

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF AT PEWTERER'S ALLEY,
BEWDLEY, WORCESTERSHIRE

Jon Milward

With a contribution by Alan Jacobs

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

21st September 2005

© Historic Environment and Archaeology Service,
Worcestershire County Council

Historic Environment and Archaeology Service,
Worcestershire County Council,
Woodbury,

University College Worcester,
Henwick Grove,
Worcester WR2 6AJ



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Project 2784
Report 1362
WSM 34482

Archaeological watching brief at Pewterer's Alley, Bewdley, Worcestershire

Jon Milward

Background information

Planning background

An archaeological watching brief was conducted by the author on behalf of the Environment Agency at Pewterer's Alley, Bewdley, Worcestershire (SO 7882 7544). The project involved monitoring the excavation of seven geotechnical test pits dug by contractors from Halcro Norwest in preparation for future flood defence works and to produce a photographic record of the east boundary wall of the alley. Fieldwork was conducted between the 10th and 11th of August 2005.

Historical background

The site lies to the north-east of the bridge at Bewdley, within the documented medieval suburb of Wribbenhall.

Bewdley is one of the towns studied by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey (Buteux 1995). This survey consists of a study of the towns' historic development and comprehensive gazetteer of known archaeological sites. The Survey indicated that Pewterer's Alley was towards the west edge of the boundary of Wribbenhall, an area which developed as an independent suburb of Bewdley and was laid out as tenement plots.

Aims

The aim of the fieldwork was to observe ground works associated with the site investigation process and to produce a record of archaeological deposits. It was also required to produce a photographic record of the standing wall forming the eastern boundary of Pewterer's Alley.

Methods

Before the fieldwork commenced, existing information relating to the site was compiled and assessed. This included records from the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record, and other documentary sources held by the Service.

During the fieldwork finds were recovered during the excavation of the test pits. The deposits exposed during the groundworks were observed and where necessary cleaned. Drawn, written and photographic records were compiled according to standard service practice (CAS 1995).

After the fieldwork the artefacts were examined and recorded on a Microsoft Access 2000 database. Artefacts were identified, quantified and dated and a *terminus post quem* date produced for each stratified context. Pottery was examined under x20 magnification and recorded by fabric type and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by the service (Hurst and Rees 1992). Illustrations were prepared from original drawings using an Adobe Illustrator software package.

Results

Test Pit 1

Test-pit 1 was excavated against the north-western edge of the stone wall at the southern end of Pewterer's Alley in an area of wasteland adjacent to the road (Figure 2). The wall's brick footings were observed at a depth of 1.2m from the current ground surface (Plate 17). This is at a depth of 1.75m from the top of the wall. A buried topsoil (103) was recorded at a depth of 1.2m from ground surface with deposits possibly associated with the construction of the wall (104) visible in the bottom of the trench at 1.22m below ground surface. Artefacts dating to the 18th century were recovered from this context.

Test Pit 2

Test-pit 2 was excavated in the garden of 1 Kidderminster Road against the south face of the eastern boundary wall of Pewterer's Alley (Figure 2). In this trench, garden soils were observed and continued deeper than the base of the trench at 1.0m below ground surface (contexts 200 and 201). Sandstone footings of the brick wall were observed at 0.2m below ground level (1.72m from the top of the wall). The sandstone continued deeper than the base of the trench at 1.0m and could possibly have been remains of an earlier wall on the same alignment as the extant wall (Plate 18).

Test Pit 3

Test-Pit 3 was excavated in the yard of 7 Beales Corner at the southern end of Pewterer's Alley (Figure 2). Modern topsoil was observed to a depth of 0.3m below the ground surface (300) on top of a mortar, and a brick, tile and charcoal rich demolition layer (301). This layer continued to a depth of 0.6m and was on top of a friable mid grey-brown silty clay containing 17th to 19th century artefacts (302), probably buried topsoil. This trench was excavated to a depth of 1.1m (Plate 19).

Test Pit 4

Test-Pit 4 was excavated spanning the width of the alley at the south end (Figure 2). Deposits below the modern path make-up were dominated by service trench activity. A drain termination, gas, and water pipes were present in this trench. Undisturbed deposits were, however, observed butting up against the base of the stone wall (contexts 404 and 405). The brick footings of the wall were present in the base of the trench at 0.65m from the ground surface (Plate 20).

