

Archaeological Watching Brief
at
**THE TITHE BARN,
ST. MARY'S GROVE, NAILSEA,
NORTH SOMERSET.**
for
Nailsea Town Council



Report No. 2245/2010
NSHER No. 47504



Bristol and Region Archaeological Services

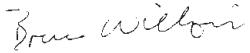

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Archaeological Watching Brief
at
**THE TITHE BARN,
ST. MARY'S GROVE, NAILSEA,
NORTH SOMERSET.**

Centred on
N.G.R. ST 4659 6990

Client: Nailsea Town Council
Agent: Prospect Landscape Design Project Management

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<i>Signature:</i>	
<i>Date Issued:</i>	20 July 2010 

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Abbreviations

AD	Anno Domini	Km	Kilometre
aOD	Above Ordnance Datum	m	Metre
BaRAS	Bristol & Region Archaeological Services	NGR	National Grid Reference
BC	Before Christ	NMR	National Monuments Record
c.	Circa	OS	Ordnance Survey
HER	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, 2010.

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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during groundworks associated with alterations and an extension to Nailsea Tithe Barn, located at Church Lane, Nailsea, Bristol BS48 4NG. Groundworks included excavation of a reduced level platform as well as foundation and service trenches. A raised floor in part of the main barn was also lowered entailing removal of the stone beams supporting it. During this alteration to the existing barn, below the raised floors, an earlier surface was located that may have been a threshing floor of 16th century date.

The exterior groundworks revealed a simple sequence of topsoil and rubble, sealing a thin subsoil and subsequently natural sandy clay. Within this were recorded a drainage feature and parallel walls forming part of a possible structure. The purpose of this structure remains unclear but it pre-dated the Edwardian school building.

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS) were commissioned by Colm O' Kelly of Prospect Landscape Design Project Management on behalf of Nailsea Town Council to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with alterations and an extension to Nailsea Tithe Barn, located at Church Lane, Nailsea, Bristol BS48 4NG.
- 1.2 The watching brief was commissioned to comply with the conditions of planning consent (North Somerset County Planning Reference 08/P/2056/F and listed building application 08/2055/LB) and in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS 2010).
- 1.3 The fieldwork was undertaken between 20 May and 11 June 2010 under the supervision of Heather Hirons, Timothy Longman and R. K. Ducker who also compiled this report.
- 1.4 The project archive will be deposited with North Somerset Museum at Weston-Super-Mare under the Accession Number WESTM 2010.6 and a copy of the report will be made available to the National Monuments Record maintained by English Heritage. The project has been entered in the North Somerset Historic Environment Record (HER) as: NSHER 47504 and in the OASIS Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations as: bristola1-71502.

2. THE SITE

- 2.1 The site (centred on NGR 4659 6990) lies on the southwest periphery of Nailsea, some 1.2 kms south-west of the town centre. It is bounded on the north by an access road and residential properties off Church Lane, to the east by Church Lane and to the south and west by St. Mary's Grove and the properties along it. The study area is relatively flat and lies at around 35m aOD.
- 2.2 The geology of the study area comprises Upper Coal Measures of the Carboniferous Period (British Geological Survey 1967).

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Prior to the present project the study area formed part of an archaeological desk-based assessment (BaRAS 2007). The full historical and archaeological background to the site is contained within this document. Relevant details are summarised below.
- 3.2 The earliest known settlement of Nailsea was probably a hamlet close to the present Holy Trinity Church (NSHER 00328). By the end of the 13th century a settlement had developed on the “island” lying between Wraxall and Backwell, which included the church. This early settlement however, never expanded to become a major centre.
- 3.3 A major factor in the later development of Nailsea was the discovery of coal there during the 15th century. The focal point of Nailsea switched again in the 19th century to the manufacture of glass.
- 3.4 The history of the Nailsea Tithe Barn (NSHER 00328) relates to its use as a repository for tithes and later, for use as a school. Hannah Moore is recorded as having used the building as a school in the late 18th and early nineteenth centuries and the building subsequently served an educational purpose until the 1970s. Since 2000 the building has been used as a community centre.
- 3.5 The barn is described as being of modest size compared to the “great Monastic tithe barns elsewhere”. The building was listed Grade II in 1973 and since 2003 has been listed Grade II*
- 3.6 Other than the desk-based study, no previous archaeological assessment has been carried out on the site or within close proximity to the site.

4. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork complied with the methodology contained within the Written Scheme of Investigation (BaRAS 2010) and also followed the *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* issued by the Institute for Archaeologists (1999). The aim of the watching brief was to record any archaeological features or deposits revealed during the course of intrusive groundworks.
- 4.2 The watching brief involved the monitoring of the mechanical excavation of a reduced level platform for the footprint of the new extension and subsequently foundation and service trenches. Raised floors in parts of the barn were also removed along with the stone beams that supported them, after which the floor level was lowered.

5. RESULTS

- 5.1 All groundworks were carried out using a 360° mechanical excavator using a toothless grading bucket.

Reduced Level Excavation (Fig. 2, Plates 1 – 4)

- 5.2 The footprint of the extension to the existing building was reduced in level from between 200mm and 500mm depth. A simple stratigraphy of topsoil, a patchy subsoil and finally weathered sandstone and sand was recorded over the majority of the footprint.

Part of a structure and a probable wall were located. The structure (101) was rectangular and of predominately drystone masonry topped off with a single course of bricks (with a mortar bond) and covered with Pennant slabs. A small concrete catchment pad with iron grill appeared to drain into the structure, which was apparently a sump for that drain.

The wall was recorded in more detail when the foundation trench around the edge of the building footprint was excavated (below).

Foundation Excavation (Fig. 2, Plates 5 & 6)

- 5.3 The footings for the extension comprised standard strip foundations approximately 500mm wide and up to 300mm deep. The wall observed was one of two that represented a probable structure of two parallel walls (102 & 103) that had been truncated at the east end by the Edwardian school building. The space between the two walls, which was approximately 2.2m wide, was filled with a soft, dark soil deposit, while the walls were cut into the surrounding weathered sandstone. The central space between the two walls was not further excavated and the purpose of the possible structure remains uncertain.

Site Services (Fig. 2, Plate 7)

- 5.4 A service trench running across the length of the extension was excavated to a maximum of 500mm below the reduced level surface. The trench was wholly excavated through subsoil (105) and natural sand/sandstone deposits (106). Further trenches excavated across the former playground, up to 800 mm deep produced similar results with tarmac sealing buried topsoil (104) and subsequently subsoil (105) that was not wholly excavated.

Floor Level Reduction (Figs. 2 & 3, Plates 8 – 11)

- 5.5 In Rooms G1 and G2 a wooden suspended floor was removed after which, stone support beams were removed and the floor level was reduced.

In Room G1, two separate phases of floor support beams were removed and these had been built over a sequence of materials that sealed an earlier floor of Pennant slabs. The pennant slabs remained only as a fragment of surface at the west end of the room that was probably the remains of a late medieval threshing floor.

In Room G2, the suspended wooden floor was removed to reveal a system of beams for floor support. The beams could not be phased but all were of later post-medieval date, reflecting the use of the building as a school. A hole in the northwest corner of the room, below the suspended floor led to a drain outside the building of apparently modern date, which was not further recorded.

Demolition of Extension (Fig. 2)

- 5.6 A modern extension (later 20th century date) was demolished adjoining the southeast corner of the barn. A concrete floor was removed that formed the floor of the structure, below which was a deposit of made-ground (115) that included demolition rubble and was up to 300mm thick.

