

Archaeological Watching Brief

at

**SOUTH VIEW,
STIBBS HILL, ST GEORGE,
BRISTOL.**

for

Mi-Space (UK) Ltd.



Report No. 2259/2012

BHER No. 24863

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**SOUTH VIEW,
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Centred on
N.G.R. ST 63395 73314

Client: Mi-Space (UK) Ltd.

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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
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government		
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.

May, 2012.

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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks associated with the construction of 13 new houses at South View, Stibbs Hill, St George, Bristol.

A number of features related to 19th and 20th-century domestic and industrial activity on the site were identified during the course of the watching brief. The earliest feature was a stone wall that formed part of an early 19th-century house, later known as 'South View'. This house was extended in the late 19th and early 20th century, and remained occupied until it was damaged by fire in 1973; it was demolished in the 1990s.

The 1888 Ordnance Survey depicts a 'Pug Mill' (BHER 3215M) on the site, but no physical remains of this structure survived. There was however evidence of extensive 19th-century quarrying across much of the site, probably to extract fireclay. The first quarries on Stibbs Hill were probably dug in the 1850s, and most if not all of them were disused by the 1880s; the pug mill was probably removed in the 1890s.

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out by Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS) at South View, Stibbs Hill, St George, Bristol.
- 1.2 The archaeological work was commissioned by Mi-Space (UK) Ltd. in order to comply with planning conditions associated with the construction of 13 new residential properties with associated parking and access road (Planning Application No. 09/02469/F).
- 1.3 The fieldwork was undertaken between the 2nd August and the 25th October 2010.
- 1.4 The project archive will be deposited with Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery under the Accession Number BRSMG 2010/19 and a digital copy of the report will be sent to the National Monuments Record maintained by English Heritage. The project has been entered in the Bristol Historic Environment Record as: BHER 24863 and in the OASIS Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations as: bristola1-74310.

2. THE SITE

- 2.1 The site (centred on NGR ST 63395 73314) is located on land to the east of Stibbs Hill, in St George, a suburb *c* 4.5km to the east of the Bristol City Centre. The site measures *c* 0.49ha and is bounded Stibbs Hill to the west, Raglan Lane (footpath) to the south, Meg Thatchers Green (footpath) to the north, and private gardens and car park to the east. (**Fig. 1**). Prior to the commencement of the construction programme, the site was overgrown wasteland. The site is situated on a steeply sloping south-facing hillside, which ranges from *c* 65m aOD to *c* 80m aOD in height.
- 2.2 The site is not located in a Conservation Area, and there are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments or Listed Buildings on or near to the site.
- 2.3 According to the British Geological Survey (2012) the underlying solid geology is Late Carboniferous sandstone (Pennant Sandstone) of the Downend Member. This rock unit also contains bands of conglomerate, pebbly sandstone, sporadic fissile mudstone beds and workable coal seams.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The site was the subject of an archaeological desk-based assessment (Longman 2009), which provides an archaeological and historical background to the site, a brief summary of which is provided below, with some additional information drawn from primary sources.

3.2 Historically, the site lay within the outparish of St Philip and St Jacob until the new parish of St George was created in 1751. St George remained part of Gloucestershire until it was incorporated into the City and County of Bristol in 1897.

Prehistoric and Roman

3.3 In the late 18th century a Roman coin hoard is reputed to have been found *c* 300m to the west of the site, and it has been conjectured that the A431, which lies *c* 80 to the south, roughly follows the route of a Roman road from *Aqua Sulis* (Bath) to *Abonae* (Sea Mills). There is however no definitive evidence of any prehistoric or Roman activity on or near the site.

Late Saxon

3.4 There is no evidence of any Saxon occupation in the immediate vicinity of the site. At the time of the Norman Conquest in 1066 the site lay within the Royal forest of Kingswood, which formed part of the extensive Royal manor of Barton, in the Swineshead Hundred.

Medieval

3.5 Kingswood Forest survived as a legal entity until 1228. Although the word Forest does not necessarily imply woodland, later maps show that much of Kingswood was in fact wooded. Despite its legal protection there are records of small illegal clearances and enclosures, or 'preprestures', in the forest from the 12th century onwards. By 1260 the new Hundred of Barton Regis was carved out of the old Swineshead Hundred, incorporating various members of the manor of Barton, such as Bitton, Hanham and Hambroke (Smith 1964). This area provided timber and agricultural produce for Bristol Castle.

Post-medieval and modern

3.6 Chester & Master's 1610 *Map of Kingswood* is the earliest map to depict the site, this shows the area to the north of *Bath Way*, the modern A431, as undeveloped open land covered with what appears to be scrubby vegetation.

