

Archaeological Desk-based Assessment & Watching Brief  
at  
**GOLDEN VALLEY MILLS, MILL LANE, BITTON,  
SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE.**  
for  
Colliers CRE



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Archaeological Desk-based Assessment  
of land at  
**GOLDEN VALLEY MILLS, MILL LANE, BITTON,  
SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE**

Centred on  
N.G.R. ST 5920 6930

Client: Colliers CRE

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### Abbreviations

AD	Anno Domini	m	Metre
AOD	Above Ordnance Datum	NGR	National Grid Reference
BaRAS	Bristol & Region Archaeological Services	NMR	National Monuments Record
BCC	Bristol City Council	OS	Ordnance Survey
BCL	Bristol Central Library	SGC	South Gloucestershire Council
BCMAG	Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery		
BRO	Bristol Record Office		
c.	Circa		
Km	Kilometre		

### NOTE

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## SUMMARY

A desk-based assessment and a geotechnical watching brief were carried out on the site of an historic brass mill/paper mill in the village of Bitton, prior to the possible redevelopment of the site. The study area, located on the north-west edge of the village, is situated at a height of approximately 16m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) and covers 4.08 hectares (10 acres). The study area is largely occupied by industrial buildings belonging to Golden Valley Mills (formerly Bitton Mill) and in part by a former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, a pair of terraced houses (Nos. 95 & 97 Bath Road) and by areas of hard standing. The main works buildings are located behind a high wall to the east of Mill Lane, with the Dacora building fronting the Bath Road (A431).

Documentary and cartographic evidence indicates that the study area has long been occupied by industrial buildings. The Bitton Mill site was home to an 18th-century brass mill, then a 19th-century paper mill and from 1962 by a car components factory, while the Dacora building stands on the site of the former Phoenix iron foundry (c.1900-55). A trawl of the South Gloucestershire Council Historic Environment Record (HER) showed three archaeological entries within the study area, additionally, several other entries are recorded in the vicinity. A search of the air-photograph collection at the National Monuments Record Centre (NMRC) in Swindon, and several other air-photographs made available to the author, revealed a few features of potential archaeological interest, including a former course of the River Boyd, within the study area.

An archaeological watching brief was carried out simultaneously with the desk-based assessment. This involved monitoring the mechanical excavation of a number of geotechnical trial pits located within the known footprint of buildings belonging to the 18th/19th century brass mill/paper mill. Those located in the area of the former mill pond were not monitored. Three pits (TP's 2, 4 and 6), in the Northwestern Yard, all contained in-situ structural remains, which probably belong to the 19th century paper mill. However, the survival of elements of the 18th century brass mill cannot at this stage be discounted. In addition, below-ground remains were also observed in trenches within the Old Press Store, although health and safety considerations curtailed work there before a detailed interpretation could be undertaken.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS) was commissioned by Colliers CRE to carry out both a desk-based assessment and an archaeological watching brief at Golden Valley Mills, Mill Lane, Bitton (centred on NGR ST 5920 6930; **Fig.1; Cover**), South Gloucestershire BS30 6HL prior to the possible redevelopment of the site. The site is owned by Magna International Developments and was leased to Intier Automotive Interiors Limited (IAI).
- 1.2 The study area (**Fig. 2**), located on the north-west edge of the village of Bitton, is situated at a height of approximately 16m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) and covers 4.08 hectares (10 acres). The site, enclosed behind a high Pennant sandstone boundary wall next to Mill Lane, comprises a number of former mill buildings and factory units. The extant historic mill buildings consist of the gatehouse, canteen, two-storey Old Press Shop and the PIM Fibre Shop. The other buildings on the mill site all date from the 1970's and 1980's. The site of the old mill pond, drained and infilled in the late 1970's/early 1980's, is occupied by two large, single-storey works buildings (New Press Shop). The buildings are surrounded by areas of hard standing for parking and for the loading/unloading of delivery vehicles. On the west side of Mill Lane, fronting Bath Road, is the second major complex of buildings located within the study area. The Dacora Building, enlarged in the late 1970's/early 1980's, includes parts of the c.1900 former Phoenix iron foundry. Adjoining the latter building are a pair of terraced houses, Nos. 95 and 97 Bath Road (currently unoccupied), and a mid-19th century former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel (now a garage).
- 1.3 The study area is bounded to the south-west by the Bath Road (A431), from west to north by the River Boyd, north-east by a 6m high earth bund beyond which is a large pond, east and south-east by a playing field, and south by residential housing and a Methodist Church on Mill Lane. The geology comprises alluvial clays of the Pleistocene period overlying Lower Lias clays with limestone (g1), of the Jurassic period.
- 1.4 The desk-based assessment and watching brief were conducted, prior to the submission of any planning application, in order to inform the Archaeological Officer for South Gloucestershire Council (the local planning authority) of the archaeological potential of the site. The study area is located within the Bitton Conservation Area and there are several listed and locally listed buildings in the vicinity of the site, including two entries within the study area itself. There is also one Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) close to the study area. Several archaeological projects have previously been carried out in the vicinity of the study area. In 1952 excavations (Boon 1953) on the site of a "Roman Camp" (SMR 1245; SAM) indicated that the earthwork's construction was no earlier than the 13th century. In 1994 and 1998 Mr D. R. Evans of South Gloucestershire Council undertook watching briefs on sites at Cheyney Court (SMR 9710) and Golden Valley Lane (SMR 12655) but no finds or features were noted. In 2002 Avon Archaeological Unit undertook an archaeological desk-based assessment, a programme of building recording and a trial excavation (Ducker 2002; SMR 14229) on land immediately south of the adjacent "Roman Camp". No evidence of Roman occupation was present, however, a series of medieval banks and ditches were recorded belonging to 13th-century crofts or tenements. A geophysical survey (SMR 16358) was undertaken over the site of the purported "Roman Camp" by Bristol University, also in 2002. National and local planning policies, including Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (Dept of Environment), state that there should be a presumption in favour of the preservation of nationally important archaeological features and sites. The best means of determining the existence and quality of such sites is by documentary study and, if necessary, by geophysical survey and selective field evaluation. The desk-based study represents the first stage in this process.

- 1.5 The desk-based assessment involved a visit by Tim Longman of Bristol and Region Archaeological Services to the Bristol Record Office (BRO), on Friday 21 November 2008, where primary and secondary documentary sources, including photographic, cartographic and other published material was examined and to the National Monuments Record Centre (NMRC) in Swindon, on Tuesday 2 December 2008, where relevant aerial photographs and cartographic material in their collection were examined. In addition, Tim Longman made several visits to the study area in late November/early December to undertake a watching brief during the excavation of a number of geotechnical pits by Hydrock Consultants Limited.
- 1.6 Copies of the report will be submitted to the South Gloucestershire Council Historic Environment Record (HER) in Kingswood and a digital copy of the report will be available to the National Monuments Record (NMR) maintained by English Heritage in Swindon. The project archive will be deposited with Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives service under the accession number BRSMG 2008/81. The project has been entered in the South Gloucestershire Historic Environment Record under HER 18627, and has also been issued with the OASIS reference 52254.



## 2. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### Desk-based Assessment

2.1 The aim of the desk-based assessment is to inform the planning process in order that a reasoned decision can be taken regarding any archaeological resource.

2.2 The principal objectives of the assessment are:

- to locate any archaeological features affected by the proposed development, assessing the potential for survival, likely condition, and significance of any archaeological features, deposits or structures within the study area.
- to advise on the potential impact of development upon the archaeological resource.

2.3 The following key sources have been consulted

- Documentary sources relevant to the study area including maps and surveys, leases etc.
- Topographical photographs, prints and drawings
- South Gloucestershire Council Historic Environment Record (HER)
- Other published sources as a general background

### Watching Brief

2.4 The fieldwork followed the *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1999). The aim of the watching brief was to record any archaeological features or deposits revealed during the course of intrusive geotechnical ground work.

2.5 The watching brief involved monitoring the mechanical excavation of a number of trial pits associated with a programme of geotechnical survey by Hydrock Consultants Limited.

### 3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### General

- 3.1 The study area is situated in the parish of Bitton, which historically formed part of the hundred of Langley & Swineshead, in the county of Gloucestershire.
- 3.2 The ancient parish of Bitton historically comprised four tithings, Bitton itself, plus Upton Cheyney, Hanham, and Oldland. Hanham Abbots and Oldland are now separate civil and ecclesiastical parishes. Bitton parish, in addition to the village of Bitton, includes the hamlets of Upton Cheyney, Willsbridge, North Common, Oldland Common and Swineford.
- 3.3 Swineshead Hundred is not yet covered by the *Victoria History of the Counties of England*, but there is an early account by Rudder (1779). A study of the history of Bitton was written by Ellacombe (1881), and more recently by Ketchley (1952).

#### Romano-British period

- 3.4 There is evidence of both prehistoric and Romano-British activity in the vicinity of Bitton. The former is evidenced by the earthwork on Barrow Hill c.300m south-west of the study area. The Roman period is represented by the Roman road, known as the *Via Julia*, between *Abonae* (Sea Mills) and *Aquae Sulis* (Bath) the line of which is followed by the modern A431 Bath Road through the village. It is postulated that the settlement of *Trajectus*, mentioned in the Antonine Itinerary, lay in or close to the modern village of Bitton (Hebditch & Grinsell 1974, 15). In addition, numerous finds including pottery and coins have been made at various locations throughout the parish.

#### Anglo-Saxon period

- 3.5 The place-name Bitton means ‘farm on the [River] Boyd’ (Smith 1964, 75) and is Anglo-Saxon in origin. St Mary’s parish church (SMR 1247) has considerable Saxon fabric and was probably a Minster.