Below the made-ground a former surface of rough metalling was observed that was suggested to have been part of the former school-yard (116). A further made-ground deposit (117) was recorded below the surface, which was not wholly excavated.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Archaeologically relevant alteration works within the barn comprised the removal of two phases of suspended floor that were believed to date to the later post-medieval use of the structure as a school. In Room G1, below the suspended floor beams and sealed by compacted soil and mortar deposits, parts of a surface of irregular Pennant sandstone slabs (114) was located.
- 6.2 Elements of the barn (The original west end wall and a number of buttresses) of circa 1500 date are known to survive below ground level, therefore, the surface (114) is suggested to be contemporary with the earliest (circa 1500) phase of construction. The floor may have formed part of the threshing floor of the barn.
- 6.3 During the groundworks outside the barn, two parallel walls were exposed in the footprint of the extension (walls 102 and 103). These are thought to represent part of a structure predating the later Edwardian school building and therefore the use of the site as a school, though they are not believed to be of medieval date. A drainage sump nearby appeared to be of later post-medieval or modern date, possibly to drain surface water from the adjacent playground.
- 6.4 The watching brief identified part of a buried surface (114) within the barn that is probably contemporary with its late medieval origins. Outside the barn features were recorded that whilst not of medieval date, pre-dated the period of utilisation of the building as a school. A later post-medieval (school period) feature was also recorded. No trace of the suggested buried c. 1500 AD buttresses along the south wall was located but the survival of the floor within the barn generally supports the conclusion that further structures of medieval date may be preserved in-situ in or adjacent to the barn.

7. PROJECT TEAM

- 7.1 The fieldwork was undertaken by Timothy Longman, Heather Hirons, Julia Newman and R. K. Ducker who also produced this report. The illustrations were prepared and the report compiled by Ann Linge. The archive was compiled and prepared for deposition by R K. Ducker and the project was managed by Bruce Williams.

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES CONSULTED

Published Works

IFA 1999 *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*
(Institute of Field Archaeologists)

Maps

Ordnance Survey 1: 50,000 Bristol District, *Geological Survey of England and Wales,*
Solid and Drift 1967

Unpublished Material

BaRAS 2007 *Archaeological Desk-based Assessment of The Tithe Barn, St. Mary's*
Grove, Nailsea, North Somerset. By Andrew Townsend. Bristol and
Region Archaeological Services Report No. 1865/2007.

BaRAS 2010 *Written Scheme of Investigation for a Recording Programme*
(Watching Brief) at Nailsea Tithe Barn, Nailsea, North Somerset.
(Bruce Williams).

9. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

BaRAS would like to thank Nailsea Town Council and Tim Combes of W. Coombes & Sons for their assistance and co-operation. Thanks are also due to George Tasker of Architecton and Vince Russet, the North Somerset Archaeological Officer for his advice.

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 that would affect a SAM.

GOVERNMENT POLICY GUIDANCE

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (1994) and Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (1990) have been replaced (23 March 2010) by Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (2010) which sets out the Government's national policies on conservation of the historic environment. Those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are called heritage assets.

Of particular relevance within the Planning Policy Statement are:

Policy HE6: Information Requirements for Applications for Consent Affecting Heritage Assets

HE6.1 Local planning authorities should require an applicant to provide a description of the significance of the heritage assets affected and the contribution of their setting to that significance. The level of detail should be proportionate to the importance of the heritage asset and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on the significance of the heritage asset. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets themselves should have been assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary given the application's impact. Where an application site includes, or is considered to have the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where desk-based research is insufficient to properly assess the interest, a field evaluation.

Policy HE9: Additional Policy Principles Guiding the Consideration of Applications for Consent Relating to Designated Heritage Assets

HE9.1 There should be a presumption in favour of the conservation of designated heritage assets and the more significant the designated heritage asset, the greater the presumption in favour of its conservation should be. Once lost, heritage assets cannot be replaced and their loss has a cultural, environmental, economic and social impact. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. Loss affecting any designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, including scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I or II* listed buildings and grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

Policy HE12: Policy Principles Guiding the Recording of Information Related to Heritage Assets

HE12.3 Where the loss of the whole or a material part of a heritage asset's significance is justified, local planning authorities should require the developer to record and advance understanding of the significance of the heritage asset before it is lost, using planning conditions or obligations as appropriate. The extent of the requirement should be proportionate to the nature and level of the asset's significance. Developers should publish this evidence and deposit copies of the reports with the relevant historic environment record. Local planning authorities should require any archive generated to be deposited with a local museum or other public depository willing to receive it. Local planning authorities should impose planning conditions or obligations to ensure such work is carried out in a timely manner and that the completion of the exercise is properly secured.