Test Pit 5

Test Pit 5 was excavated across the width of the alley between Test Pits 4 and 6 (Figure 2). The drain and water pipe observed in Test Pit 4 were also present in this trench beneath a thick grey-brown silt layer (501). The footings for the southern boundary wall were present at a depth of 0.6m below the ground surface. The deposit butting against the footings (502) contained a number of large chunks of sandstone, these were not bonded together but were grouped at the same level (Plate 21).

Test Pit 6

Test Pit 6 was excavated across the width of the alley, just to the west of the entrance to the garden of 1 Kidderminster Road (Figure 2). The services present in Test Pits 4, 5 and 7 were also observed along with deposits pre-dating the construction of the north boundary wall (contexts 603 and 604). The foundation of the wall was cut through these deposits and it was possible to ascertain its depth. This was between 0.5 and 0.8m from the surface of the path. The foundation was 1.98m from the top of the wall (Plate 22).

Test Pit 7

Test Pit 7 was excavated across the width of the alley towards the north-east corner of the garden of 1 Kidderminster Road (Figure 2). The stratigraphy in this trench mirrored that of Test Pit 6. The top of the foundation of the north alley wall was 0.5m from the surface of the path and 1.98m from the top of the wall. This was consistent with the same measurements from Test Pit 6 (Plate 23).

Deposit description

Context	Description	Interpretation	Depth below ground level
100	Loose dark brown humic silty loam, contains occasional small sub-rounded and sub-angular stones	Dumped soil and biodegraded garden refuse	0 – 0.7m
101	Grey brown humic silty loam.	Dumped material	0.7 – 0.92m
102	Patch of light grey brown silty loam	Dumped material	0.92 – 1.0m
103	Dark grey-brown silty loam, occasional small sub-rounded stones	Buried topsoil	1.0 – 1.2m
104	Firm mottled buff and yellow coloured clay and grey brown silty loam	Possible backfill of sandstone wall foundation cut	>1.2m
200	Friable dark grey-brown silty loam with occasional small rounded and sub-rounded stones	Garden soil	0 – 0.5m
201	As 201 but slightly greyer	Garden soil	0.5 - >1.0
300	Friable light brown silty clay with occasional small charcoal flecks and rare small sub-rounded stones	Topsoil	0 – 0.3m
301	Compact mortar rich layer with abundant ceramic building material (CBM), small – large frags of sandstone mixed with patches of charcoal rich dark brown silty loam	Demolition layer	0.3 – 0.6m
302	Friable dark grey brown silty clay with abundant small charcoal flecks and flecks of mortar	Buried topsoil	0.6 – 1.1m
400	Tarmac	Path surface	0 – 0.12m
401	Friable buff coloured crushed stone	Hardcore	0.12 – 0.22m
402	Steep sided trench cut	Gas pipe trench	0.22 - >0.67
403	Loose grey-brown charcoal rich silty loam with abundant large chunks of sandstone and CBM	Fill of 402	0.22 - >0.67
404	Friable dark grey-brown silty loam with abundant charcoal and ash.	Material dumped against wall	0.23 – 0.4m
405	Friable buff coloured silty clay with abundant charcoal flecks and some small chunks of CBM	Material dumped against wall	0.4 – 0.66m
500	Tarmac	Path surface	0 – 0.14m
501	Loose mid grey-brown silty loam with occasional small charcoal flecks and small sub-rounded stones and CBM.	Dumped material	0.14 – 0.46m
502	Loose light grey-brown silt with frequent inclusions of charcoal, mortar, CBM and some large angular sandstones present	Backfill of east alley wall foundation	0.46 – 1.16m
600	Tarmac	Path surface	0 – 0.11m
601	Mid grey-brown friable silty loam with frequent inclusions of CBM, mortar and charcoal	Dumped material	0.11 – 0.3m
602	As 601 but more humic	Buried topsoil	0.3 – 0.53m
603	Friable black coal rich silty layer	Dumped material	0.53 – 0.63m
604	Friable mixed layer, mainly buff coloured clay with occasional small frags of CBM and	Dumped material	0.63 – 0.81m

Context	Description	Interpretation	Depth below ground level
	charcoal		
605	Friable grey silt loam	Backfill of wall foundation	0.53 – >0.8m
700	tarmac	Path surface	0 – 0.1m
701	Friable mid grey-brown silt with occasional small chunks of CBM and charcoal	Dumped material	0.1 – 0.32m
702	As 701 but slightly greyer	Dumped material	0.32 - >0.38m

Finds by Alan J Jacobs

Artefactual analysis

The pottery assemblage retrieved from the excavated area consisted of 69 sherds of pottery weighing 831g, and, in addition, fragments of ceramic tile, glass, copper alloy, bone, oyster shell and tobacco pipe were recovered. The group came from four stratified and eight unstratified contexts. These finds could be dated from the post-medieval period onwards (see Table 1). The level of preservation was generally fair with the majority of sherds displaying only moderate levels of abrasion.