#### Medieval period

- 3.6 The Domesday Survey of 1086 mentions Bitton (*Betone*), which was held by Dunn from King William I (1066-87). The entry translation reads: ‘*In Swinehead Hundred. Dunn holds Bitton from the King. He held it himself before 1066. 2 hides; 1 of them paid tax, the other belonged to the Church. In lordship 2 ploughs; 5 villagers and 2 smallholders with 5 ploughs. 4 slaves; meadow, 10 acres. The value was £6; now £3* (Moore 1982, 78).
- 3.7 In 1151 the manor of Bitton, along with other estates, was granted to Robert FitzHarding. In 1287 Robert Harding sold the manor to Robert de Hanham. By the 1320’s the manor was owned by Richard Le Blount and the Blount family retained ownership for the next 200 years or so.
- 3.8 In 1952 an excavation (Boon 1953) was undertaken on the site of a purported ‘‘Roman Camp’’ (SMR 1245; SAM). However, no evidence of Roman occupation was recorded, indeed it was concluded that the date of construction of the earthwork could be no earlier than the 13th century. Together with the results of a geophysical survey of the site by Bristol University in 2002, the ‘‘Roman Camp’’ is now thought more likely to be the northern parts of two medieval crofts or tenements that originally fronted onto Bitton High Street.

## **Sixteenth Century**

- 3.9 In 1515 Lady Margaret Hussey, only child and heiress of Sir Simon Blount, died and the estate (including the manor of Bitton) passed to her husband John Lord Hussey. The manor was then sold to Sir Maurice Berkeley and it remained in the ownership of the Berkeley family until 1633 when the manor was dismembered and sold to various persons.

## **Seventeenth Century**

- 3.10 By 1652 Sir John Newton of Barr's Court was claiming the rights of the manor. However, the manorial rights and much of the property was separated from the manor house probably prior to when Sir John acquired the manor. By 1660 the manor house was owned by John Dennis, Esq. Later created a baronet, Sir John Newton died without issue in 1661, and his estates and titles passed to his distant cousin Thomas Newton, Esq. of Hatherthorp (Lincs.), who became the 2<sup>nd</sup> baron Newton.

## **Eighteenth Century**

- 3.11 In 1722 John Dennis's daughter, Mrs Mary Butler, sold the manor house to Thomas Edwards, Esq., an eminent solicitor in Bristol. From the Edwards family it passed by will to Thomas Edwards Freeman, Esq., from whom it descended to Sir Thomas Edwards Freemantle, Bart. (later Lord Cottesloe), who in 1847 sold it to the Ellacombe family.
- 3.12 In 1743 on the death of Sir Michael Newton, 4th baronet, the baronetcy became extinct. His widow, Margaret Countess Coningsby, lived until 1761 when the estate was sold. The Bitton lands were later purchased by the Whittuck family of Hanham Hall.
- 3.13 By 1761 William Champion, the owner of Warmley brass works, was seeking new business partners to invest in his Warmley Company. Charles Whittuck of Hanham Hall, who owned coal mines in the area, Charles Bragge (later Lord Bathurst) of Cleve Hill, another coal owner, and Norborne Berkeley (later Lord Botetourt) of Stoke Park, M.P. for Gloucestershire, each decided to invest in his enterprise. The investment made by these partners and others (including Thomas Goldney) allowed Champion to expand spelter, copper and brass production. In order to achieve this growth new premises were opened, to augment those at Warmley, including battery mills (known as Bitton Mill) on the River Boyd at Bitton.
- 3.14 Due partly to a failure to be granted a Charter of Incorporation in 1768, which, it was argued by competitors, would give the Warmley Co. a monopoly, the company went bankrupt. In March 1769 the works at Warmley, Bitton and Kelston were sold at auction to the Brass Battery, Wire & Copper Company of Bristol.
- 3.15 The mill pond at Bitton Mill was known as 'Soapers Pool' in 1777.
- 3.16 In 1787 '*all the works, mills, estates and utensils*' of the United Brass Battery, Wire & Copper Company of Bristol were sold to a group of Bristol merchants. The new company committee consisted of ten members, six of them Harfords, led by Mark Harford of Blaise Castle House, Henbury. The new company was named Harfords & Bristol Brass & Copper Company and was valued at £100,000.
- 3.17 By 1796 the influence of Joseph Harford, banker (a partner in Ames, Cave & Co.), led to it often being referred to as the 'Joseph Harford & Bristol Brass Company'.

### **Nineteenth Century**

- 3.18 In 1825 Bitton Mill was bought by Thomas Bevan and converted into a paper mill. The paper making process essentially involved boiling rags with bleach and lime before they were shredded into pulp and then pressed and rolled.
- 3.19 The 1843 tithe apportionment (BRO EP/A/32/8) records that 'Bitton Mill' was then the property of William Bevan. The mill pond was then known as 'Sopers' Pool'.
- 3.20 The paper mill burnt down in 1849 and Messrs. Sommerville of Edinburgh purchased the premises and had the works rebuilt and enlarged. William Sommerville, the mill owner in 1859, lived at 'The Lons', a house he had built in 5 acres of gardens, below Redfield Hill, between the village and Willsbridge.
- 3.21 Bitton Mill was rebuilt again in 1876 after another fire. Apparently only the machine room survived the fire.
- 3.22 John Whittuck, of Hanham Hall, sold his Bitton estate to G. H. Leonard, Esq. of Clifton, Bristol in 1878.
- 3.23 By 1881 the paper mill was known as Golden Valley Mills and it employed some 400 people manufacturing 30-35 tons per week of writing, envelope and Government paper.

### **Twentieth Century**

- 3.24 William Sommerville sold the mill to the King-Smith family *c.*1900. They lived at Bitton Hill House, which is located some 300m north-west of the study area, overlooking the works.
- 3.25 Until 1932 the mills generated the electricity supply to the village.
- 3.26 In 1961 the paper mill closed, being bought the following year by Pressed Fibre Limited. The works was then used to manufacture Morris 1100 bucket seats, which were made from moulded wood pulp. By 1968 the site was occupied by British Moulded Fibre (BMF).
- 3.27 The site was redeveloped between late 1976 and 1982 to the current layout with the former mill pond being infilled in two phases. A small number of 19th-century mill buildings were retained, including the Old Press and PIM Fibre Shops. The Dacora Building, fronting on the High Street, includes elements of the old Phoenix iron foundry (*c.*1900-55). New factory buildings were erected on the site of the former mill pond.
- 3.28 The site was purchased by Marley in 1985. Magna bought it in 1996 and still retain ownership of the buildings and land. Plastic moulding for interior fittings for the car industry commenced in 1999, although wood fibre moulding continued until 2002. Production ceased on site in 2006.

#### 4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

- 4.1 Several previous archaeological projects have taken place in the vicinity of the study area. A trawl of the South Gloucestershire Council Historic Environment Record (HER) was provided by Paul Driscoll (HER Assistant). Several entries are recorded within the study area itself and in the surrounding area (see **Fig. 11**) in general and are summarised in **Table 1** below:

**Table 1: Summary of South Gloucestershire Council Historic Environment Record (HER) trawl**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Year/Period</b>
1245	Playing Field	Earthwork Enclosure(s)	C13
2244	Mill Lane	Bitton Mill	C18-C20
3946	Playing Field	Bronze dog figurine	Roman
10348	Bitton	Settlement	Saxon/Medieval
10641	Mill Lane	Methodist Chapel	1859
10642	Bath Road	Wesleyan Chapel (closed)	1834
12543	Golden Valley Lane	Foundry (Bush & Wilton)	C17-Mid C19
12655	Playing Field	Archaeological Watching Brief	1998
13271	Bitton Mill	Gatehouse & Canteen	C19
13272	No.131 High Street	3-Bay Stable	C19
14229	Golden Valley Lane	Archaeological Assessment	2002
14603	River Boyd	Bridge (site of)	C19
14706	Golden Valley Lane	Foundry (Bush & Wilton)	C18-C19
16358	Playing Field	Geophysical Survey	2002
17632	Golden Valley Lane	Machine Shop (Bush & Wilton)	C18-C19
17633	Golden Valley Lane	Stores (Bush & Wilton)	C18-C19
17634	Golden Valley Lane	Fetling Shop (Bush & Wilton)	C18-C19
17635	High Street	Pattern Shop (Bush & Wilton)	C18-C19
17636	Golden Valley Lane	Medieval Ditch	2002
17637	Golden Valley Lane	Medieval Ditch	2002
17638	Golden Valley Lane	Medieval Ditch	2002

- 4.2 There are three entries on the Historic Environment Record (HER) located within the study area itself.

## 5. CARTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

- 5.1 The earliest detailed cartographic evidence of the study area is on a 1769 map titled *'Map of the Country 11 miles round the City of Bristol'* (**Fig. 4**), which shows 'Battering Mills' in Bitton, thereby confirming the existence of the brass mill by that date, the year it is recorded as having been bought by the Brass Battery, Wire & Copper Co. of Bristol.
- 5.2 An 1814 parish map of Bitton called *'Plan of Part of Gloster-Shire shewing particularly the Parish of Bitton'* (**Fig. 5**) shows 'Bitton Brass Works'. Although no mill pond is shown, other documentary sources confirm its' presence by at least that date.
- 5.3 Interpretation of the tithe map of 1843 (**Fig. 6**) for the parish of Bitton was greatly hampered by the damage/wear to the tithe map itself. Much of the study area, as originally shown on the map, has been erased. All that is visible is the mill pond (39), the mill building (39) and a couple of small plots of land (38 & ?). However, this map is important as it is the earliest known cartographic representation of the mill pond.