3.7 After the English Civil War (1642-49) the area devolved to a succession of non-Royal hands, and from this period onwards the rate of woodland clearance accelerated as the demand for wood, land, and coal, rose in response to Bristol's growing population and the expansion of industry. By the late 17th century coal mining had become a significant industry in the Kingswood area, but there is no evidence of any mining activity in the immediate environs of the site.

3.8 Donn's 1769 *Map of the County 11 Miles Round the City of Bristol* covers the site, but lacks the detail of later maps. However, it does show that by this point there had been significant ribbon development along the roads from St George to Longwell Green (A431) and Warmley (A420).

3.9 The earliest map to depict the site in any detail is William Maule's 1803 *Map of St George Parish*. This shows the site defined by its modern boundaries, with a building in the centre. The accompanying terrier identifies the owner as Mary Sturge.

3.10 The *St George Tithe Map* of 1842 shows the same enclosure, but with a new building on the Stibbs Hill frontage; the house shown on the 1803 map appears to have been removed by this point. The accompanying apportionment identifies the new building as a 'House & Garden' owned and occupied by John Stibbs.

- 3.11 John Stibbs (1819-1892) is recorded in several 19th-century census returns. The first reference is the 1851 census, which identifies him and his wife Martha Stibbs (1813-1858) as grocers. In 1860 he is recorded as a brick maker (Frenchay Museum Archives 2012). The name ‘Stibbs Hill’ is first recorded in 1871. John Stibbs is not recorded in on the 1871 census, but his second wife Mary Ann Stibbs (b.1816) and her daughter Julia Flook (b.1855) are recorded as ‘Factory Operatives’ living in the only the only house on Stibbs Hill. John Stibbs is recorded as a ‘Fire Clay (Brick) Worker’ in 1881, and as a ‘Clay Merchant’ in 1891.
- 3.12 The 1888 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 plan (**Fig. 2**), surveyed 1880-1, shows that over the proceeding 40 years the site and parts of the surrounding area had been extensively quarried. A ‘Pug Mill’ (BHER 3215M) is also shown to the south of John Stibb’s house. Pug Mills were used to prepare clay for making bricks and other ceramics. By the mid-19th century most Pug Mills were horse powered, and usually comprised a free-standing wooden or iron tub containing a rotating vertical shaft fitted with knives to knead the clay (Pugh 2010). Pug mills were often housed in small circular buildings. Horse-driven pug mills were eventually superseded by the mechanical pug mills invented in the late 19th-century.
- 3.13 The geology of the site comprises Carboniferous Pennant sandstone with bands of coal. Coal seams often occur next to deposits of fireclay. Evidence that fireclay occurs in this area is provided by the fact that large quarries were dug by the Bristol Fire Clay Company at nearby Crews Hole between 1880 and 1913 (Dowling 2012). Fireclay is rich in alumina, and can be made into firebricks with good chemical resistance to slag, and a low coefficient of expansion and thermal conductivity, which makes them ideal for use in kilns, flues and chimneys (Tyler *et al* 2005). Before it can be fired, fireclay needs to be crushed, ground and is often mixed with burned fireclay as grog (*ibid*); this is probably the reason a Pug Mill was constructed at Stibbs Hill.
- 3.14 At some point in the early 20th century John Stibb’s house was divided in two. The 1925 edition of Kelly’s Directory identified the residents of these cottages as Thomas Alfred Cole, Edmund Iles and James Sweet. By 1934 Edmund Iles had been replaced by Harry Smith.
- 3.15 The 1936 edition of Kelly’s Directory, lists the cottages on Stibbs Hill as ‘Nos. 1-2 South View’; the occupants are listed as Harry Smith and James Sweet. This edition also lists Thomas Alfred Cole & Sons as builders at ‘Stibbs Hill’, perhaps suggesting that part of the site was being used as a builders yard. Later editions of Kelly’s directory record the same occupants up until the 1960s.
- 3.16 Twentieth-century Ordnance Survey plans show that apart from the addition of new outbuildings to the side and rear of Nos. 1-2 South View, there were few changes to the site between 1904 and 1967. The 1967 Ordnance Survey plan (**Fig 3**) shows the site at its most developed stage. In 1973 South View was severely damaged by fire, thereafter the cottages remained derelict until they were eventually demolished in the 1990s.
- 3.17 Bristol and Region Archaeological Services carried an archaeological evaluation of the site in September 2009. The edge of a large circular pit was identified during the evaluation. This feature was interpreted as the base of the pug mill depicted on the 1888 Ordnance Survey plan (Roper 2009).
- 3.18 Geotechnical test pits dug by Structural Soils Ltd. (2010) revealed that much of the lower part of the site was covered by between 3m and 3.7m of made ground; these deposits probably lie within backfilled quarry pits

4. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork was carried out in accordance with the methodology outlined in a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (Longman 2010). All fieldwork complied with the *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 construction work involved terracing the hill slope to provide a level surface for the construction of 13 new houses and gardens, the excavation of strip foundation trenches and the digging of a *c* 5m wide *c* 40m long 'Attenuation Tunnel' along the southern edge of the site.
- 4.3 The site was recorded in accordance with the BaRAS Site Recording Manual (BaRAS 2005). A photographic record of all features was made using a digital camera.

5. RESULTS

5.1 The archaeological work revealed a number of 19th and 20th century features, full descriptions of which are provided in the context summary (**Appendix 2**). All major features are illustrated on the site plan (**Fig 4**).

Natural

5.2 The natural geology of the site (107) comprises interbedded sandstone, clay and coal seams, which are overlain by reddish brown sandy silt subsoil (115). Across a large part of the site natural deposits had been heavily truncated by extensive late 19th century quarrying.

Early 19th century

5.3 The earliest feature on the site was the corner of an early 19th-century house later known as 'South View'. Most of this building lay in area designated as a wildlife reserve and remained unaffected by the construction work. The exposed part of the building comprised a 0.5m-thick wall (109), constructed with random uncoursed sandstone bonded with a pale creamy brown lime mortar. A small area of flagstone flooring (110) was exposed on the north side of the wall (**Plate 1**).

Mid 19th - 20th century

5.4 Walls (111) (**Plate 2**), (112) and (113) (**Plate 3**) were all constructed with random uncoursed sandstone bonded with a greyish white lime mortar. Wall 112 abuts wall 113. These walls are all parts of ancillary buildings built in the mid to late-19th century to the rear of South View.

5.5 Two stone-built retaining walls (104)/(106) (**Plate 4**) and (117)/(118) (**Plate 5**) were uncovered to the south of walls 109 and 111-3. The retaining walls were both constructed with random uncoursed sandstone bonded with a dark greyish black mortar. Both walls overlie buried soil layer (128), which forms an extensive horizon that seals 19th-century quarry fills (102), (103) and (127). The quarry backfill comprised a mixture of redeposited natural clay, stone rubble, topsoil and shaly coal. The area to the south of wall 104/106 dropped away steeply due to extensive quarrying which accentuated the natural hill slope.

5.6 Brick walls (108) and (114) (**Plates 6-7**) were uncovered to the east of walls 111-3; these walls were bonded with a hard grey mortar. Cartographic evidence suggests these walls formed parts of outbuildings built between 1904 and 1913.

5.7 Two areas of rough flooring, (105) and (116), were also uncovered, one to the south of wall 104/106, the other between walls 108 and 114. Floor 105 is probably an external surface; 116 could be an internal surface of an early-20th outbuilding.

5.8 A N-S aligned 1.44m wide, 0.75m deep ditch [119] was uncovered near the southern edge of the site. The ditch backfilled with re-deposited clay (120), which was re-cut [121] as a steep sided 0.75m wide and 1.5m deep trench, which was in turn filled with dark brown silty clay (122). This feature is probably related to 19th-century industrial activity on the site; a plausible interpretation is that it was dug to drain water from a quarry pit further up the hill.