Material	Total	Weight (g)
Post-medieval pottery	19	446
Modern pottery	50	385
Tile	2	247
Slag	3	52
Glass	5	18
Copper alloy object	1	29
Tobacco pipe	31	135
Bone	4	31
Total	115	1343

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

Discussion of the pottery

All sherds have been grouped and quantified according to fabric type (see Tables 2-3). A total of six diagnostic form sherds were present and could be dated accordingly, the remaining sherds were datable by fabric type to the general period or production span.

The discussion below is a summary of the finds and associated location or contexts by period. Where possible, *terminus post quem* dates have been allocated and the importance of individual finds commented upon as necessary.

Fabric number	Fabric name	Total sherds	Weight (g)
78	Post-medieval red sandy ware	7	238
81.2	Westerwald stoneware	1	22
81.7	Staffordshire? stoneware	1	13
82	Delft ware	1	5
84	Creamware	14	123

91	Post-medieval buff ware	2	115
Total		26	521

Table 2: Quantification of the post-medieval pottery by fabric

The post-medieval pottery assemblage contained 33% of the overall pottery assemblage by count and 62% by weight. The assemblage was dominated by creamware sherds mainly in the form of plates or dishes dating from 1740-1780, located in stratified contexts 103 and 405 as well as in unstratified context 101. A number of red sandy ware sherds were also recovered from stratified context 103, these had a more general 17th-18th century date range, no distinct forms being recovered, and most of this ware was recovered from unstratified contexts 200 and 702. Two sherds of post-medieval buff ware were recovered from contexts 103 and 104 both in the form of a slipware platter or dish with brown, combed decoration over a cream slip and a piecrust rim, possibly fragments of the same dish. Smaller fragments of Delft ware (fabric 82) and Westerwald tankard (Fabric 81.2) were present in context 103. A single fragment of Staffordshire stoneware (fabric 81.7) was present in unstratified context 602.

Fabric number	Fabric name	Total sherds	Weight (g)
81.4	Modern stoneware	1	8
83	Porcelain	1	1
85	Modern stone china	40	250
101	Modern miscellaneous	1	56
Total		43	315

Table 3: Quantification of the modern pottery by fabric

The modern pottery assemblage contained 67% of the overall pottery assemblage by count and 38% by weight. The most common fabric was modern stone china (fabric 85), predominantly of general 19th-20th century dating. The form of a dish with a purple transfer pattern was recovered from context 103, which is of early 19th century date. Examples of willow pattern modern stone china came from a number of unstratified contexts. A small sherd of early 19th century mocha ware was recovered from unstratified context 702. Only single sherds of porcelain, modern miscellaneous stoneware and a modern plant pot (fabrics 83, 81.4 and 101 respectively) were recovered from unstratified contexts 602, 200 and 100. The balance of modern material recovered would indicate modern domestic rubbish.

Other finds consisted of a number of fragments of bottle and window glass dating from the late 19th-20th centuries and a single copper alloy door knocker. Two fragments of tile were recovered, one a modern floor tile, and the other a post-medieval roof tile; several fragments of bone and some mollusc shells were also recovered. Finally 31 fragments of tobacco pipe stem broadly datable from the 17th-19th centuries were recovered. An example of a broken bowl still displaying a WH stamp on the base of its foot, the shape of which indicates production by William Harper of Broseley, around the middle of the 18th century.

Significance

The assemblage is too small to have much significance, and probably represents residual material from nearby settlement activity. The general mix of fabric and forms would indicate a domestic assemblage during the post-medieval to modern period. The lack of medieval activity would appear to be significant. The post-medieval assemblage is interesting in that the creamware and post-medieval buff ware show very little abrasion and the creamware appears early and similar to white salt glazed stoneware.