Landowner	Occupier	No.	Name	State of Cultivation	Quantities		
					<i>a</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
William Bevan	William Bevan	39	Mill Pond	Water	9	2	29
		39a	Withy Bed	Withy	5	1	2
		40	Eight houses & gardens	-	-	2	32
		88	Five Acres	Pasture	5	1	34
		175	Second Hill	-----Do-----	3	-	19
		176	Middle Hill	-----Do-----	2	-	22
		178	First Hill	-----Do-----	1	1	34
		878	In Holm Mead	Mead	4	-	8
	James Parsons	38	Bridge Ground	Arable	1	-	20
Sir Thomas Freemantle, Bart.	James Parsons	163	Leg	Pasture	-	2	5
	Henry Pedlingham	162	Part of Sopers' Pool	-----Do-----	2	2	4
		69	Veltam and pond leg	-----Do-----	10	1	5
Sir Thomas Freemantle, Bart. on lease from Samuel Whittuck	Henry Pedlingham	162a	Part of Sopers' Pool	-----Do-----	1	-	4
James Bush Flower Exor. Of the late George	John Henry Cater	161	Sopers' Pool	-----Do-----	1	-	7
Methodist Society	Methodist Society	37	Chapel & Yard	-	-	-	32
Samuel Whittuck	James Parsons	160	The Hams	Pasture	2	3	34

**Table 3: Extract from 1843 Bitton Tithe Apportionment (BRO)** (see **Fig. 6** for map)

- 5.4 The First Edition Ordnance Survey plan (1:2500 scale) (**Fig. 7**), surveyed in 1881, shows several changes to the study area, all apparently associated with the mill having been substantially enlarged, probably most structural alterations dating from its' re-building after two disastrous fires in 1849 and 1876.

- 5.5 The study area is shown, on the Second (1902) and Third Edition (1912) (**Fig. 8**) Ordnance Survey plans (1:2500), as being largely unaltered. Neither the present gatehouse or the canteen appear though on the latter plan, indicating that they were built sometime after 1912.
- 5.6 The O.S. 1:10,560 plan of 1960 (**Fig. 9**) shows few alterations other than the gatehouse and canteen had been built by that date.
- 5.7 The 1981 Ordnance Survey plan (1:10,000) (**Fig. 10**) shows the study area much as it appears today, except for the pond to the east of the study area, a remnant of the former mill pond. The pond was then still about twice as large as today and partly encroached within the study area, the eastern extension of the New Press Shop having not yet been built. The Old Press Shop and PIM Fibre Shop also appear to be roofless. There also is a building, possibly the Pump House, in the area of the Main Car Park. The mill cottages, which may have dated from the late 18th century, had been demolished sometime after 1960.
- 5.8 Since 1981 there has been only one other major change within the study area. The former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, largely unaltered since it was built in 1834, and despite being a locally listed building, was subsequently partly demolished with the remaining portion being converted into a garage.

## 6. AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

### General

- 6.1 A number of vertical air-photographs obtained from the National Monuments Record Centre (NMRC) in Swindon were examined (Enquiry No. AP 33722). The available photographs were studied in accordance with standard procedures for air-photograph analysis (Brophy & Cowley 2005; Wilson 2000).
- 6.2 None of the vertical air-photographs incorporating the study area have been selected for inclusion in this report, largely because they were taken from too high an altitude to be of much use. However, three oblique air-photographs (**Plates 2, 3 & 4**) taken in 1935, 1966 and 1986 and made available by Mr. A. Wilmott and Ms. H. Lease (see Acknowledgements), have been selected for inclusion.



## 7. GEOTECHNICAL WATCHING BRIEF

### General

- 7.1 All groundworks were carried out using 360° mechanical excavators utilising toothed grading buckets. Hydrock Consultants Limited had been contracted to undertake a programme of geotechnical site investigation employing two principal sampling strategies, firstly, the drilling of 7 bore holes across the study area and secondly, the excavation of some 40 trial pits across the part of the study area occupied by the mill buildings and former mill pond. Samples of deposits would then be taken in order to ascertain the levels of ground contamination from potentially hazardous substances. The archaeological monitoring concentrated on the latter investigation activity.
- 7.2 The watching brief was carried out over a period of 4 days between 24th November and 4 December 2008 and involved monitoring the excavation of 11 of the 40 trial pits. Of these only 3 trial pits (TP's 2, 4 & 6) excavated in the Northwestern Yard area, on the site of former mill buildings demolished during the redevelopment of the site from the late 1970's, were observed to contain significant structural remains. None of the trial pits excavated on the site of the former mill pond were monitored.

### Trial Pit 2

- 7.3 The trench (**Plate 15**), which measured some 5m long x 1m wide, was found to contain two substantial, parallel stone-built walls (contexts 204 & 205) set approximately 1.9m apart. They were aligned roughly E-W and were constructed of Pennant sandstone bonded with dark greyish brown lime-flecked mortar. Each wall survived to within about 0.2m of the ground surface. The gap between the two walls was partly occupied by a cast iron pipe, some 100mm in diameter, which appeared to transect the trench. The gap between the two walls had been infilled, apparently post-demolition, with a mixed rubble fill composed of stones, bricks, clinker, slag and ash in a matrix of black sandy gravel fill (202). A layer of Type-1 stone chippings (201) had then been laid across the area prior to the depositing of a layer of tarmac (200).

### Trial Pit 4

- 7.4 This trench (**Plate 16**), which also measured approximately 5m long x 1m wide, also contained substantial structural remains, and was located several metres east of TP 2. A large stone-built wall (405), at least 0.5m wide, constructed of Pennant sandstone, was observed towards the east end of the trench, surviving to a height in excess of 0.6m. It transected the trench and appeared to be aligned NW/SE, which correlates with the known alignment of several walls belonging to former mill buildings in that area. Apparently contemporary with the latter structure was a stone-built arched culvert entrance/exit (404). The apex of the arch was some 0.4 – 0.5m above the surface of the oily contaminated ground water that proceeded to fill the base of the trench. The culvert entrance/exit itself was largely full of yellowish brown clayey silt (406). Springing from the wall above the arch was the remnant of a brick-built barrel-vaulted roof, which presumably originally spanned the area beyond the arch. The trench had been infilled, post-demolition, by a fill deposit almost identical to that recorded in TP 2, except it included several large blocks of brickwork that had once formed parts of the vaulted roof.

### Trial Pit 6

- 7.5 Another trench (**Plate 17**), measuring approximately 5m long x 1 m wide, was mechanically excavated several metres south-west of TP 4. The same fill deposit (602) as was recorded in both TP's 2 and 4 was recorded beneath the modern layers of tarmac (600) and Type-1 stone

scalpings (601). However, it soon became apparent that a substantial stone wall (604), in excess of 1.5m high, was present in the east-facing section. It appeared likely that it had formed the west-side of a culvert aligned roughly N-S, possibly associated with the structure (404) recorded in TP 4. Beneath fill 602 was a layer of wooden boards and other debris (603), beneath which was groundwater heavily contaminated with oil.

- 7.6 No other features or deposits of archaeological significance, other than layers of demolition rubble, were observed and no artefacts pre-dating the modern period were recovered during intrusive groundwork in several other trial pits (**Plates 18 & 19**) excavated in the modern building on the west side of the old mill site. Likewise, no significant deposits were recorded in a trial pit excavated beyond the south-east-end of the Old Press Shop, just west of the south-west edge of the former mill pond.
- 7.7 Five trial pits were proposed for excavation within the Old Press Shop (**Plate 20**) and the PIM Fibre Shop. Excavation work had commenced in the first of these, and in-situ structures had been noted, when health and safety considerations dictated the evacuation of the buildings while a structural survey of the roofs was carried out. Unfortunately, the report timetable did not allow for a return for further monitoring at a later date.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 *Planning and Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16, 1990) highlights the fragility and finite nature of England's archaeological resource. It is stressed that, depending on the particular circumstances involved, significant archaeological remains should be preserved, whether physically or 'by record' (Breeze 1993; Cullingworth & Nadin 1994).
- 8.2 Several previous archaeological investigations have taken place in the vicinity of the study area. In addition to an archaeological excavation of the purported 'Roman' earthwork (SMR 1245; SAM) located in the nearby playing field in 1952 (Boon 1953), and a desktop study, building survey and trial excavation (SMR 14229) on the site of the former Bush & Wilton iron foundry (SMR 12543) west of Golden Valley Lane in early 2002 (Ducker 2002), two other programmes of archaeological fieldwork have taken place within 300m of the study area. In 1998 (SMR 12655) Mr David Evans of South Gloucestershire Council carried out a watching brief on part of the playing fields, but no finds or features were noted, while in 2002 a team from Bristol University undertook a geophysical survey (SMR 16358) of the nearby earthworks.
- 8.3 It is likely that most of the study area (*areal units 508, 509, 511, 512, 516 & 517 on 1<sup>st</sup> Edition O.S.*) has been subject to much disturbance, associated with the construction of the brass mill buildings and excavation of the mill pond in the 1760's, plus reconstruction and new build *c.*1849 and post-1876 associated with the paper mills and the late 1970's/early 1980's wood pulp/fibre works. Associated with that the partial re-channelling (inc. sluices and weirs) of the River Boyd and landscaping work may have had a negative impact on any archaeological remains. Therefore one might normally expect poor preservation of any archaeological features and deposits present. However, the watching brief identified in-situ archaeological features and deposits associated with the brass mill/paper mill in several of the trial pits, specifically TP's 2, 4 and 6 in the Northwestern Yard area of the site.
- 8.4 In addition to recording the preservation of in-situ archaeological remains the programme of archaeological work has also determined that several extant buildings pre-dating the redevelopment of the site in the late 1970's/early 1980's are present within the study area. Apart from the three locally listed buildings (listed by the local planning authority), specifically the Gatehouse & Canteen (SMR 13271) belonging to the paper mill and the former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel (SMR 10642), the Old Press Shop and the PIM Fibre Shop belonging to the 19th century paper mill also survive. The latter buildings may also include elements of the 18th century brass mill. It is also known that the Dacora building, which fronts on the High Street, incorporates parts of the *c.*1900 Phoenix iron foundry.
- 8.5 The existence of at least two 'tunnels' beneath the present works are also known of (ERM Report 2006). Apparently these culverts were used, during the works period as a paper mill, to flush rags and other waste materials used in the paper-making process into the river Boyd when the sluice gate from the mill pond was opened. These 'tunnels' are thought to be located, in places, to within 1m of the current ground surface. In more recent decades, unfortunately, both have been utilised as a depository for waste oil and other hazardous materials, which they were found to still contain during the latest geotechnical investigation.
- 8.6 Associated with the brass mill/paper mill was a row of eight mill cottages, which stood on the site of the current reception car park (next to Mill Lane) from at least 1843. They were demolished in the late 1960's.
- 8.7 During the examination of photocopies of aerial photographs from the collection of the National Monuments Record Centre (NMRC) in Swindon, few significant features were noted within the study area partly because the site has been largely occupied by buildings for the last 250 years or so and partly because most of the vertical air-photos were taken from high

altitude. Three oblique photographs dating from 1935, 1966 and 1986 do though provide useful visual information of how the site changed over the 50-year period. When a site visit was conducted in early December, particular attention was paid to the portions of the study area where any such changes were observed.

