

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING  
BRIEF  
AT  
46, HIGH STREET,  
TEWKESBURY,  
GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Tom Vaughan and Sarah Phear

13th February 2008

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Historic Environment and Archaeology Service,  
Worcestershire County Council,  
Woodbury,  
University of Worcester,  
Henwick Grove,  
Worcester WR2 6AJ



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Project 3200  
Report 1602  
GSMR unassigned



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## Archaeological watching brief at 46, High Street, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire

**Sarah Phear and Tom Vaughan**

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### Background information

<i>Client</i>	Mr D Samra
<i>Site address</i>	46, High Street, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire SO 8935 3301
<i>National Grid reference</i>	GSMR unassigned
<i>Sites and Monuments Record reference</i>	Tewkesbury Borough Council
<i>Planning authority</i>	06/00855/FUL
<i>reference</i>	GCC 2007
<i>Brief</i>	HEAS 2008
<i>Project design</i>	IFA 2001
<i>Project parameters</i>	
<i>Previous archaeological work on the site</i>	

There has been no previous archaeological work undertaken within the site itself.

The site occupies a back plot off the High Street, within the centre of the medieval town. The building on the frontage of 46, High Street, is a Grade II Listed 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century timber-framed house with a parapeted 18<sup>th</sup> century façade which has been subsequently altered to look like timber frame. There is a surviving 17<sup>th</sup> century carved panel over the door on the left side of the frontage and a timber-framed wing to the rear (GSMR 7915). The earliest Ordnance Survey maps from 1880 (Fig 4) to 1925 indicate that the site was formerly occupied in its entirety with buildings running the full length of the plot.

### *Previous archaeological work on associated sites*

The archaeological background to Tewkesbury has previously been summarized by Patrick (2002, 4-5) as follows:

Tewkesbury is situated at the confluence of the rivers Severn and Avon, with the Carrant Brook and the River Swilgate flowing to the north and south of the town respectively. This position at a crossing point of the Avon, and to a lesser extent of the Swilgate, is an important factor in the town's development as the surrounding area's tendency to flood has resulted in the town being sited on a virtual island. Tewkesbury is sited upon a ridge of Mercian Mudstone, which has been cut through by the Avon and Swilgate rivers. The Mercian Mudstone is then overlain by Quaternary gravel deposits of the Third (main) terrace of the River Severn.

Prehistoric finds have been recovered from a number of locations in Tewkesbury, mainly in the northern Oldbury part of the town. Roman finds of 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century date have been found throughout the area of the medieval town, particularly in the northern end of the High Street and in the south close to the Abbey (GSMR 5517). A Roman road linking Gloucester to Droitwich is thought to have crossed the Avon close to the town (GSMR 8090) but the exact nature of the Roman settlement in Tewkesbury is not known and no indication of a defined urban settlement has yet been found.

Little is also known about the post-Roman early medieval occupation of the town. The use of the name 'Oldbury' to describe the northern part of the town does suggest the existence of earthworks or other prominent settlement remains during the late Saxon/early Norman conquest period (GSMR 8101). Tewkesbury grew and flourished in the medieval and early post-medieval period and the form and extent of the town at this time is still visible due to the survival of the street plan and several buildings.

The town entered a period of decline in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which is interpreted as being a result of the town's failure to adapt from cottage-based industries to the new factory system of production. This decline was reflected in the population figures and the 1831 population of 5,780 was not reached again until after WWII. Consequently buildings dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> through to the 18<sup>th</sup> century survive where in other similar towns they would have been rebuilt or re-fronted at a later date. The High Street frontage is occupied by a large number of listed buildings, including adjacent to the site: 45, a 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> timber framed building with 18<sup>th</sup> century stucco front (GSMR 7914); 43-44, an 18<sup>th</sup> century red brick building (GSMR 7913); 42, a painted brick 18<sup>th</sup> century building (GSMR 7912); 47-48, 17<sup>th</sup> century timber-framed cottages, the latter of which is stuccoed (GSMR 7916); 49, an 18<sup>th</sup> century parapeted red brick fronted timber-framed building (GSMR 7917). The survival of so many buildings of medieval and early post-medieval origin is indicative of good preservation of below ground archaeological remains.