DISTRICT POLICY

North Somerset Council Replacement Local Plan 2nd Draft (2004) states (Policy ECH/6 Archaeology):

Development will not be permitted where it would involve significant alteration or cause damage to nationally-important archaeological remains (whether Scheduled or not), or would have a significant impact on the setting of such remains.

Where there is good reason to believe that development proposals could affect locally-important archaeological remains, the Council will seek a field evaluation and assessment, or may formally require the submission of further information, to establish the extent and importance of the remains before the planning application is determined. Where such assessment indicates the development would affect locally-important archaeological remains and the Council considers preservation in-situ is not justified it will seek before permission is granted a formal voluntary agreement by the developer to excavate and record the remains and to publish the results, or may grant permission subject to conditions requiring an approved programme of archaeological work to be undertaken before development commences.

APPENDIX 2: Context Descriptions

Context No.	Description
101	Structure, rectangle of drystone walls topped by 1 course of mortared bricks and capped with pennant slabs, filled by (113). Not fully excavated. Immediately adjacent is an iron drain grill set in concrete that feeds into one side of the structure.
102	Linear Structure, only the last fragmentary courses survive. Random coursed, unworked sandstone rubble. Bonded with brownish-grey mortar with inclusions of lime and charcoal flecks. Cut into natural sandstone, runs parallel to Wall 103 with fill of topsoil between them.
103	Linear structure parallel to Wall 102 – virtually nothing survives except a few random stones but would appear to be identical to Wall 102.
104	Dark greyish-brown, fine sandy silt. Has occasional-frequent inclusions of sub-angular sandstone fragments – topsoil.
105	Strong brown (orange) fine sandy silt – subsoil.
106	Strong brown sand and sandstone – archaeologically sterile geological deposit.
107	Rubble and mortar “beams” to support later raised wooden floor.
108	Rubble and mortar “beams” to support an earlier raised wooden floor.
109	Friable, pale, yellowish-brown, sandy mortar with inclusions of white lime mortar and occasional small sandstone rubble fragments. Up to 120mm thick in Room G1.
110	Firm/compacted, dark grey/black, sandy, sooty silt. Has occasional mortar and charcoal flecks within it. Up to 50mm thick in a patch of 6m x 10m in size over part of the suggested threshing floor.
111	Firm, mid-brown sandy silt with occasional inclusions of sandstone fragments and charcoal flecks. Occurs as a lens in the northeast corner of Room G1 only.
112	Rubble and mortar utilised as a plinth base placed directly over floor surface 114.
113	Fill in centre of Structure (101) loose, friable, mid – dark brown sandy silt.
114	Surface of pennant slabs of irregular shapes and sizes laid to no particular pattern. Some worn smooth, some remain rough edged. No mortar bond but some black sooty sand in joints. Covers an area of approximately 5m x 2m. Possibly remnant of medieval threshing floor.
115	Black sandy silt with frequent inclusions of brick and sandstone rubble, between 250 and 300mm thick. Below concrete floor in area of Room G7.
116	Rough metalled surface below 115 in area of Room G7, up to 200mm thick.
117	Made-ground deposit of reddish brown silt with frequent inclusions of mortar and charcoal in area of Room G7.