- 8.8 It is understood that proposals for the study area include importing inert material on to site, post demolition, in order to build-up the ground level within the site to minimize the risk of flooding from the nearby River Boyd, prior to any new build. Any new buildings would then probably require piled foundations.
- 8.9 Despite this recent archaeological investigation and monitoring it is considered possible that further archaeological work may be required by the Archaeological Officer of South Gloucestershire Council in advance of any redevelopment of the study area. Further work could involve a programme of building recording concentrating particularly on known historic (pre-1970's) structures (ie. mill buildings, the iron foundry, and the chapel) within the study area, plus an archaeological evaluation. This latter intervention would involve the mechanical excavation of a number of trenches across the site in order to determine the presence of in-situ archaeological remains and deposits. These investigations could, in turn, have implications for both any additional archaeological work as well as the permitted design and extent of any proposed scheme of redevelopment.

## 9. SOURCES CONSULTED

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National Monuments Record Centre (NMRC), Swindon  
South Gloucestershire Council Historic Environment Record (HER), Kingswood

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- 1814            *'Plan of Part of Gloster-Shire shewing particularly the Parish of Bitton'*
- 1843            *'A Map of the Parish of Bitton in the County of Gloucester'*. Tithe map & Apportionment. (BRO EP/A/32/8)
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## **10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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This report was compiled by Timothy Longman (Project Officer, BaRAS) and produced by Ann Linge (Design & Production Officer, BaRAS) of Bristol and Region Archaeological Services.

The project was managed by Bruce Williams (Manager, BaRAS).

## **APPENDIX 1: Policy Statement**

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

### **NATIONAL POLICIES**

Statutory protection for archaeology is enshrined in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979), amended by the National Heritage Act, 1983. Nationally important sites are listed in the Schedule of Ancient Monuments (SAM). Scheduled Monument consent is required for any work which would affect a SAM.

### **ODPM PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE**

The Planning Policy Guidance of Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16) consolidates advice to planning authorities. The Guidance stresses the non-renewable nature of the archaeological resource, details the role of the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), encourages early consultation with county and district archaeological officers and sets out the requirement for developers to provide sufficient information on the archaeological impact of development to enable a reasonable planning decision to be made.

PPG 16 also indicates the circumstances where further work would be necessary and outlines the use of agreements and conditions to protect the archaeological resource.

### **LOCAL AUTHORITY POLICY**

The Planning Policy Guidance of Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16) consolidates advice to planning authorities. The Guidance stresses the non-renewable nature of the archaeological resource, details the role of the Local Authority Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), encourages early consultation with county and district council archaeological officers and sets out the requirement for developers to provide sufficient information on the impact of a development on the archaeological resource to enable a reasoned planning decision to be taken.

PPG 16 also indicates the circumstances where further work would be necessary and outlines the use of agreements and conditions to protect the archaeological resource.

South Gloucestershire Council's Local Plan (adopted January 2006) states:

#### ***Archaeology L11***

*Development which would not physically preserve sites of national archaeological importance, whether scheduled or not, or would have a significant impact on the setting of visible remains, will not be permitted.*

*Planning permission will not be granted for development on sites or landscapes of archaeological interest or of high archaeological potential without an archaeological assessment and if necessary a field evaluation.*

*Where the assessment indicates that the proposed development would harm a site, structure or landscape of archaeological or historic importance or its setting, development will not be permitted unless applicants can demonstrate a satisfactory scheme indicating how the impact of the proposal on the archaeological resource can be mitigated. The council will negotiate agreements to preserve and manage archaeological remains.*