5.9 A modern tarmac road surface (129) with granite-sett edging (128) and Pennant Sandstone kerbs (130) (**Plate 8**) was uncovered beneath the present road on the west side of Stibbs Hill.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The earliest archaeological feature uncovered during the watching brief was the corner of an early 19th-century house. There was also evidence of extensive 19th-century quarrying across much of the site. Cartographic and documentary evidence indicate that the house was built between 1803 and 1842, and was owned and occupied by the eponymous John Stibbs of Stibbs Hill.
- 6.2 John Stibbs is recorded as a brick maker in 1860, a fireclay worker in 1881, and as a clay merchant in 1891, this and the fact that a large fireclay quarry operated at Crews Hole between 1880 and 1913 (Dowling 2012), suggests that the quarries on Stibbs Hill were also dug to extract fireclay. The first quarries on Stibbs Hill were probably dug in the 1850s, and most if not all of them were out of use by the 1880s. A pug mill shown on the 1888 Ordnance Survey plan was probably removed soon after John Stibbs died in 1892.
- 6.3 In the 20th century John Stibbs's house, which became known as 'South View', was divided in two and remained occupied until it was severely damaged by fire in 1973. After the fire the site remained derelict; South View was eventually demolished in the 1990s.
- 6.4 Before clay can be fired into bricks or other ceramics it needs to be processed to make it malleable and free from air bubbles. This process is known as 'pugging' or 'tempering', and up until the introduction of the horse-powered pug mill mid-19th-century this was done by arduously treading or kneading damp clay in 'tempering pits'. Historic images show that horse-powered pug mills were freestanding mechanisms sometimes, but by no means always, covered with circular timber-framed or brick-built buildings. Although there is a pug mill shown on the 1888 Ordnance Survey plan, it is unclear if a building covered it. No structural remains of the pug mill were found during the watching brief.
- 6.5 A large cut feature partially excavated during the 2009 evaluation was tentatively identified as the remains of the pug mill. However, although this feature may have been a tempering pit, perhaps a precursor to the pug mill, it is unlikely to have been the pug mill itself, which would have been an aboveground structure.
- 6.6 There was no evidence of the building shown in the centre of the site on William Maule's 1803 map, the remains of which were probably destroyed by late-19th-century quarrying.
- 6.7 The primary aim of the watching brief was to record any surviving remains of a 19th-century pug mill, and although no evidence of this structure survived, documentary research has allowed the identification of what is probably a previously unknown 19th-century fireclay extraction site that pre-dates the larger fireclay quarries at nearby Crews Hole.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES CONSULTED

Maps, plans and documents

Chester & Master's Map of Kingswood	1610
B. Donn's Map of the County 11 Miles Round the City of Bristol	1769
William Maule's Map of St George Parish	1803
St George Tithe Map	1842
Ordnance Survey (Surv. 1880-1)	1888 1:2500 plan
Ordnance Survey	1904-67 1:2500 plans
Census returns	1841-1901

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8. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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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 Raymond Ducker and David Fallon (Project Officers BaRAS).

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.

DISTRICT 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	Date
101	Layer	Demolition rubble and topsoil. Friable dark greyish brown sandy silty clay with abundant brick and stone rubble inclusions.	Modern
102	Layer	Quarry fill. Re-deposited sandy clay with occasional small sub-rounded sandstone fragment inclusions.	19th century
103	Layer	Quarry fill. Dump of coal-rich waste	19th century
104	Structure	Stone retaining wall. Aligned SE – NW, returns NE-SW at NW end. Constructed with random uncoursed sandstone rubble with occasional bricks. Bonded with very dark grey-black mortar. Varies from 0.25 - 0.3m thick and survives to approximately 0.9m high.	19th century
105	Structure	Surface. Constructed with irregular Pennant Sandstone slabs with a possible machine base set in the centre.	19th/20th century
106	Structure	Stone retaining wall. Same as (104).	19th century
107	Layer	Natural. Interbedded gritty sandy clay, clay, sandstone and coal seams; varies in colour from strong brown (orange) to pale yellow. Contains small sub-rounded and sub-angular sandstone inclusions.	Geology
108	Structure	Brick wall. Constructed with red bricks (240mm x 110mm x 70mm), laid to with alternating header-stretcher bond. Bonded with a hard grey mortar. Survived up to 0.7m high, 5.5m long and 0.24m wide.	20th century
109	Structure	Stone wall. Corner of a building. Constructed with uncoursed, irregularly sized sandstone rubble with occasional brick fragments, bonded with cream/pale brown lime mortar. The wall survived up to 0.6m high, 0.50m wide, 1.7m NW-SE and 1.1m SW-NE.	Early 19th century
110	Structure	Flagstone floor. Constructed with Pennant sandstone slabs. Floor within building (109).	19th century
111	Structure	Stone wall. Part of a building. Constructed with random uncoursed, sandstone rubble bonded with pale grey/white lime mortar, re-pointed with grey lime mortar. Some traces of white render. Over to 3.5m long, 0.35m wide and survived up to 0.5m high.	19th/20th century
112	Structure	Stone wall. Part of a building. Constructed with random uncoursed sandstone rubble with occasional brick and tile fragments, bonded with an off-white lime mortar. Over 0.9m long, 0.35m wide and survives up to 1.2m high.	19th/20th century
113	Structure	Stone wall. Constructed with random uncoursed sandstone rubble, bonded with an off-white lime mortar. Over 0.6m long, 0.35m wide and survives up to 0.1m high.	19th/20th century
114	Structure	Brick wall. Truncated end of a wall exposed in section by reduced level excavation. Red bricks (240mm x 110mm x 70mm) bonded with a hard grey mortar. 0.23m wide, survives up to 0.6m high.	19th/20th century
115	Layer	Subsoil. Reddish brown sandy silt.	Unknown
116	Structure	Floor/yard surface. Constructed with a mixture of Pennant Sandstone and bricks.	20th century
117	Structure	Foundations of wall (118). Constructed with random uncoursed stone with occasional bricks bonded with a hard dark grey mortar. 0.7m wide, 14m long, 0.1m high.	20th century
118	Structure	Stone retaining wall. Constructed with random uncoursed stone with occasional bricks bonded with a hard dark grey mortar. 0.4m wide, 14m long, survived up to 0.6m high.	20th century
119	Cut	Ditch. Concave cut, N-S aligned, 1.44m wide, 0.75m deep, length unknown. Seen in section only.	19th/20th century
120	Fill	Fill of [119]. Re-deposited natural firm mid-brownish yellow clay.	19th/20th century
121	Cut	Re-cut of ditch [119]. Vertical sides, sloping base, N-S aligned, 0.75m wide, up to 1.5m deep; length unknown. Seen in section only.	19th/20th century
122	Fill	Fill of [121]. Soft very dark greyish brown silty clay with occasional tile, charcoal and coal inclusions.	19th/20th century