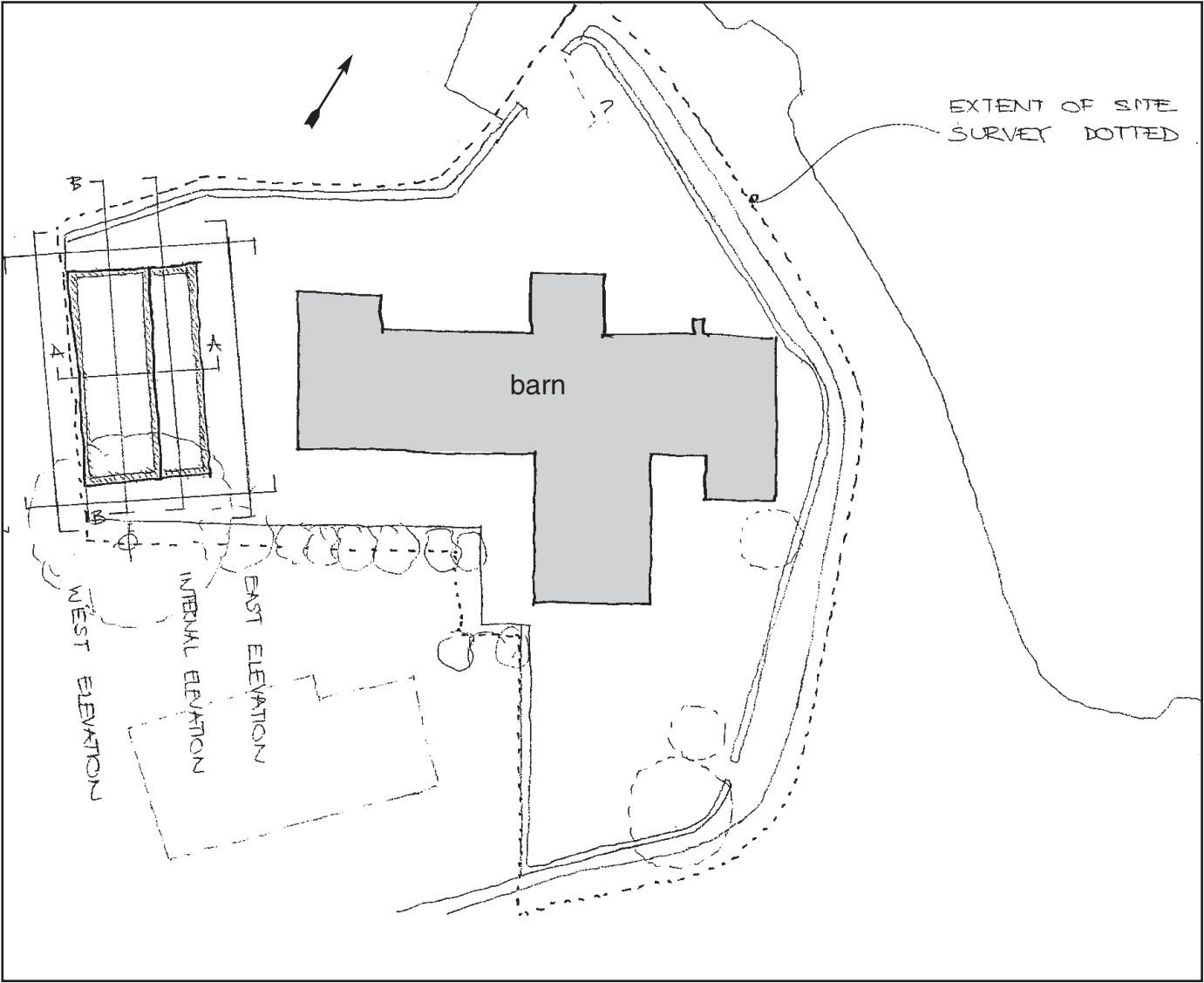
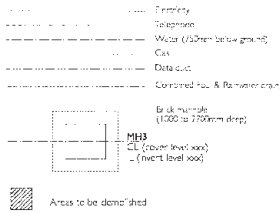