#### *Previous archaeological work on associated sites*

The Service has undertaken a number of archaeological projects within this part of Tewkesbury:

A watching brief of groundworks at 40/41, High Street, to the south of Quay Street, found that post-medieval development had removed most of the evidence for earlier activity on the site. However, undisturbed deposits surviving on the north side indicated a moderate level of Roman activity, along with medieval settlement from at least the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, an undated alluvial channel was identified on in the south side of the site. Set against the background of previous archaeological research in Tewkesbury, the Roman deposits add to evidence for intensive activity across a wide area during the period, while the medieval remains represent domestic activity in an urban context. The post-medieval deposits were less significant in themselves, but emphasised the scale and intensity of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century development in the town, and its effect on pre-existing archaeological remains (Miller 2001).

Two trenches were excavated on the corner of Oldbury Road and Eagle Alley to the south-east of the present site, through surfaces of 19<sup>th</sup> century brick and floor tile. Although only dug to 1m maximum depth, the earliest deposit found was a garden soil containing 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century pottery. This was sealed by made ground containing 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century pottery. The latter deposits were thought to represent the replacement of an earlier substrate, although they contained residual Roman and medieval pottery (Miller et al 2007).

The evaluation of properties to the rear of 15/16 Barton Street and 3, Nelson Street, to the south-south-east, revealed well-preserved remains dating from the medieval period onwards, buried approximately 1-1.5m below the present ground level, up to 2.6m in depth. The features consisted of pits and ditches containing evidence for domestic activity in the backyards, such as animal husbandry and the processing of crops (GSMR 21350; Patrick 2002).

Further investigations of groundworks associated with development to the rear of Barton Street and Nelson Street recorded modern mixed soils and overburden to a depth of more than 0.80m below the present ground surface. Boreholes identified the natural matrix at approximately 1.80m depth, and it is conjectured that medieval and earlier levels remain largely undisturbed below the overburden layers across the site (Vaughan 2007).

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#### **Aims**

The aim of the watching brief was to observe and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible.

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## Methods

General specification for fieldwork	CAS 1995
Sources consulted	GSMR 1 <sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map 1880 scale 25":1 mile (Fig 4) Ordnance Survey map 1900, scale 25":1 mile Ordnance Survey map 1925, scale 25":1 mile VCH VIII
Date(s) of fieldwork	11 February 2008
Area of site	c 67m <sup>2</sup> . Indicated on Fig 2
Dimensions of excavated areas observed	Foundations length 17.55m width 0.50-0.65m depth c 1.10-1.80m
Trenches observed as a percentage of the total site area	c 15.5%.

### *Access to or visibility of deposits*

Observation of the excavated areas was undertaken during and after manual excavation. Due to their depth, all of the trenches were recorded from above. However, the exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits, although any less clear may not have been identified.

### *Statement of confidence*

Access to, and visibility of, deposits allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

## Deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Overburden / fill	Blackish greyish charcoal and fuel ash; moderately compact; occasional small plaster and CBM frags; upper layer within 103; overlying 101.	0.00-0.20m
101	Overburden / fill	Mixed pinkish red clay with greenish grey clay; occasional small plaster and charcoal frags and small pebbles; frequent roots; fill within 103; sealed by 100.	0.17-1.01m
102	Floor	Brick floor; 3 courses thick; bedded in pinkish white mortar; bricks 0.25x0.12m; overlies 103; sealed by 101.	0.99-1.19m
103	Wall	Brick wall within cut 111; 3 bricks wide; light brown mortar/plaster covers internal walls; pinkish mortar at base above floor 102; approx 10 courses extant; backfilled with 100 and 101.	0.00->1.70m
104	Foundation layer	Yellowish cream clay; compact; natural clay used as foundation layer for 102; only partially exposed.	1.19m +
105	Wall	Brick wall within cut 115; 8 courses visible; oriented east-west.	0.11-1.12m
106	Foundation layer	Light grey brown clay silt; small CBM and pebbles; below modern paved surface; overlies 107.	0.00-0.24m
107	Foundation layer	Mixed small pebbles and pea gravel; occasional charcoal and CBM frags; below 106; diffuse boundary with 108 below.	0.20-0.41m
108	Layer	Brownish grey sandy clay; occasional white plaster and small pebbles; diffuse boundary with 107 above and 113 and 123 below;	0.38-0.53m
109	Layer	Greyish brown sandy clay; occasional pebbles and charcoal flecks.	0.42-0.61m
110	Fill	Greyish brown sandy clay; occasional pebbles and charcoal flecks. Fill of 111; base not well defined.	c 0.55->1.70m
111	Wall foundation trench	Cut for wall 103; backfilled by 110; base not well defined; cuts 112, 113, 114 and 119; relationship with 109 and 120 unclear.	c 0.55->1.70m
112	Layer	Mixed light brown to dark brown sandy clay? Frequent small pebbles and pea	0.56-0.64m

