper, and Tracey Smith (BaRAS Project Officers).

## **APPENDIX 1: Policy Statement**

This report is the result of work carried out in the light of national and local authority policies.

### **NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY (ENGLAND)**

The *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) for England published by the UK Government in March 2012 states that the historic environment, which includes designated and non-designated heritage assets, is an irreplaceable resource and, as such, should be taken into account by Local Planning Authorities when considering and determining planning applications. This is taken to form part of a positive strategy set out in the respective Local Plan to ensure the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. The assigned significance of heritage assets will be key factor in terms of their conservation.

Given their irreplaceable nature, any harm to, or loss of, a heritage asset, or heritage assets, should be clearly and convincingly justified as part of a planning application. As part of this, applicants are required to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposal, including any contribution made by their setting. Where a heritage asset, or assets, are to be harmed or lost as the result of a proposal, the applicant will be required to record and advance the understanding of the significance of that asset or assets, to include making the evidence arising publicly accessible, but this will be in proportion to the significance of the asset/assets in question.

While the NPPF takes into account the historic environment as a whole, additional protection is afforded to designated heritage assets under current English Law. Any proposal that would result in harm or loss of a designated heritage asset is also required to be justified by the applicant in meeting strict criteria set out in the NPPF.

### **LOCAL POLICY**

Bristol City Council Supplementary Planning Document (2006) states (policy SPD No.7, p4):

(i) There will be a presumption in favour of preserving any archaeological features or sites of national importance, whether scheduled or not.

(ii) Development which could adversely affect sites, structures, landscapes or buildings of archaeological interest and their settings will require an assessment of the archaeological resource through a desktop study, and where appropriate a field evaluation. Where there is evidence of archaeological remains, development will not be permitted except where it can be demonstrated that the archaeological features of the site will be satisfactorily preserved in situ, or a suitable strategy has been put forward to mitigate the impact of development proposals upon important archaeological remains and their settings; or, if this is not possible and the sites are not scheduled or of national importance, provision for adequately recording the site prior to destruction is made, preferably by negotiating a planning agreement to ensure that access, time and financial resources are available to allow essential recording and publication to take place.