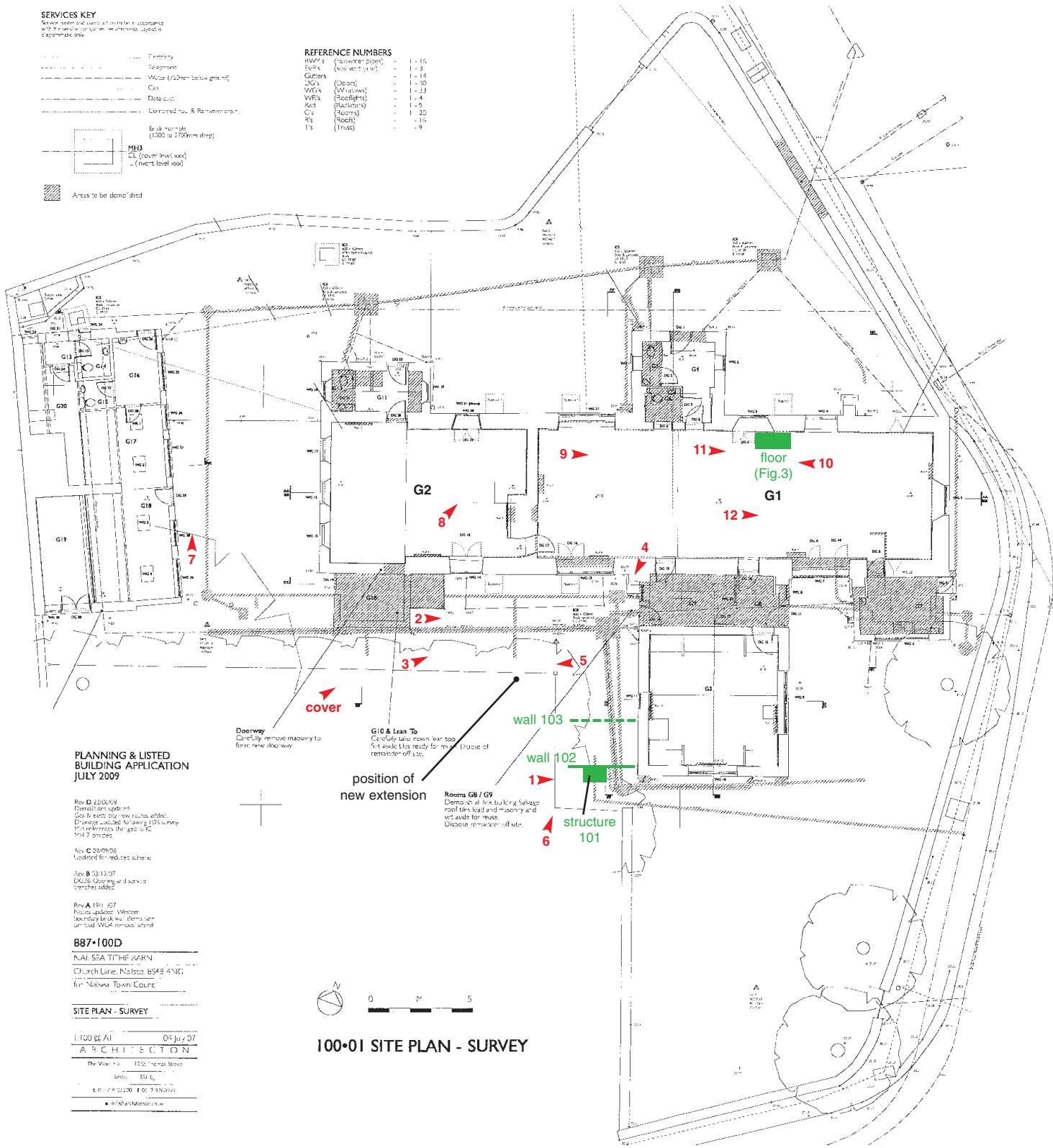
Fig.1 Site location plan

SERVICES KEY
 Sever water and sewerage pipes in accordance with the service survey in the technical layout of the application only.