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
		gravel; occasional charcoal.	
113	Subsoil	Light grey brown sandy clay; occasional pebbles and charcoal flecks; Diffuse boundary with 108 above and 114 below; defined boundary with 122 below.	0.37-1.12m
114	Natural	Reddish brown sandy silt, sands and gravel. River terrace deposit?	1.18m +
115	Wall foundation trench	Vertical sided; cut for wall 105; cuts 107, 108, 109, 112, 113; butted by 106.	0.11-1.12m
116	Wall	Brick wall within cut 117; 2 bricks wide; 15 courses extant; parallel with main northern wall boundary; forms southern wall of corridor/passage with 105; stepped cut onto natural 114; cellar?	0.00-1.04m
117	Wall foundation trench	Cut for wall 116; stepped and cut into 114.	0.00-1.04m
118	Demolition deposit	CBM and soil, etc; between 105 and 116; not entirely observed due to partial collapse; within 117.	0.00-c 1.04m
119	Layer	Mid greyish brown sandy silt; moderately compact; homogeneous; occasional charcoal flecks and CBM; no finds; overlies 114; below 120.	0.34-1.39m
120	Layer	Greyish brown sandy clay; frequent pebbles; overlies 119; below 121; cut by a modern brick manhole.	0.17-0.48m
121	Layer	Greyish brown sandy clay; occasional pebbles; overlies 120; sealed by modern brick paved surface; cut by a modern brick manhole.	0.04-0.25m
122	Demolition deposit	CBM, small sandstone frags and clay; within hollow in surface of natural – a deliberate cut?; diffuse boundary with 108 above; defined boundary with 113 above; overlies 114 and 123.	0.30-0.66m
123	Layer	Same as 113 but more loamy; diffuse boundary with 108 above and 114 below; defined boundary with 122 above.	c 0.28-0.46m

## Discussion and conclusions

No significant deposits, layers, features, or structures were identified nor artefacts retrieved during the project. The brick walls and associated foundations are of 19<sup>th</sup> century date (Figs 2 and 3), and probably relate to the structures recorded on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map and which remained on site until the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The natural matrix of silty sands and gravels, 114, was recorded at approximately 1.18m below the present ground surface. This was overlain by a thick homogeneous soil, 113 and 119. Although frequently truncated by the 19<sup>th</sup> century foundation trenches and sealed by layers associated with these structures, the soils did not contain dateable material. It is therefore unclear if they represent or contain medieval or post-medieval deposits relating to backyard activity, although the potential still remains within those areas of the site not affected by the present development.

## Publication summary

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on behalf of Mr D Samra at 46, High Street, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire (NGR: SO 893 330; GSMR ref. unassigned). Structural remains in the form of 3 brick walls were recorded which correlate with structures shown on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance survey map and date to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Several thick soil deposits overlay the natural silty-sand and gravel deposit, the former of which did not contain any datable materials, and are likely garden soils.*

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## Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Mr D Samra, Joan Desmond (Tewkesbury Borough Council), and Charles Parry (Gloucestershire County Council Senior Archaeological Officer).