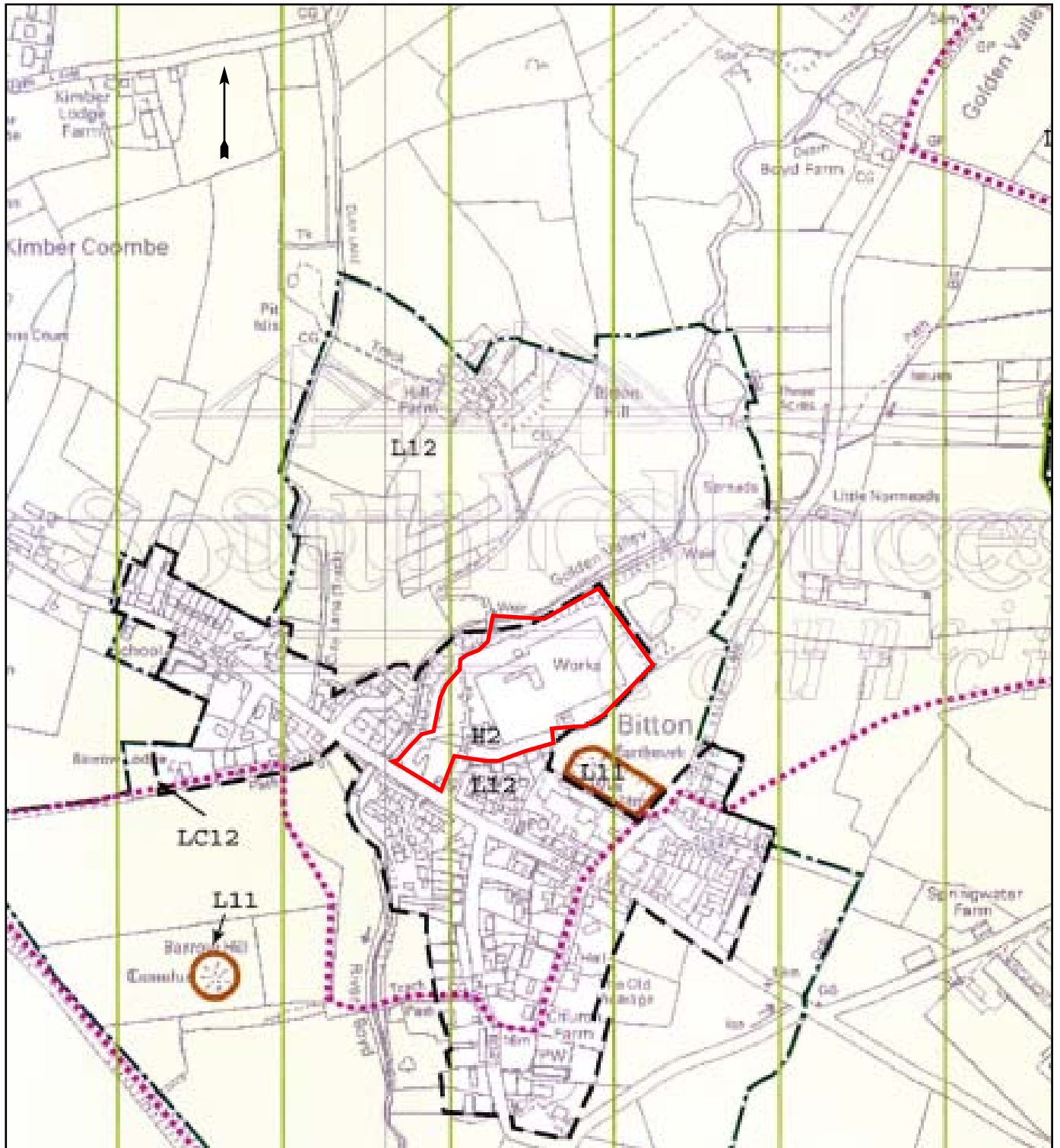


Fig.1 Site location plan, approx scale 1:7000

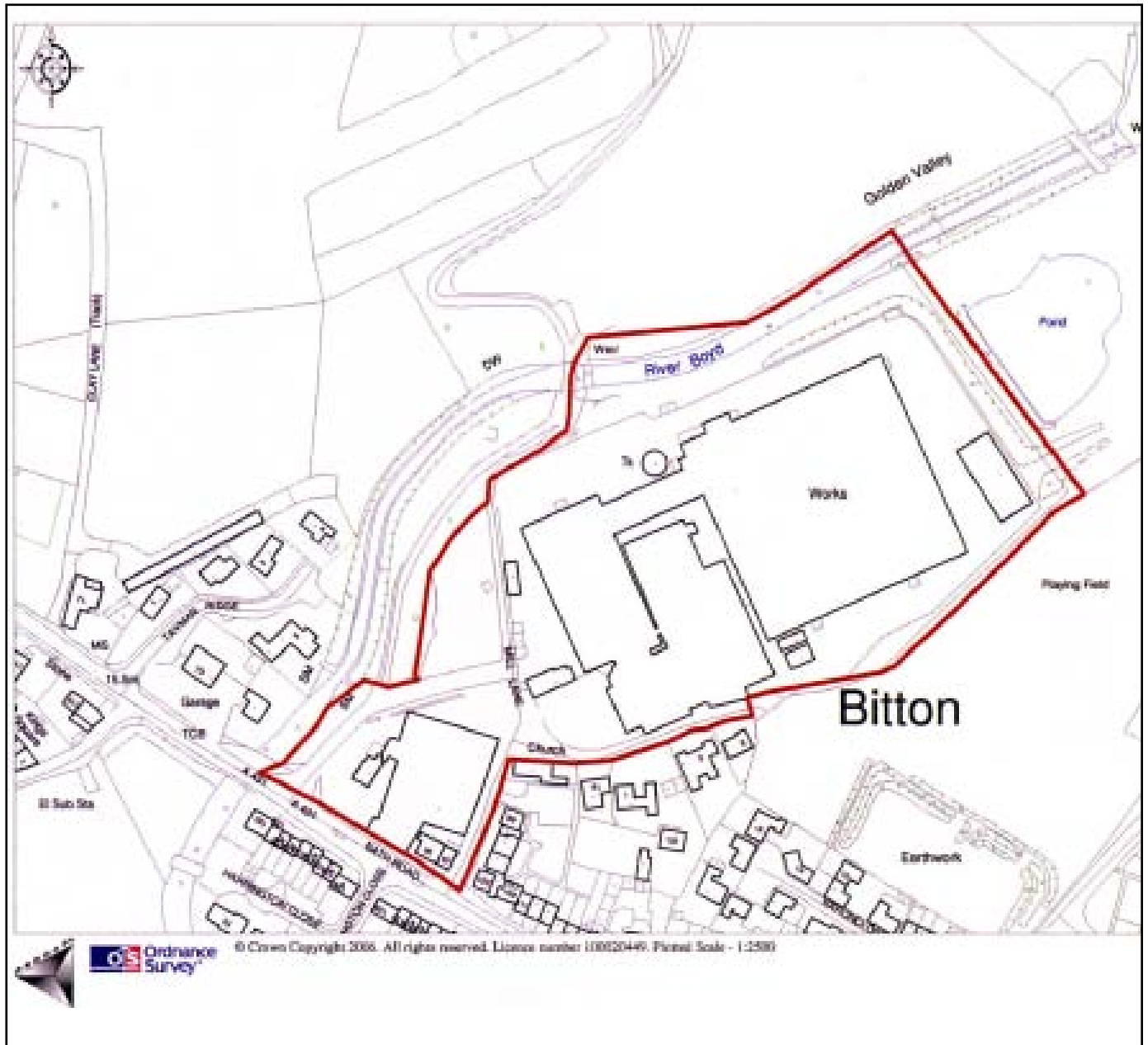


Fig.2 Site plan, scale 1:2500

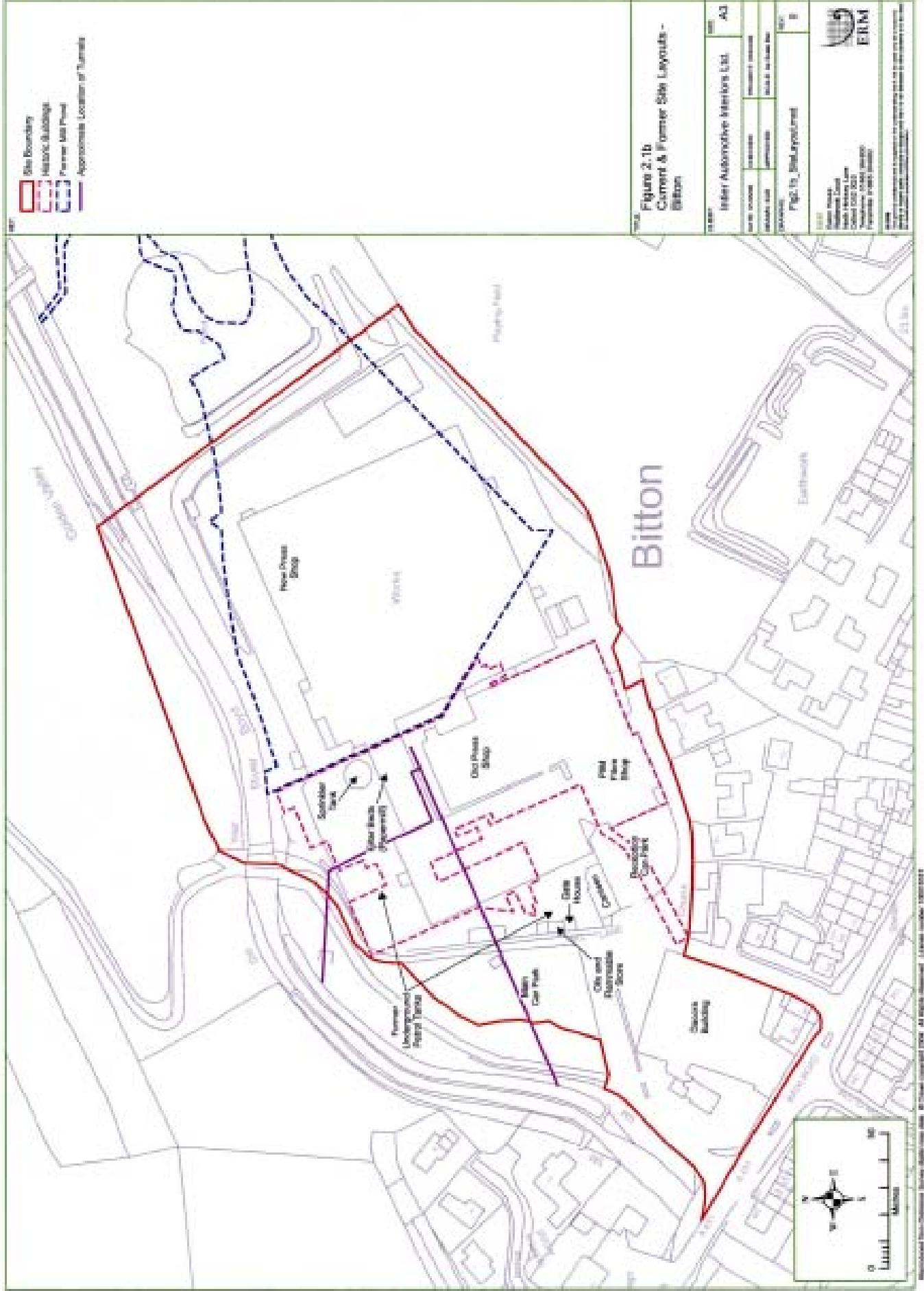


Fig.3 Current and former site layouts

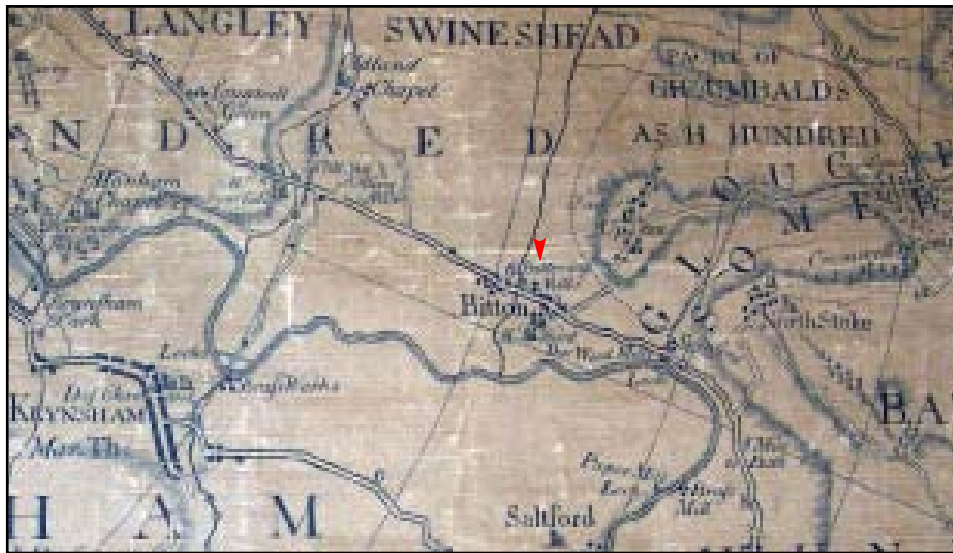


Fig.4 Extract from B. Donn's 1769 *'Map of the country 11 miles round the City of Bristol'*

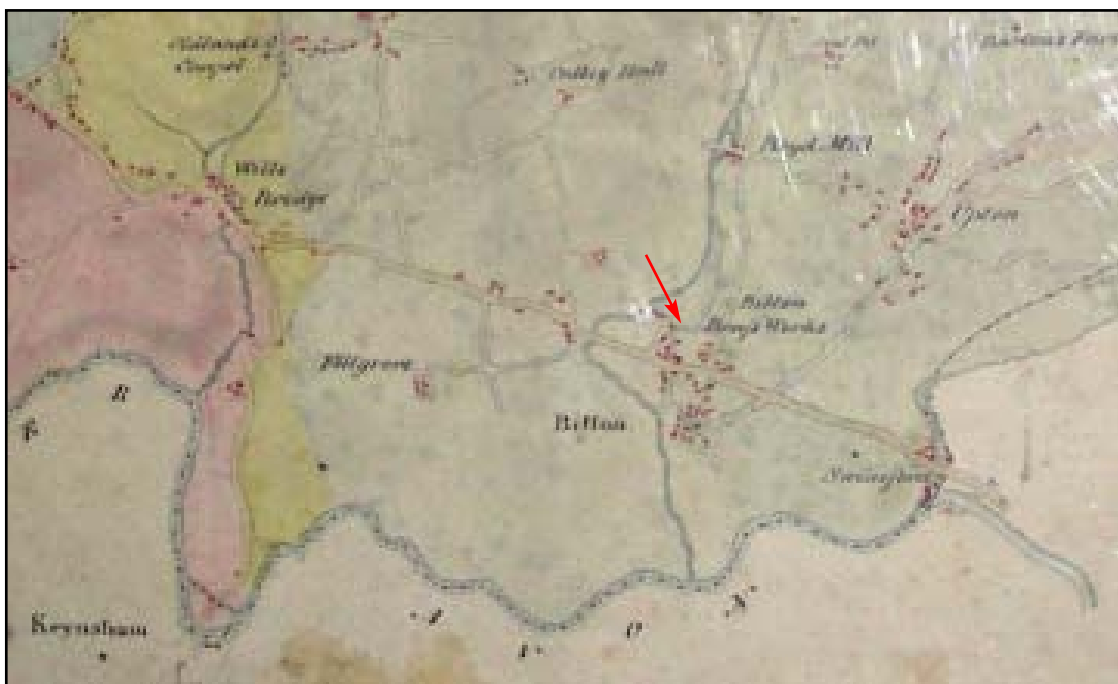


Fig.5 Extract from 1814 *'Plan of Part of Gloucestershire shewing particularly the Parish of Bitton'*