REFERENCE NUMBERS

WSP1	Gaswater (200)	1 - 16
WSP4	(not used)	1 - 3
Gumers		1 - 14
DCV	(Down)	1 - 20
WCV	(Up/return)	1 - 23
WRS	(Receivng)	1 - 4
Rd	(Receiving)	1 - 5
C's	(Rooms)	1 - 20
RS	(Receivng)	1 - 14
TS	(Truss)	1 - 9



PLANNING & LISTED BUILDING APPLICATION JULY 2009

- Rev D 22/06/09
Demolition updated
G0 & walls on new route added.
Change called for during 12th survey.
Full references changed to LC
M&P sizes
- Rev C 20/09/08
Updated for red lines scheme
- Rev B 23/11/07
DC216 Drawing and service
changes added
- Rev A 19/11/07
Notes updated. Western
boundary brick wall. Demolition
approved. W&F removed. added

887-100D
 NAI, SFA T'HE BARN
 Church Lane, Nailsea, BS48 4NG
 for Nailsea Town Council

SITE PLAN - SURVEY

1:100 @ A1 04 July 07
 A R C H I T E C T O N
 The Vale Ho 1130, The Vale, Bristol
 BR10 3JG
 t: 0117 912220 f: 0117 9363021
 www.valearchitects.co.uk



100-01 SITE PLAN - SURVEY

Fig.2 Plan showing study area in detail, scale as shown

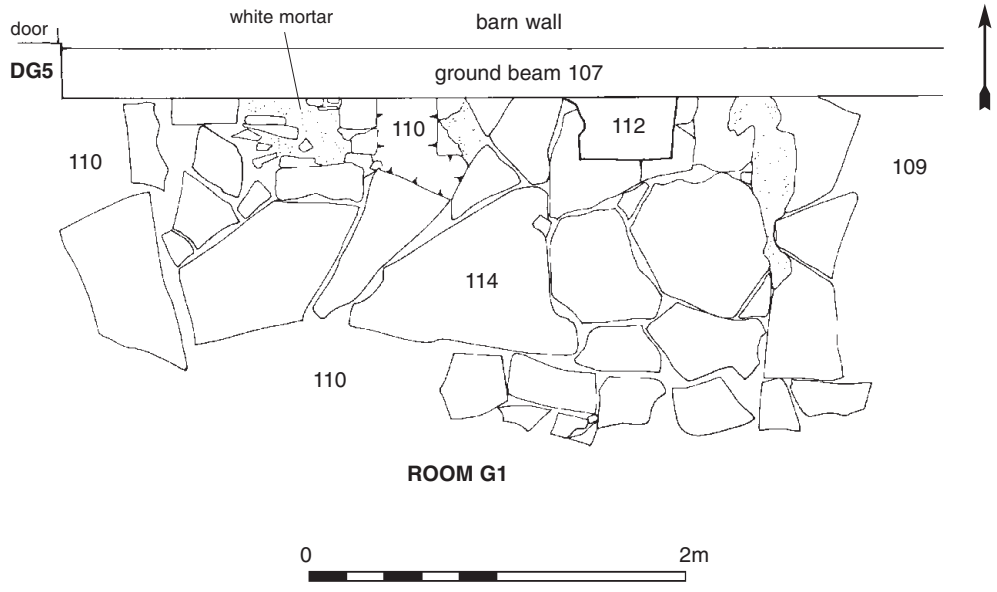


Fig.3 Plan of suggested 16th-century threshing floor, scale 1:40



Plate 1
Structure 101 as initially
exposed, looking east,
1m scale



Plate 2
General view of the
reduced level excavation
with the footings of the
demolished outbuilding
and a modern ceramic
service pipe in fore-
ground, looking ENE



Plate 3
General view of the
reduced level excavation,
looking ENE



Plate 4
General view of the
reduced level excavation
between Rooms G1 and
G3, looking SSE



Plate 5
General view of foundation
trench excavation for the
extension, looking west



Plate 6
Walls 102 and 103 and
central fill (113) between
them, looking north-east,
scales 0.5m and 1m



Plate 7
General view of service
trench excavation
adjacent to Rooms G16
– G18, looking north



Plate 8
Beams for supporting
suspended wooden floor
as exposed in Room G2,
looking north-east,
1m scale



Plate 9
General view of the floor
beams in Room G1 after
removal of the suspended
wooden floor, looking west-
south-west



Plate 10
Working view of the
threshing floor in Room
G1, looking west



Plate 11
The threshing floor as
exposed, looking east,
1m scale



Plate 12
The timber frame supporting
the roof of Room G1,
looking east