123	Structure	Road edging. Granite setts defining edge of tarmac surface (125). Setts measure 120mm x 100mm.	Modern
124	Structure	Kerb. Pennant sandstone kerbs defining edge of tarmac surface (125). Kerbs measure 600mm x 100mm.	Modern
125	Layer	Tarmac road surface.	Modern
126	Cut	Quarry. Concave cut, 10m wide, over 1.8m deep.	19th century
127	Fill	Fill of quarry [126]. Mixed deposit of reddish brown silty clay, dark greyish brown topsoil, with common brick and stone rubble inclusions	19th century
128	Layer	Buried topsoil layer. Dark greyish brown silty clay	19th century
129	Layer	Tarmac road surface.	Modern
130	Layer	Make up layer for surface (129). Gravel	Modern

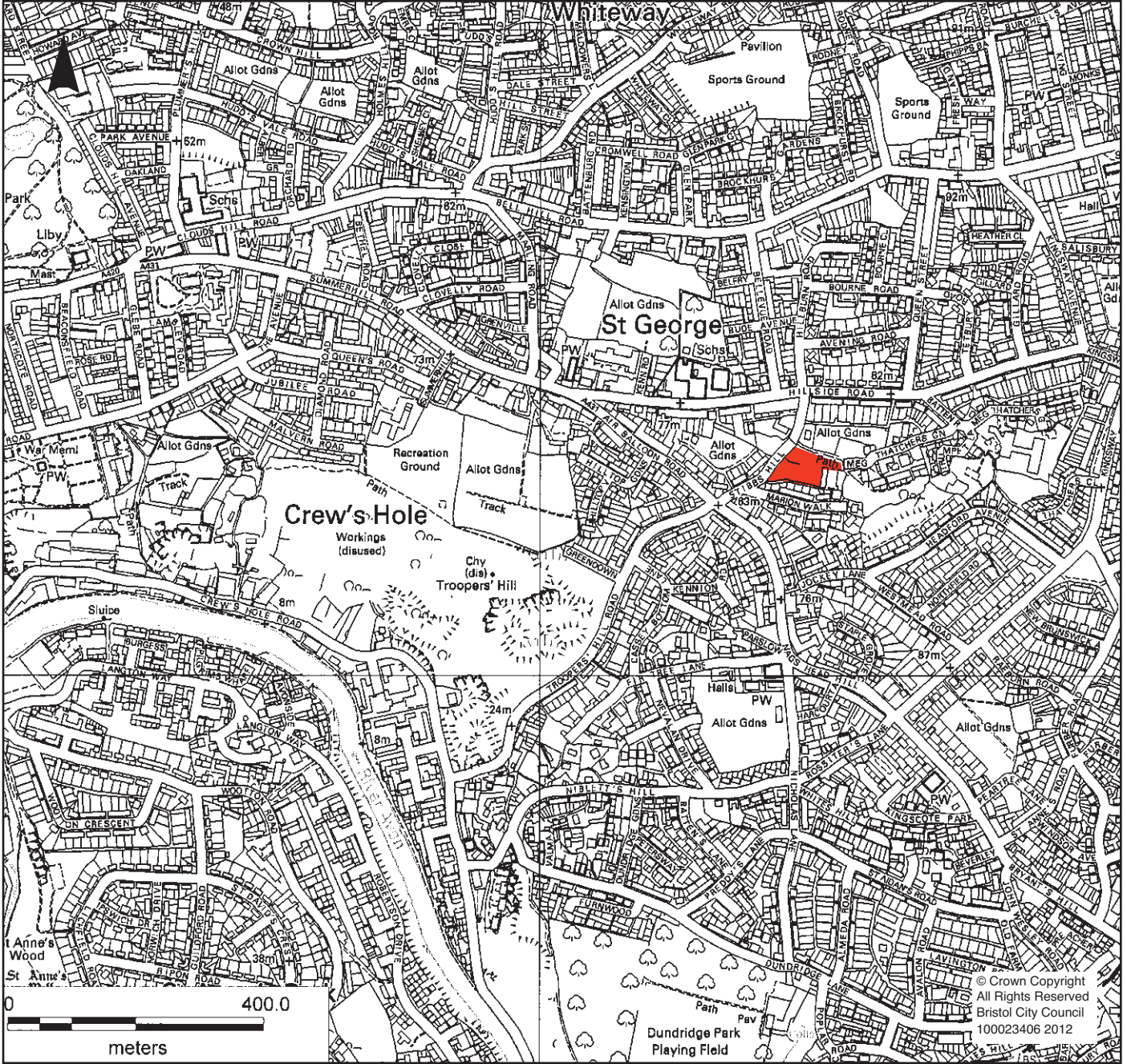


Fig.1 Site location plan, scale 1:10,000

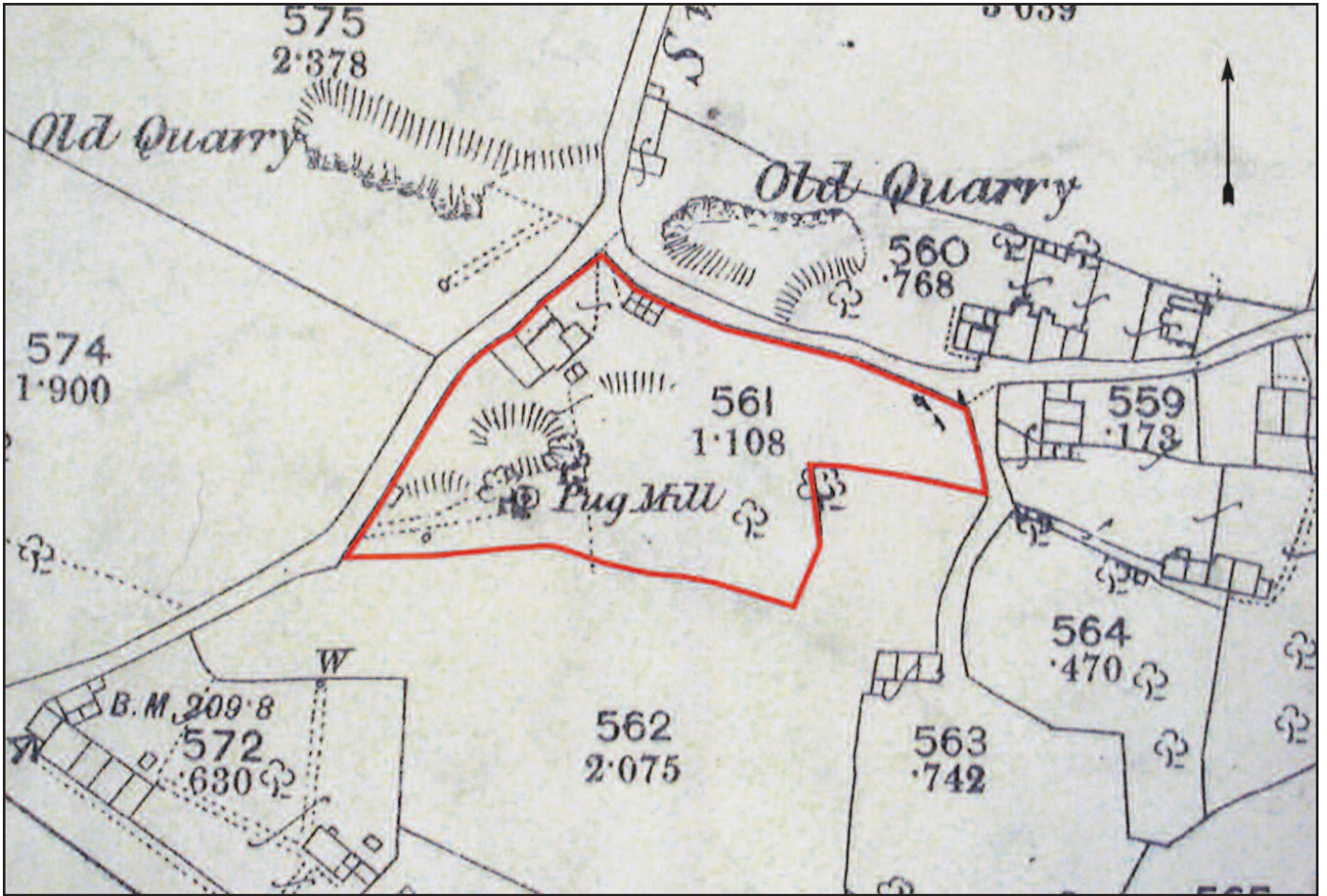