Fig.6 Extract from 1843 tithe map entitled *'A Map of the Parish of Bitton in the County of Gloucester'*

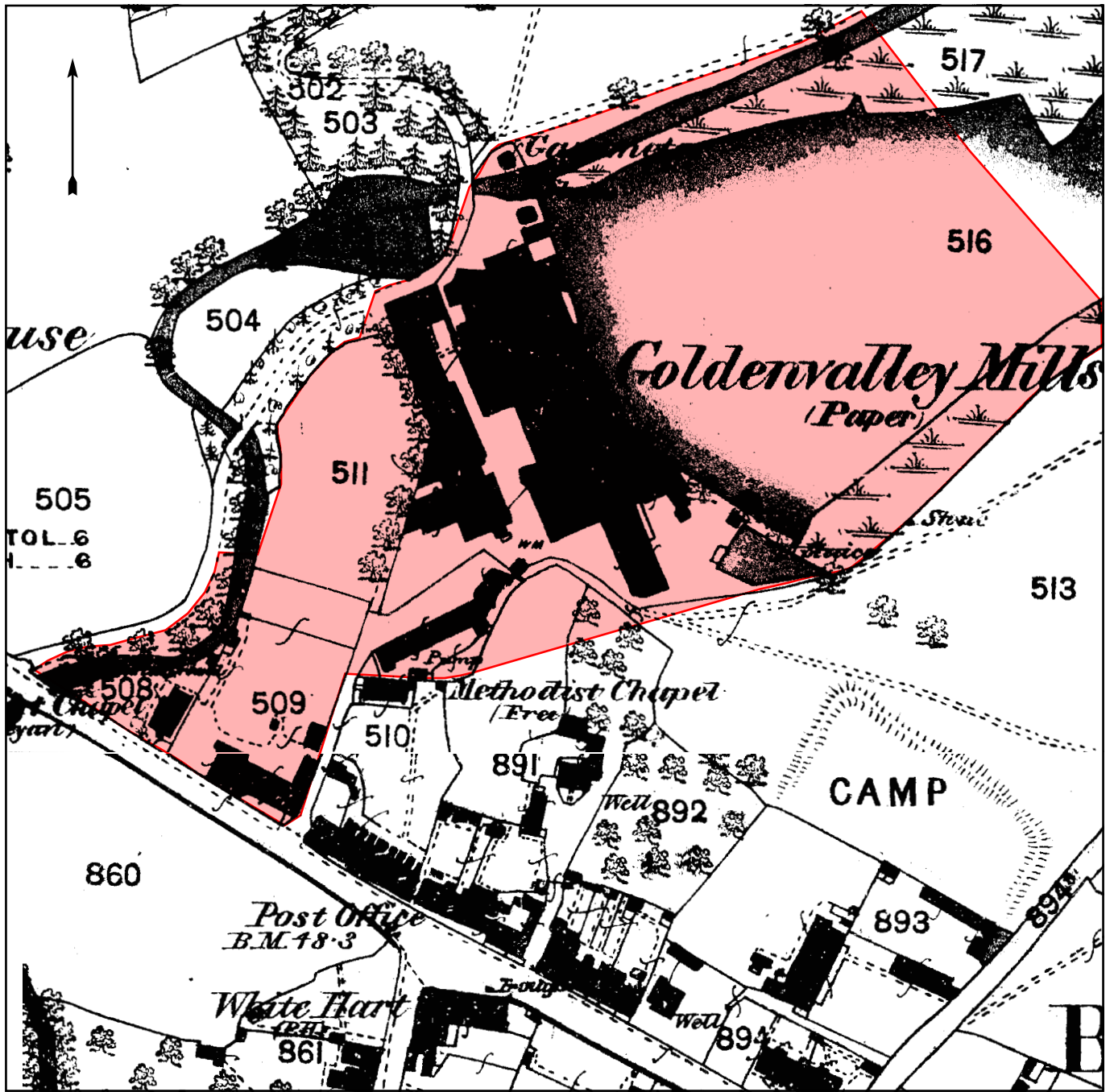


Fig.7 Extract from 1881 First Edition O.S. (1:500)