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## Personnel

Fieldwork was undertaken by Sarah Phear. Report preparation was undertaken by Tom Vaughan. Illustrations were by Sarah Phear. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers.

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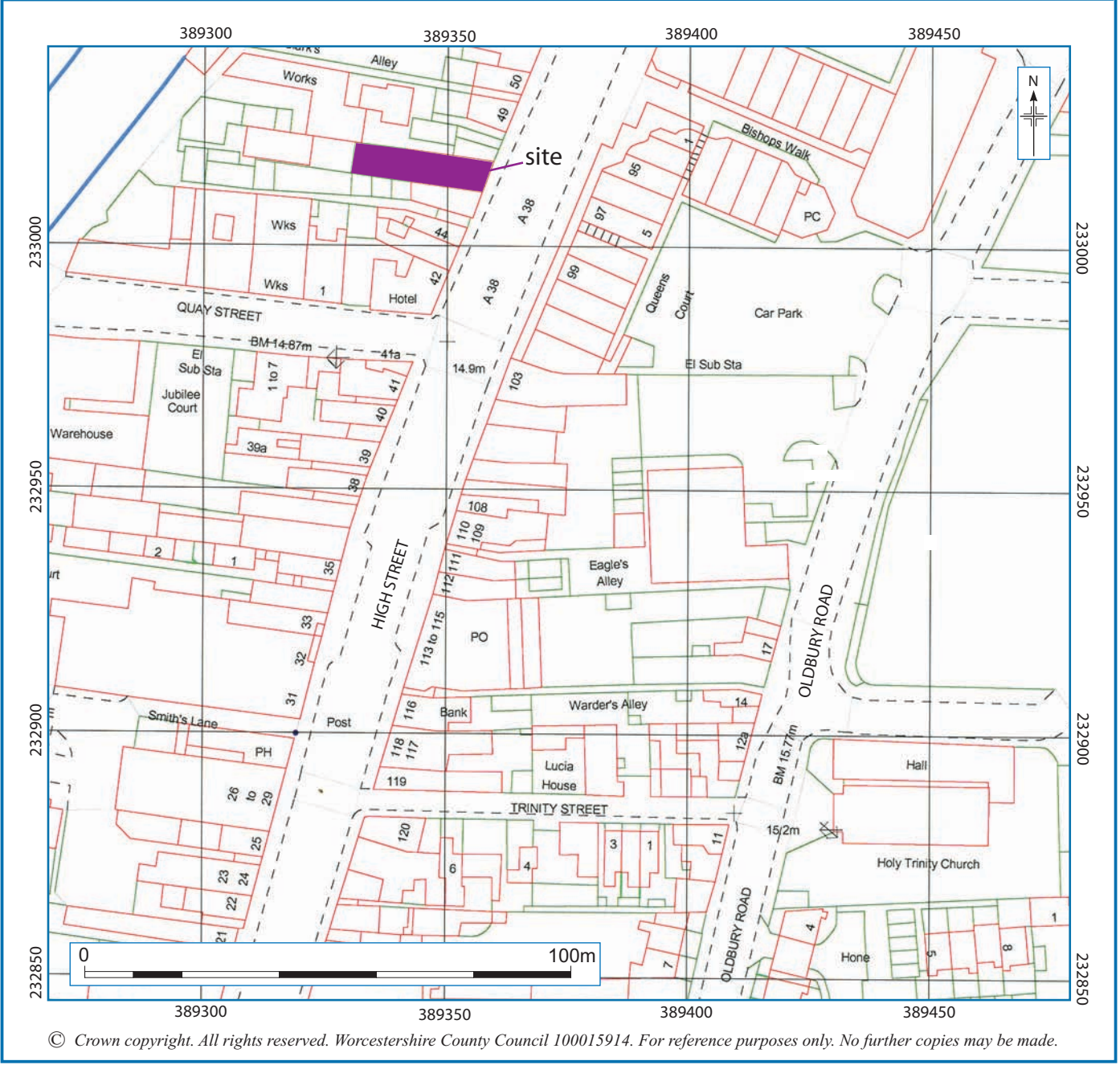
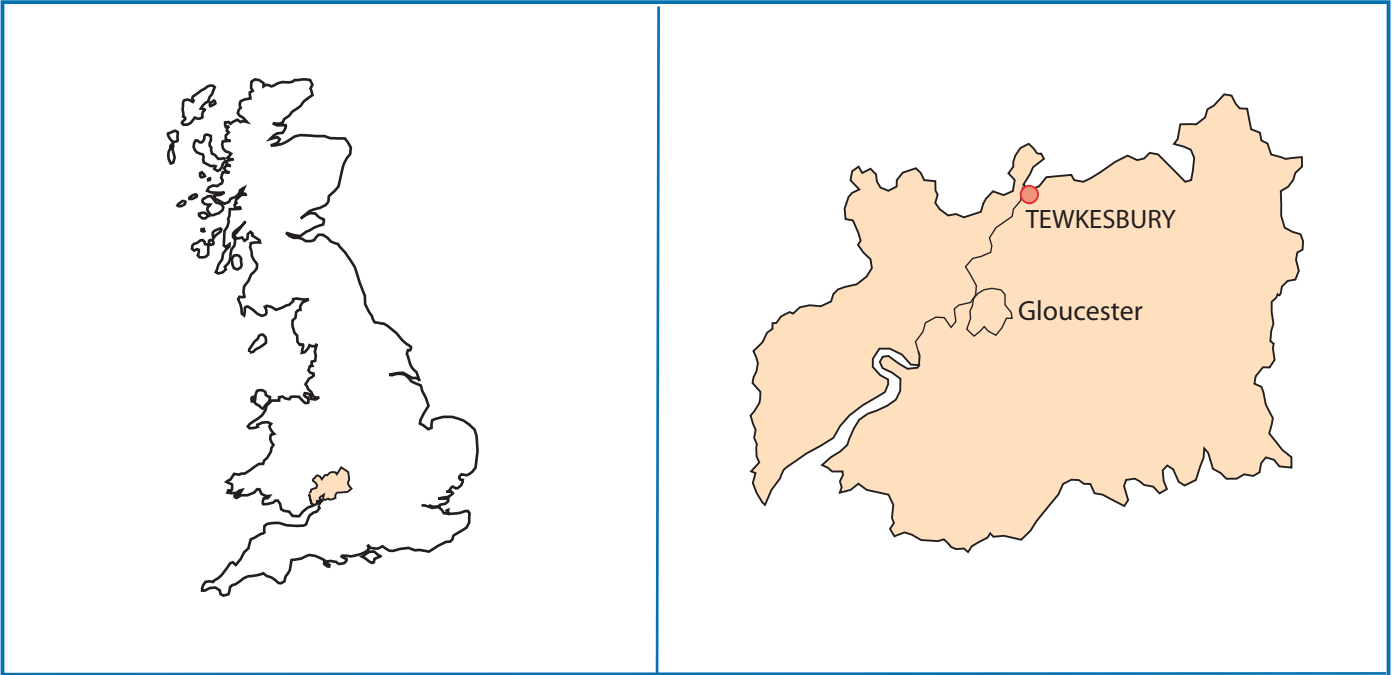
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## Figures