## APPENDIX 2: Context Descriptions

Context No.	Type	Description	Stratigraphic relationships	Date
100	Fill	<b>Made ground.</b> Friable dark brown silt containing brick rubble.	Overlies (101)	Modern
101	Structure	<b>Perimeter wall of the New Gaol.</b> Constructed with coursed squared sandstone-blocks (up to approx. 0.3m x 0.3m x 0.8m) bonded with a hard grey ashy lime mortar. The wall was 1m in width and over 0.48m in height.	Underlies (100); overlies (103)	1816-20
102	Layer	<b>Bedding layer for (111).</b> Black silt with brick and stone rubble inclusions	Underlies (104); overlies (103)	Mid-19th century
103	Layer	<b>Weathered natural.</b> Firm orange-sand.	Underlies (102)	Geology
104	Structure	<b>Concrete floor.</b>	Overlies (102)	Modern
105	Layer	<b>Made ground.</b> Firm grey sandy-silt with occasional brick inclusions. Up to 0.38m in thickness.	Underlies (102); overlies (103)	Mid-19th century
106	Structure	<b>Concrete floor.</b>	Overlies (109) & (120)	Modern
107	Structure	<b>Bedding layer for (removed) floor.</b> Friable dark-brown sandy-silt with 85% slate fragments and gravel inclusions.	Underlies (106); overlies (108)	Mid-19th century
108	Layer	<b>Made ground.</b> Same as (105)	Cut by [123]; overlies (122)	Modern
109	Structure	<b>Upper part of foundations of external wall.</b> Constructed with a compact mixture of pale-grey mortar and stone rubble.	Underlies (106); overlies (110)	Mid-19th century
110	Structure	<b>Lower part of foundations of external wall.</b> Constructed with random uncoursed stone rubble bonded with a hard dark-grey mortar with common charcoal or coal inclusions.	Overlain by (109); fills [123]	Mid-19th century
111	Structure	<b>Brick floor.</b> Constructed with handmade bricks (240mm x 100mm x 60mm) laid on bed. No mortar.	Same as (110); underlies (104); overlies (102)	19th or 20th century
112	Layer	<b>Made ground.</b> Redeposited natural orangey-red sand.	Underlies (106); overlies (113) & (118)	Mid-19th century
113	Structure	<b>Capstones for brick-lined drain (117).</b> Flat limestone slabs 40-60mm thick, approx. 0.5m x 0.7m in width.	Underlies (112); overlies (117)	Mid-19th century
114	Structure	<b>Internal wall.</b> Constructed with random uncoursed stone-rubble bonded with a pale-grey mortar. North-South aligned. 0.55m in width, over 0.5m in length, 0.4m in height.	Cut by [125]; overlies (116)	Mid-19th century
115	Structure	<b>Brick structure possibly defining west edge of trough or drainage gully.</b> Constructed with handmade bricks (240mm x 100mm x 60mm) bonded with a hard pinkish-cream mortar. Aligned North-South, measured 0.58m in length and 0.41m in width; 1 brick thick.	Underlies (112); overlies (117)	Mid-19th century
116	Structure	<b>Foundations of external wall.</b> Same as (110).	Same as (110); underlies (114); fills [126]	Mid-19th century
117	Structure	<b>Brick-lined drain.</b> Constructed with handmade bricks (240mm x 100mm x 60mm) bonded with a hard grey-mortar	Filled by (124), overlain by (113); abuts (114)	Mid-19th century
118	Structure	<b>Stone structure possibly defining north edge of trough or drainage gully.</b> Constructed with stone slabs (0.52m x 0.42m x 0.2m)	Underlies (112); abuts (115)	Mid-19th century
119	Structure	<b>Lower part of foundations of internal wall.</b> Constructed with random uncoursed stone-rubble bonded with a dark grey mortar. N-S aligned. 0.55m wide, over 0.5m long, over 0.2m deep.	Overlain by (120); fills [127]	Mid-19th century
120	Structure	<b>Upper part of foundations of internal wall.</b> Constructed with stone-rubble bonded with a light-grey mortar. North-South aligned. 0.56m in width, over 0.6m in length, over 0.26m in depth.	Underlies (106); overlies (119)	Mid-19th century
122	Geological Layer	<b>Weathered natural.</b> Firm orange-sand.	Underlies (102)	Geological deposit
123	Cut	<b>Construction cut of wall (110).</b>	Filled by (110); cuts (108)	Mid-19th century
124	Fill	<b>Fill of drain (117).</b> Friable dark-grey sandy silt containing charcoal, mortar and glass inclusions.	Overlies (117)	19th – 20th century
125	Cut	<b>Construction cut of brick-lined drain (117).</b>	Filled by (117)	Mid-19th century
126	Cut	<b>Construction cut of wall (116).</b>	Filled by (116); cuts (108)	Mid-19th century
127	Cut	<b>Construction cut of wall (119).</b>	Filled by (119); cuts (108)	Mid-19th century
128	Structure	<b>Steel tank.</b> Measured 0.8m in width and 3.1m in length. The top of the tank had been cut off with an oxyacetylene torch.	Abuts (129)	20th century
129	Structure	<b>Brick wall.</b> Defined west edge of yard to the north of the Old Gaol Stables. 0.3m in width.	Abutted by (128)	20th century

Context No.	Type	Description	Stratigraphic relationships	Date
130	Structure	<b>Stone wall.</b> Boundary wall defining the southern boundary of the site 0.4m in width <sup>2</sup> . Constructed with red sandstone-rubble bound with a lime mortar.	Unknown	1890s