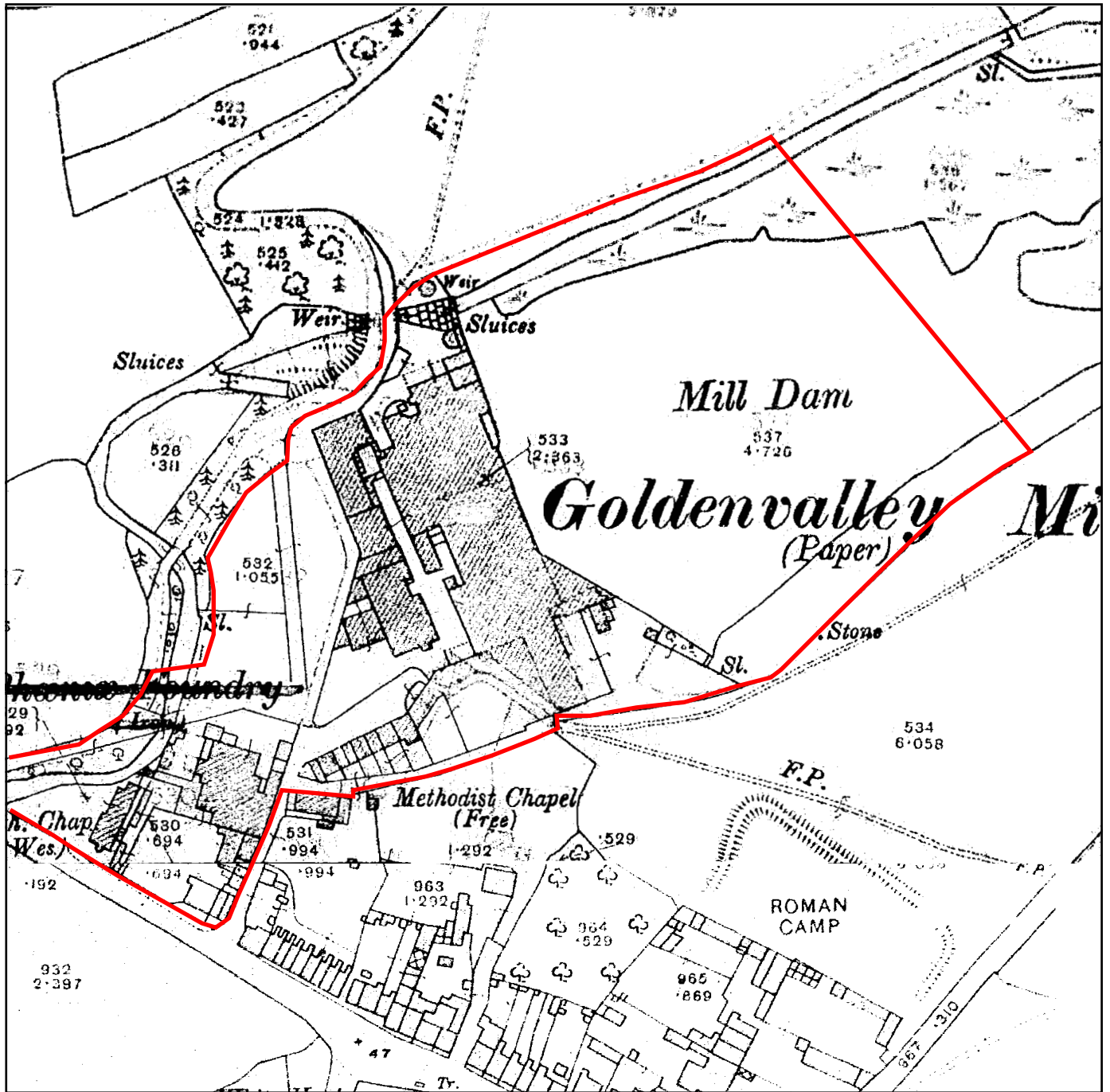


Fig.8 Extract from 1912 O.S., 1:2500

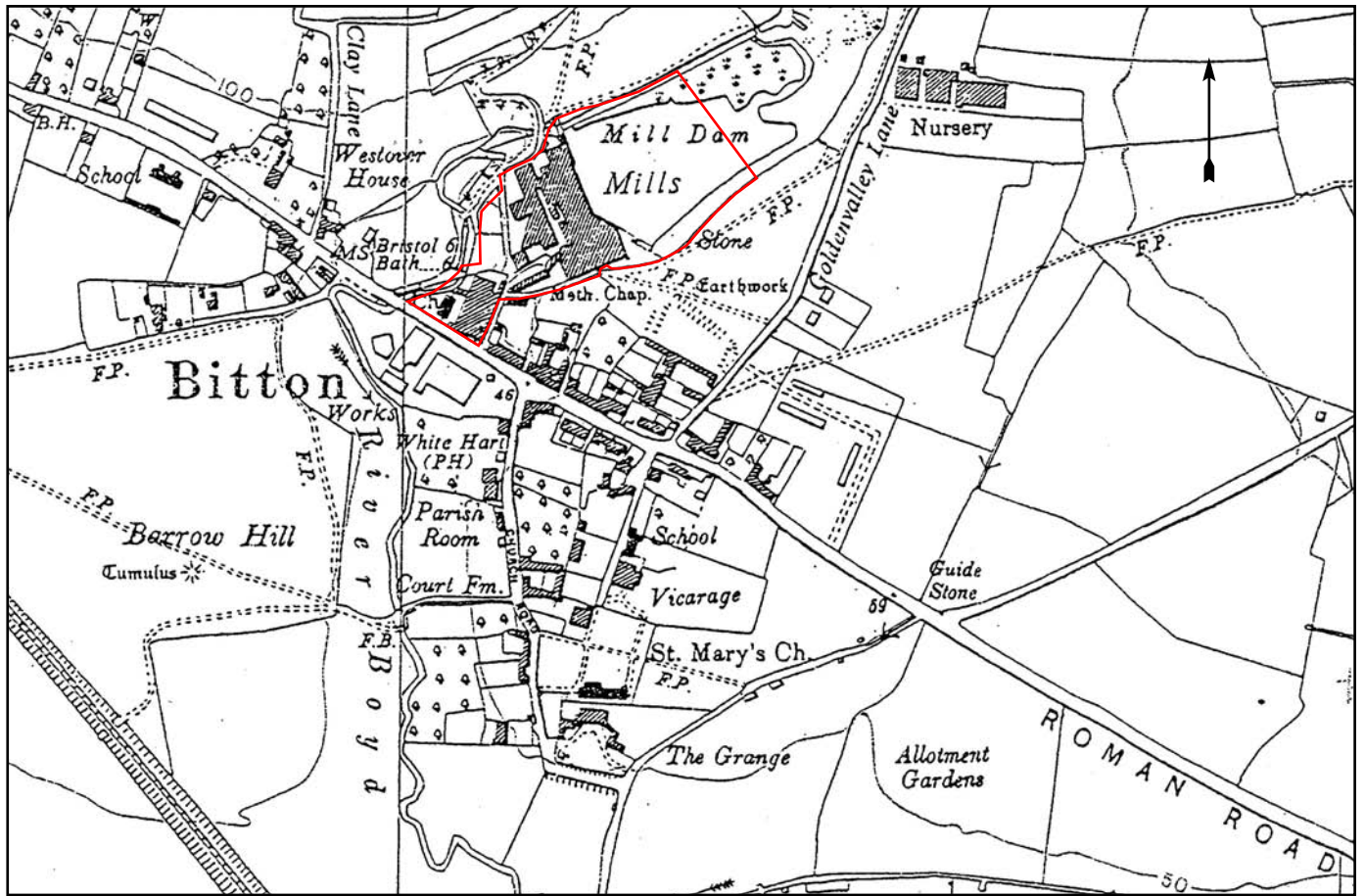


Fig.9 Extract from 1960 O.S., original scale 1:10,560

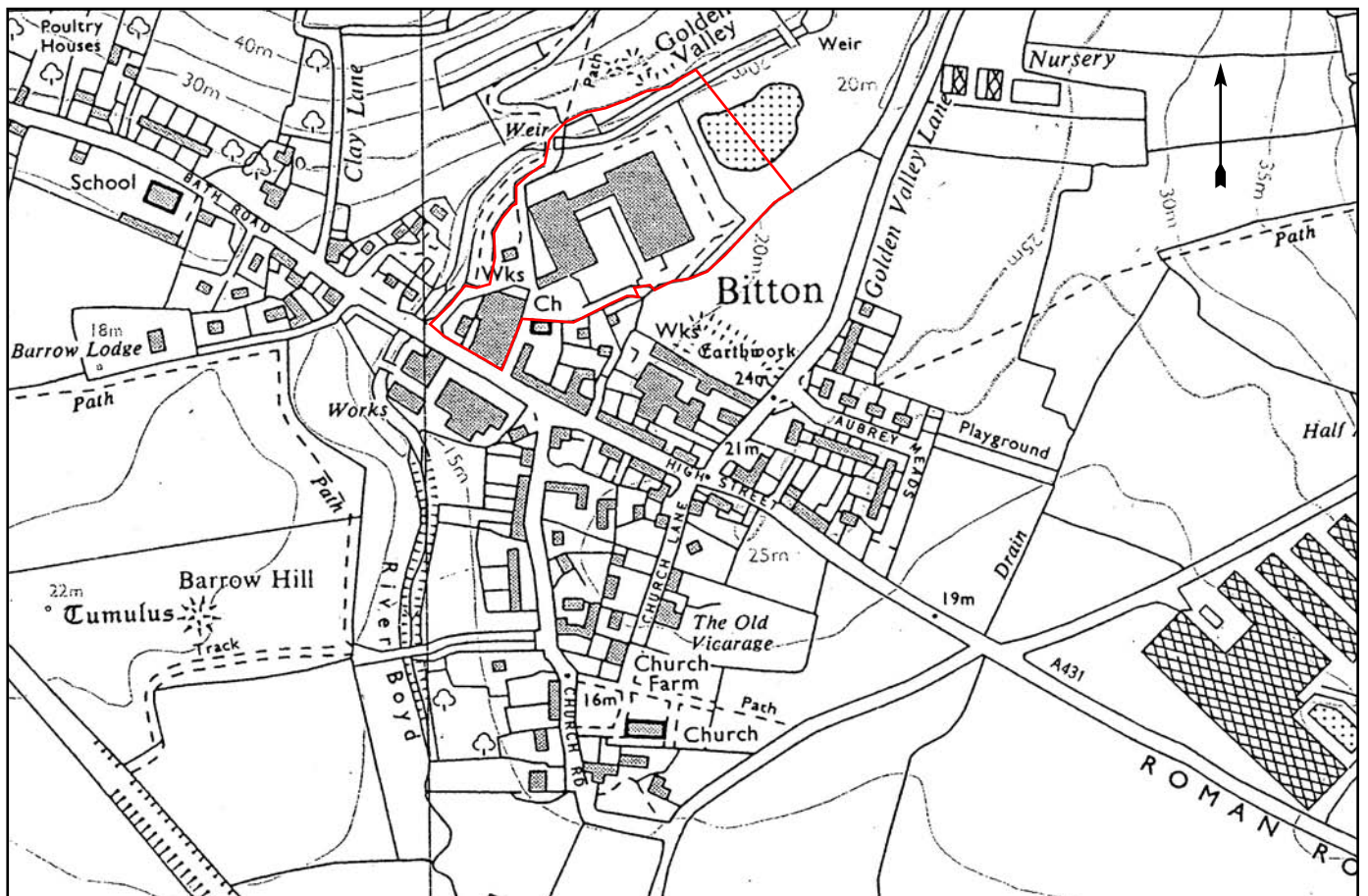


Fig.10 Extract from 1981 O.S., original scale 1:10,000

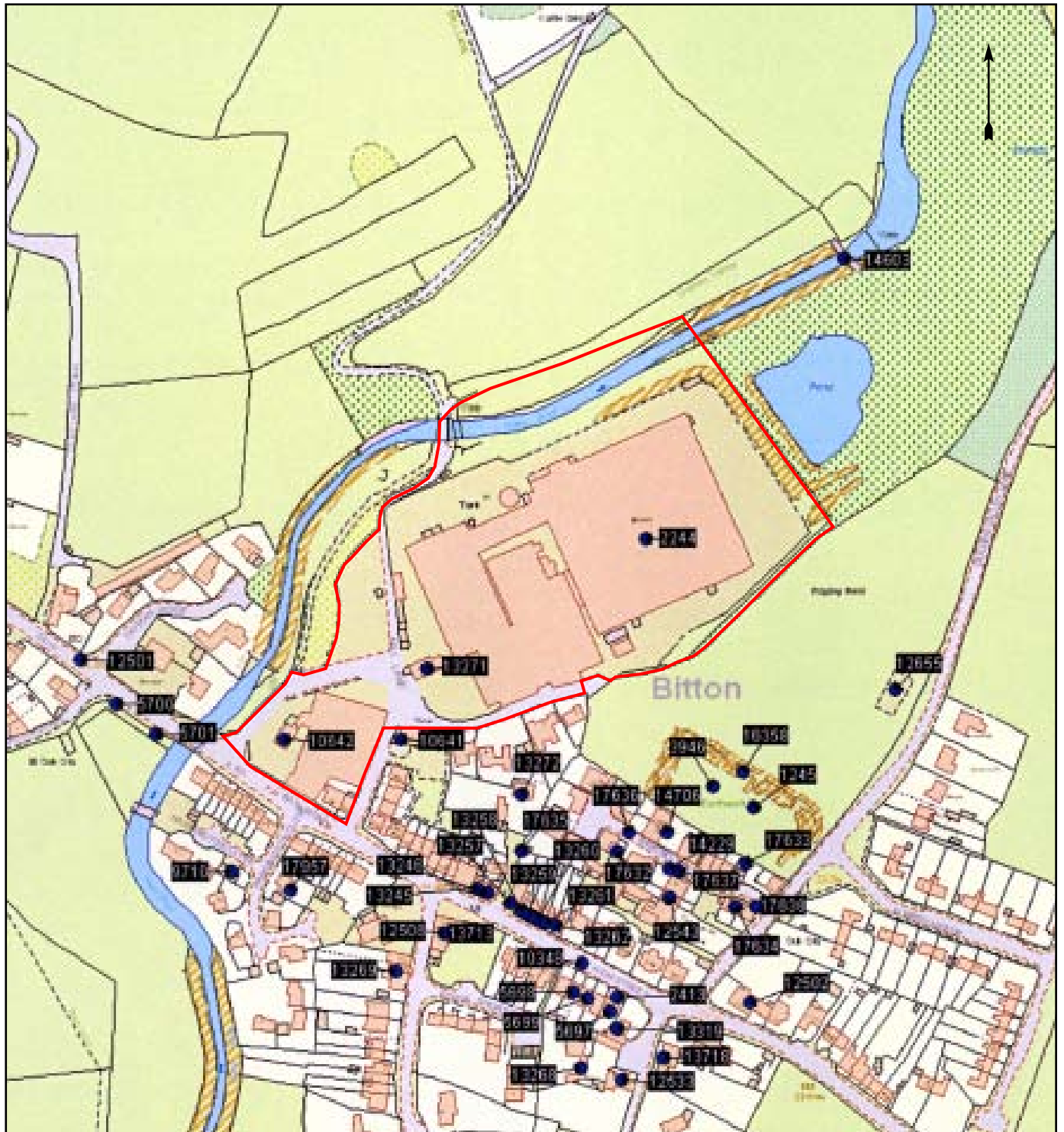


Fig.11 Plan showing location of HER entries





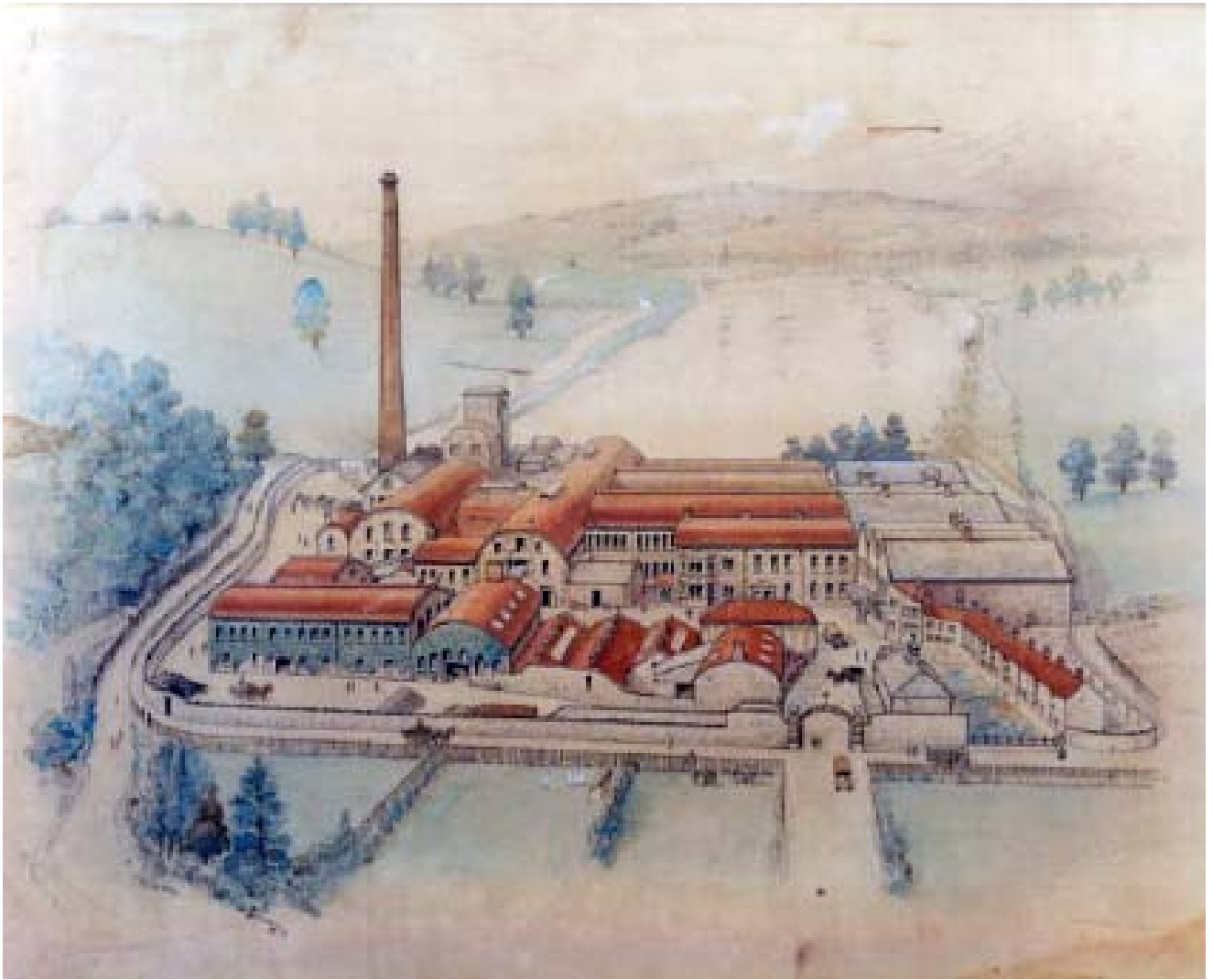


Plate 1 Circa 1900 (post 1912) painting showing Golden Valley Mills, Bitton

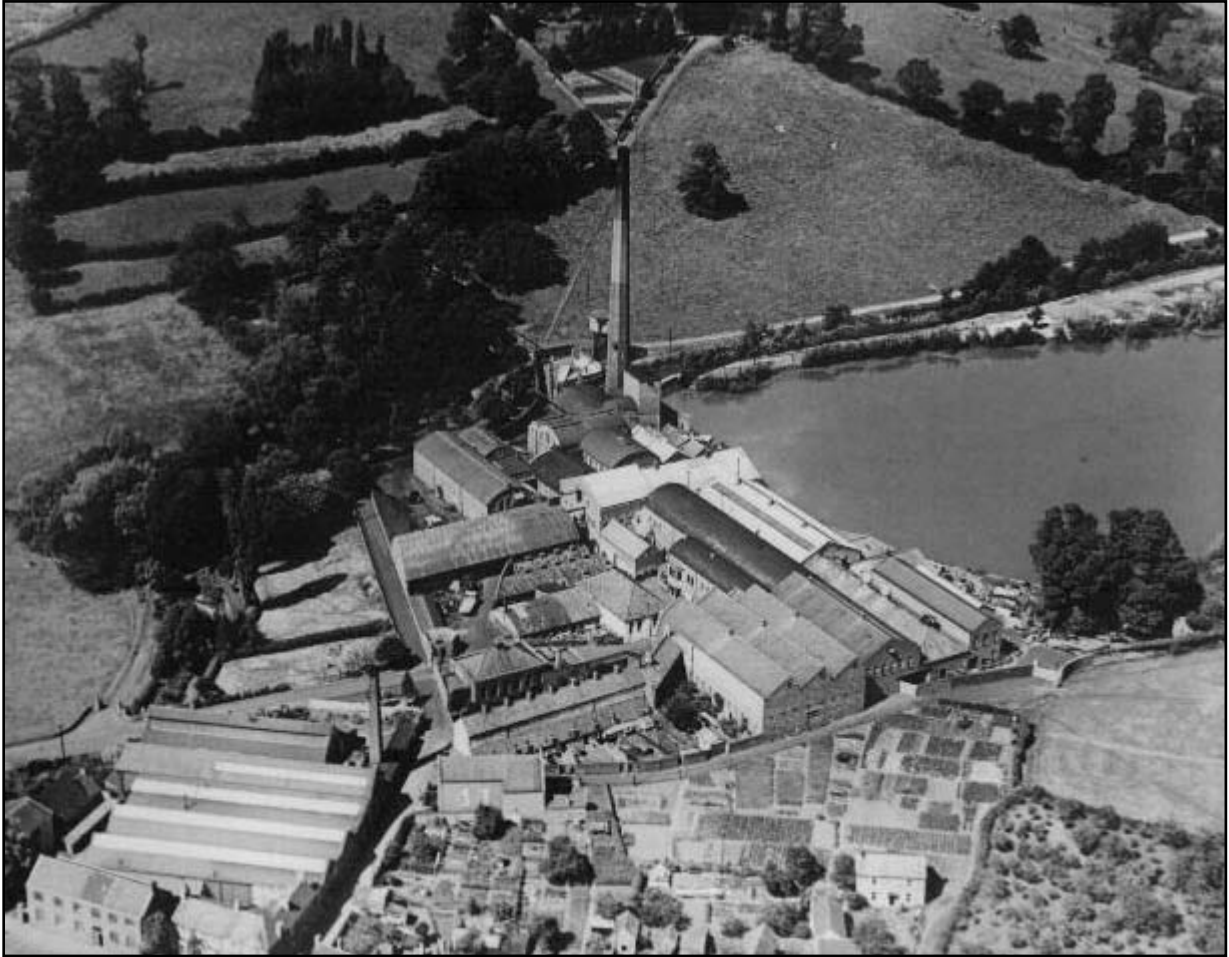


Plate 2 An oblique air-photograph of the study area in 1935, looking north



Plate 3 An oblique air-photograph of the study area in 1966, looking north



Plate 4 An oblique air-photograph of the study area in 1986, looking east



Plate 5  
The surviving part of the former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, dating from 1834 (south & south-east facing elevations)



Plate 6  
View east along the driveway towards the mill entrance



Plate 7  
The main gates of Golden Valley Mills, the entrance flanked by the gatehouse (left) and the canteen (right)



Plate 8  
Looking east towards the  
north-facing gable-ends  
of the PIM Fibre Shop



Plate 9  
Looking east across the  
Northwestern Yard, and  
the locations of TPs 2, 4  
& 6



Plate 10  
View south from the  
Northwestern Yard, the  
north-facing gable-ends  