Fig.2 Extract: 1888 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 plan

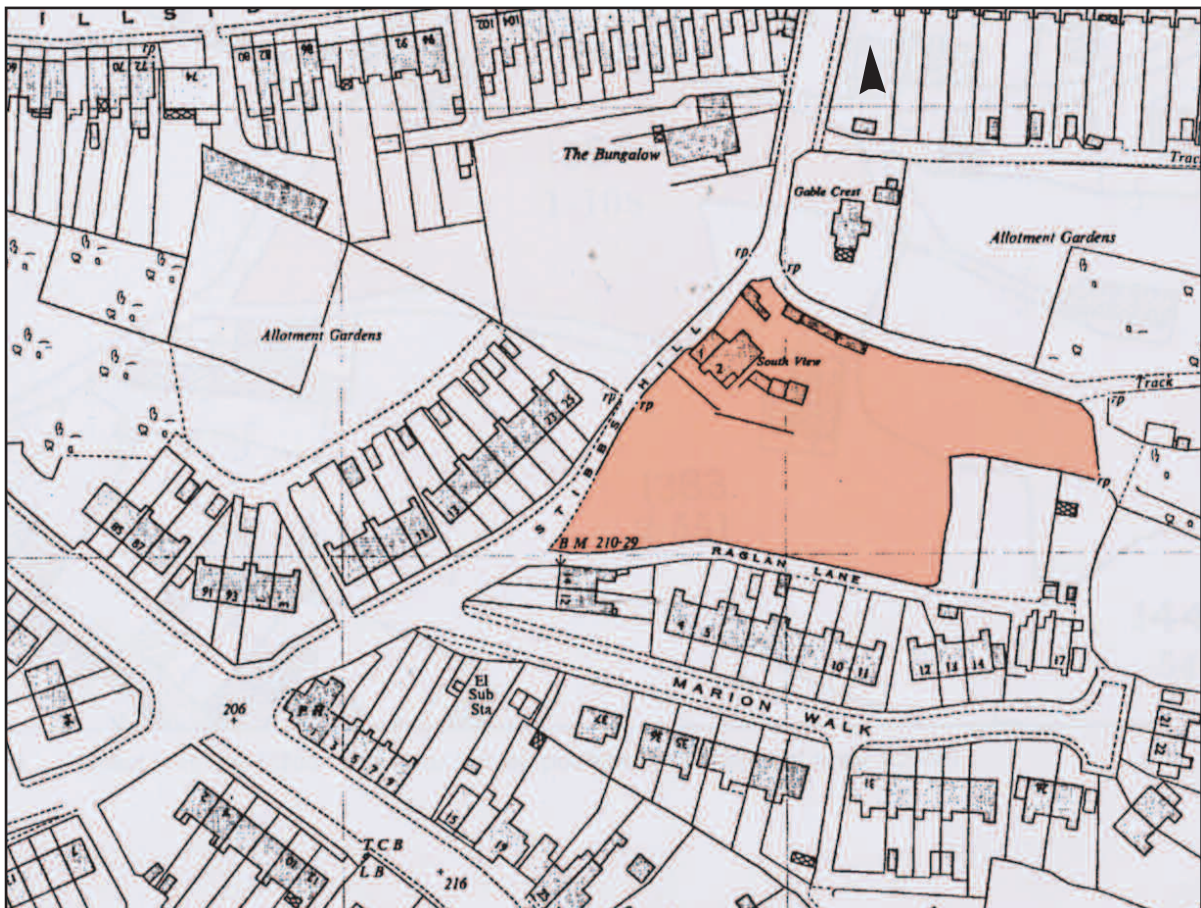


Fig.3 Extract: 1967 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 plan

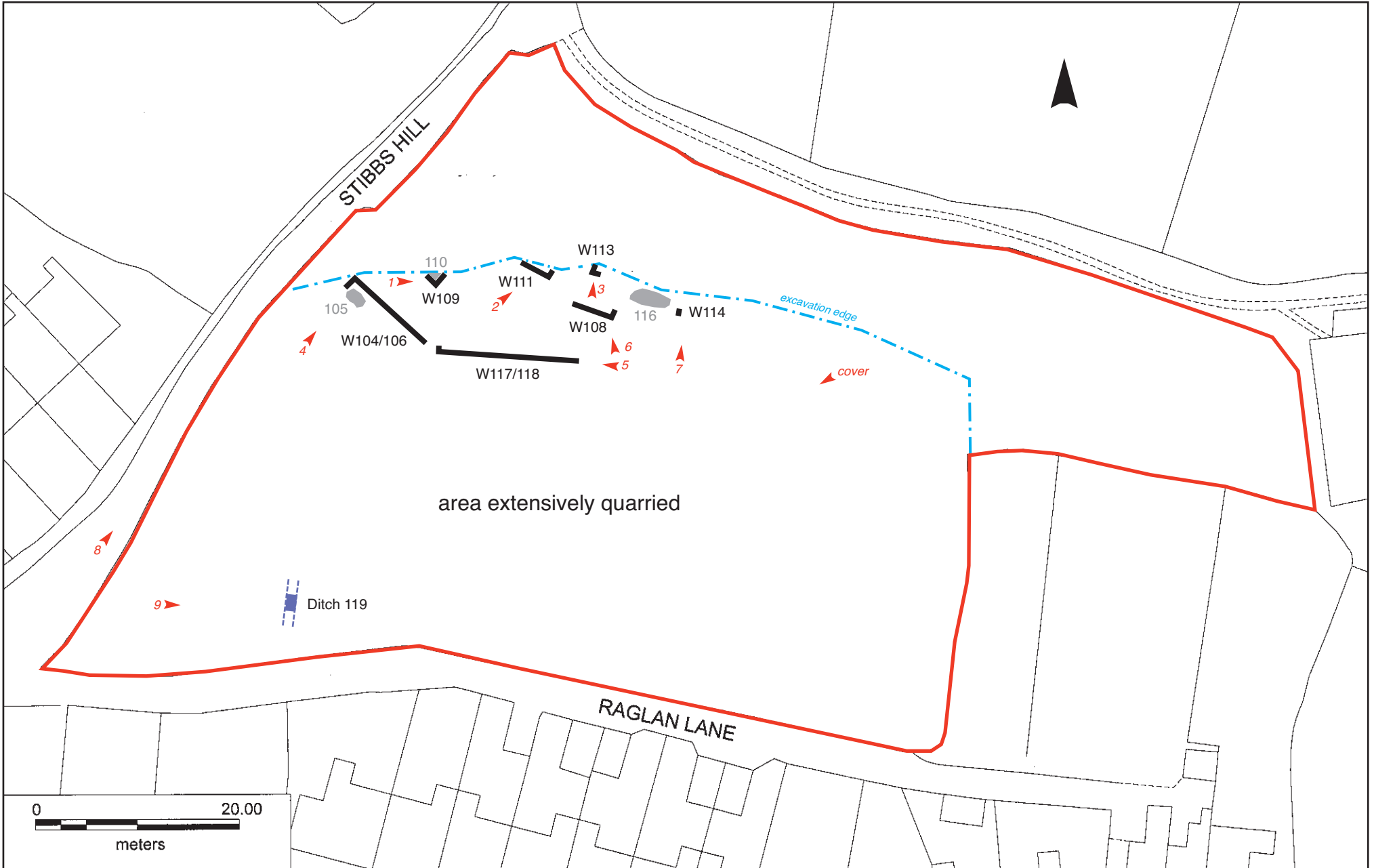


Fig.4 Site plan and plate directions



Plate 1
Wall (109), viewed from
the south-west



Plate 2
Wall (111), viewed from
the south-west



Plate 3
Wall (112) and (113),
viewed from the south



Plate 4
Wall (104)/(106), viewed
from the south-west



Plate 5
Wall (117)/(118), viewed
from the east



Plate 6
Wall (108), viewed from
the south



Plate 7 Wall (114), viewed from the south



Plate 8 Road surface and edging (128), (129) and (130), viewed from the south-west



Plate 9 Digging the 'attenuation tunnel', viewed from the west