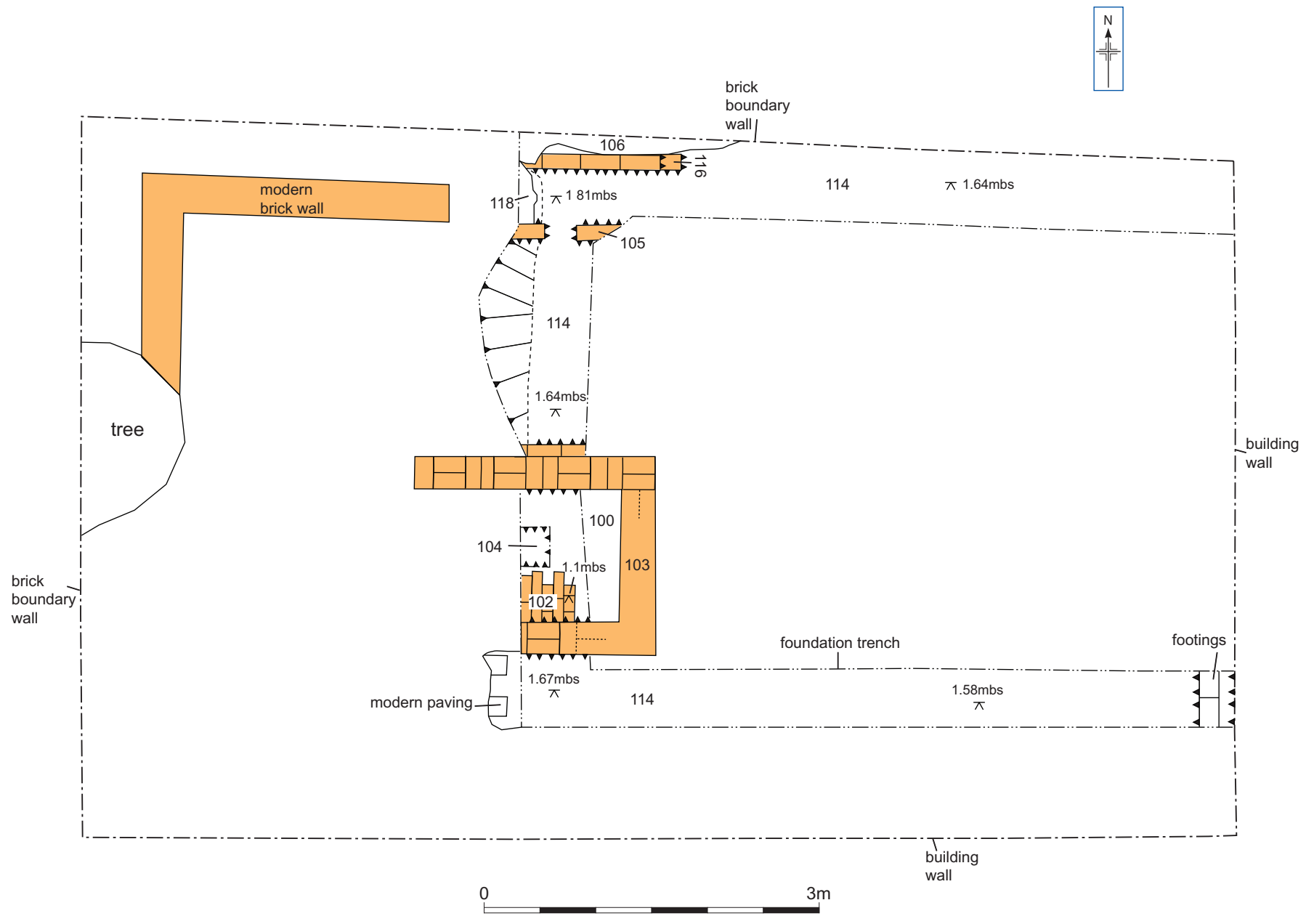




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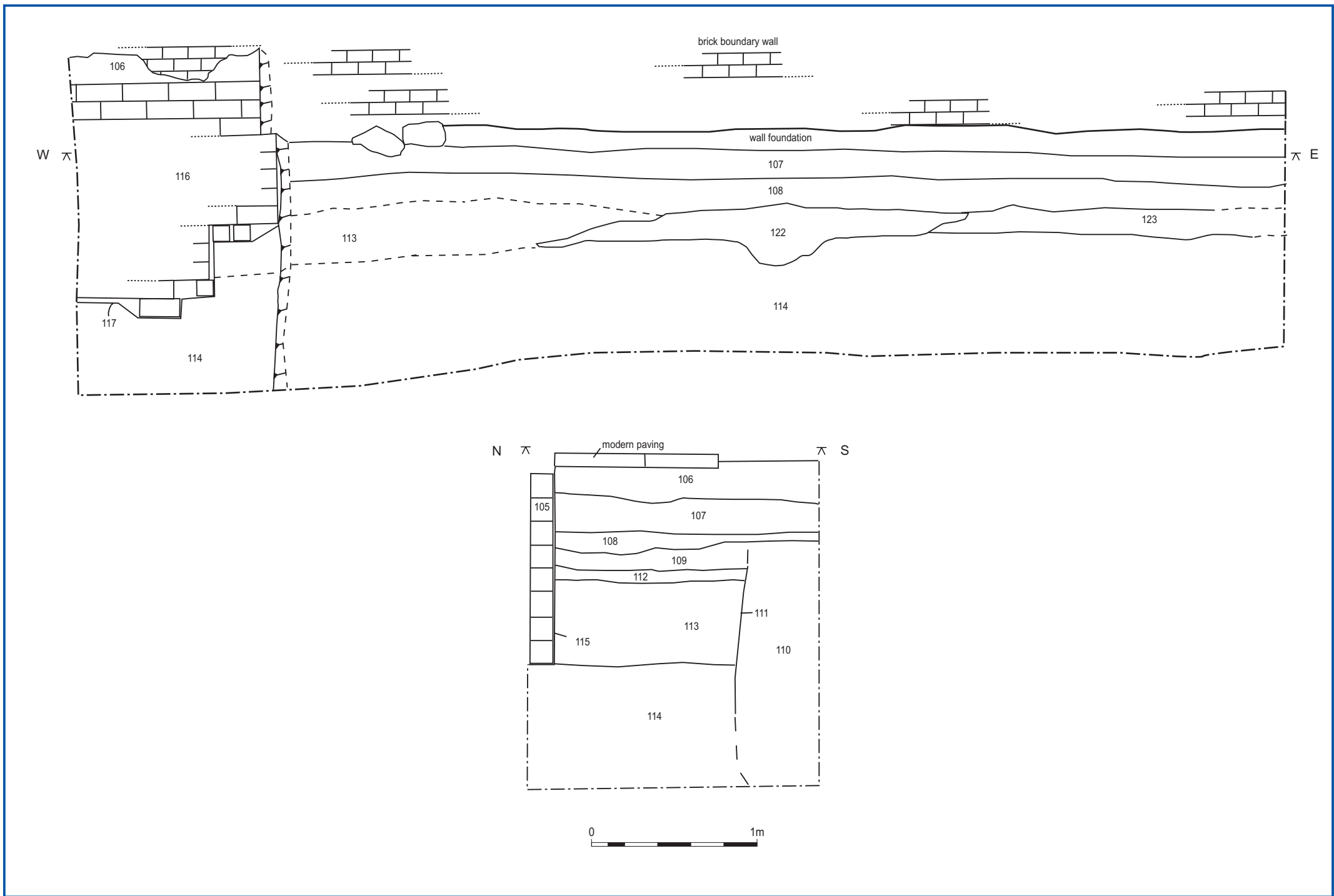
Location of the site

Figure 1



Plan of foundation trench with brick structural remains

Figure 2



South facing section with wall 116 (top) and west facing section between walls 105 and 103 (bottom)

Figure 3



1880

SCALE: 1:1,596

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1880 Ordnance survey map with the site location indicated

Figure 4

## Plates



*Plate 1: General shot of site, view north-east*



*Plate 2: Brick structure 103 in West Trench, view west*



*Plate 3: Brick structure 103 in West Trench, view north*



*Plate 4: Stratigraphy in West Trench, north of structure 103, view east*



*Plate 5: Brick walls 105 (foreground) and 116 (background) at west end of North Trench, view north*



*Plate 6: North-west corner of North and West Trenches, view north-west*



*Plate 7: General shot of North Trench, view east*





*Plate 8: General shot of Southern trench, view east*

## **Appendix 1 Technical information**

### **The archive**

The archive consists of:

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | Fieldwork progress records AS2               |
| 1  | Photographic records AS3                     |
| 38 | Digital photographs                          |
| 1  | Drawing number catalogues AS4                |
| 7  | Scale drawings (on 3 permatrace sheets AS34) |
| 3  | Abbreviated context records AS40             |
| 1  | Computer disk                                |

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum  
Clarence Street  
Cheltenham  
Gloucestershire  
GL50 3JT

Tel. Cheltenham (01242) 237431