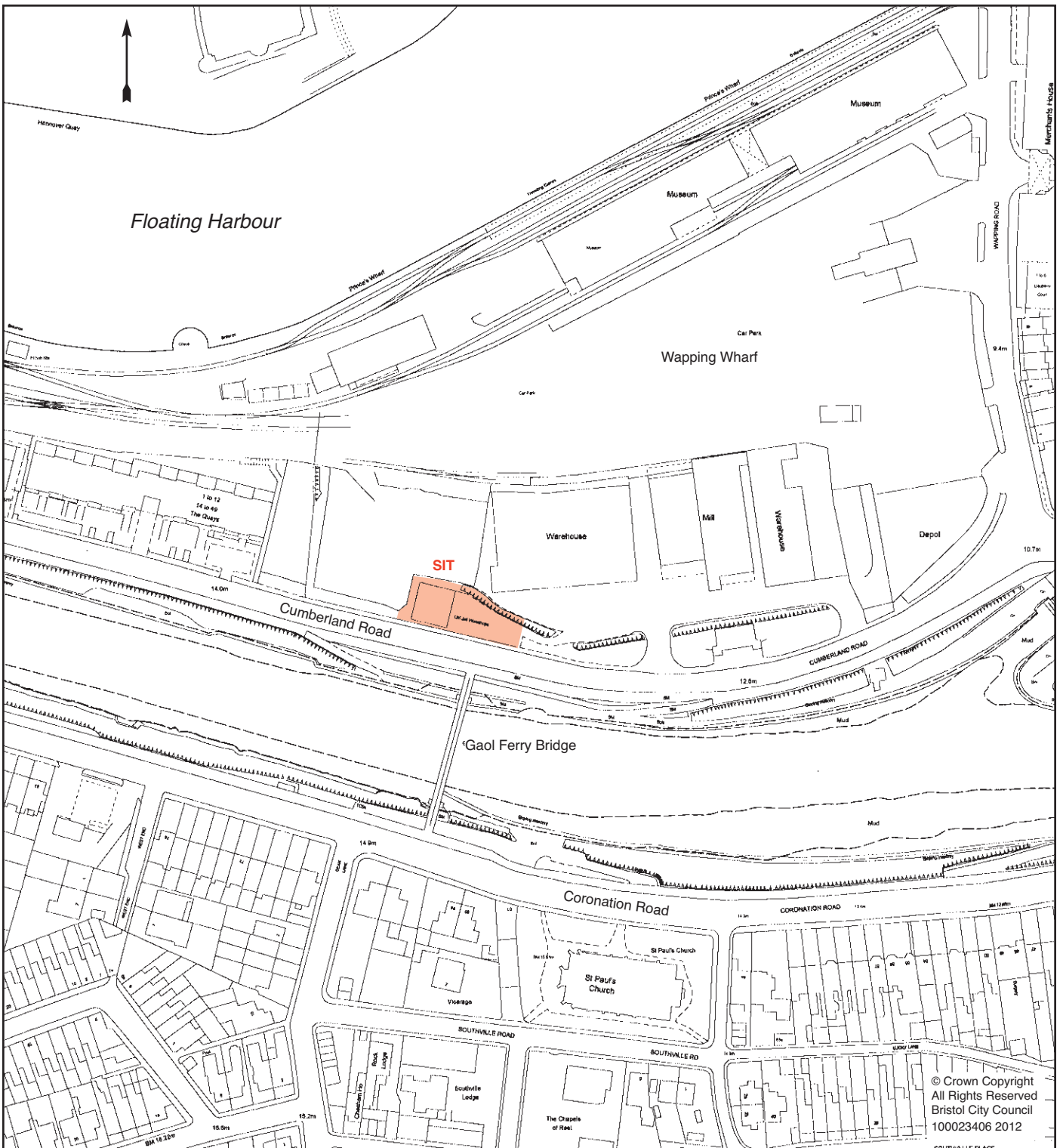


Fig.1 Site location plan, scale 1:2000



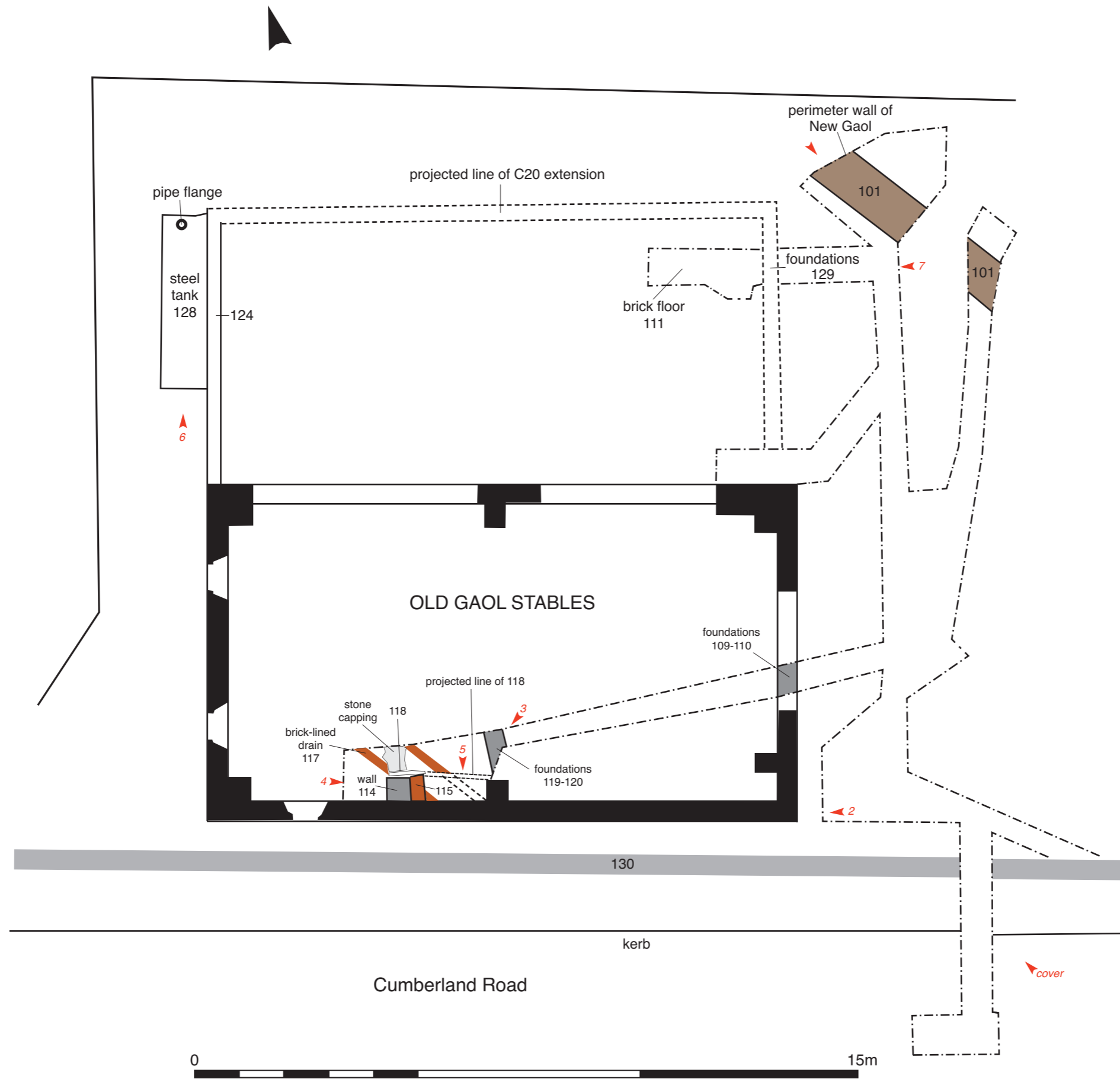


Fig.2 Site plan showing location of archaeological features and plate directions, scale 1:100



Plate 1  
Perimeter wall of the  
New Gaol (101), viewed  
from the north-west



Plate 2  
Foundations of the Old  
Gaol Stables (110)/(116),  
viewed from the east



Plate 3  
Foundations of internal  
partition-wall (119), viewed  
from the north-east



Plate 4

Foundations of internal partition-wall (114) and brick-lined drain (113)/(117), viewed from the west



Plate 5

Possible trough or drainage gully defined by walls (114), (119) and stone slabs (118), viewed from the north



Plate 6 Steel tank (128) viewed from the south



Plate 7 Excavating new-service trench to the north of the Old Gaol Stables, viewed from the east