of the Old Press Shop  
are visible in the near  
distance



Plate 11  
The south-east facing gables elevation of the Old Press Shop and the PIM Fibre Shop



Plate 12  
View north-east across the former Reception Car Park – until the 1960s occupied by a terrace of mill cottages. Left is the canteen, centre the roof of the Old Press Shop and right is the Main Reception Building



Plate 13  
View south-west down Mill Lane, towards the High Street. Right is the eastern elevation of the Dacora Building, left is the west-end of the Methodist Church



Plate 14  
The Bath Road frontage  
of the Dacora Building  
(left) with Nos. 95 & 97  
Bath Road next door  
(right)



Plate 15  
View north-east of TP 2,  
showing walls 204 (bottom  
right) and 205 (top left). An  
in-situ cast iron pipe is  
also visible



Plate 16  
North-west facing section  
in TP 4. Left is wall 405,  
next to the culvert (404)  
entrance/exit





Plate 17 Looking north along TP 6. To the left (within trench) is wall 604, the west-side of a N-S aligned culvert



Plate 18 Excavating a trial pit near the south-east corner of the Old Press Shop – looking north-east



Plate 19 Excavating a trial pit within the modern building west of the Old Press Shop – looking north



Plate 20 Interior view of the Old Press Shop – looking north. Several trial pits have been broken out, and are awaiting excavation