Context	Material	Type	Total	Weight (g)
100	Pottery	Modern	6	129

Context	Material	Type	Total	Weight (g)
101	Copper Alloy	Object	1	29
101	Pottery	Post-medieval	3	26
103	Tile	Post-medieval	1	147
103	Pottery	Modern	4	46
103	Pottery	Post-medieval	11	261
103	Slag	Modern	1	48
104	Tobacco pipe	17 th – 19 th century	1	4
104	Pottery	Post-medieval	1	59
200	Bone	Post-medieval/modern	2	28
200	Glass	Post-medieval/modern	1	11
200	Pottery	Post-medieval	2	58
302	Glass	Post-medieval/modern	1	1
302	Tobacco pipe	17 th – 19 th century	4	11
405	Oyster shell	?	1	23
405	Pottery	Modern	7	70
501	Bone	Post-medieval/modern	1	2
501	CBM	Modern	1	100
501	Tobacco pipe	17 th – 19 th century	7	90
501	Pottery	Modern	2	8
502	Tobacco pipe	17 th – 19 th century	4	11
502	SLAG	Modern	1	2
601	Pottery	Modern	7	55
602	Glass	Modern	2	3
602	Oyster shell	Modern	1	30
602	Tobacco pipe	17 th – 19 th century	13	16
602	Pottery	Modern	19	52
602	Pottery	Post-medieval	1	13
701	Tobacco pipe	17 th – 19 th century	1	2
701	Pottery	Modern	3	15
702	Mammal bone	Post-medieval/modern	1	1
702	Glass bottle	Modern	1	3
702	Oyster shell	Modern	1	11
702	Tobacco pipe	17 th – 19 th century	1	1
702	Pottery	Modern	2	10
702	Pottery	Post-medieval	1	29
702	Glassy slag	Post-medieval/modern	1	2

Table 4: Quantification of the artefacts by context

Discussion

The deposits observed in the test pits mainly represent a low level of 18th and 19th century activity. The deposits built up above the base of the stone wall recorded in Test Pit 1 were representative of recent dumping of soil and organic refuse. The area of waste-land where Test Pit 1 was excavated was maintained as parkland by the council until approximately 30 years ago (G Holland pers comm). The patch of ground has now gone to waste and is used as a dump, particularly at the southern end. The quantity of material discarded here has actually blocked up the first underpass before the bridge (Plate 24).

The buried topsoil and demolition deposits present in Test Pit 3, were consistent with the recent history of 5 Beales Corner (WSM 12766). In the 1970s the area was landscaped with the original 17th century building demolished and rebuilt approximately 0.6m higher (G Holland pers comm).

The space between the alley walls contained at least three different services surrounded by dumped 19th and 20th century deposits. It was possible, however, to generally ascertain the depth of the footings of the alley walls in the trenches along its length. The south-east wall foundation observed in Test Pits 4 and 5 was 0.65m and 0.6m below the ground surface respectively. Further to the north the stretch of brick north-west alley wall viewed in Test Pits 6 and 7 was consistently 0.5m below ground level. In Test Pit 2 remains of an earlier sandstone wall were possibly used as the footing for the current south-east alley wall (see plate 18) This was, however, more likely just the foundation for the brick wall as seen elsewhere in the county, for example contemporary late 18th century walls at Tanwood House farm, Chaddesley Corbett (Robson-Glyde 2004). The presence of services in Test Pit 7 unfortunately prevented any further observation of the south-east wall's construction.

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 the Environment Agency at Pewterer's Alley, Bewdley, Worcestershire (SO 7882 7544; WSM 34482). The excavation of seven geotechnical test pits by hand was observed and the archaeological deposits recorded. A photographic record of the general nature of the south-east alley wall was also produced. No significant deposits relating to the medieval and post-medieval development of Bewdley were recorded although it was possible to ascertain the depth of the footings for the various stages of the alley walls. These were between 0.5 and 0.65m below the current ground surface of the alley. Some pre-wall undisturbed deposits were present in some of the test pits and a few 18th century artefacts were recovered. Remains of an earlier wall (or possibly a sandstone foundation to the brick wall) were observed in Test Pit 2 and had apparently been used as the footing for the later brick wall. Unfortunately no datable evidence was recovered from around this feature to hazard a guess at its age.

Archive

Fieldwork progress records AS2	3
Photographic records AS3	2
Trench record sheets AS41	3
Digital photographs	1 CD
Boxes of finds	1

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum
Hartlebury Castle, Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
01299 250416

telephone

Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project; Mr E Wilson (Environment Agency), Mark, Carl (Halcro Norwest) and Mrs G Holland.

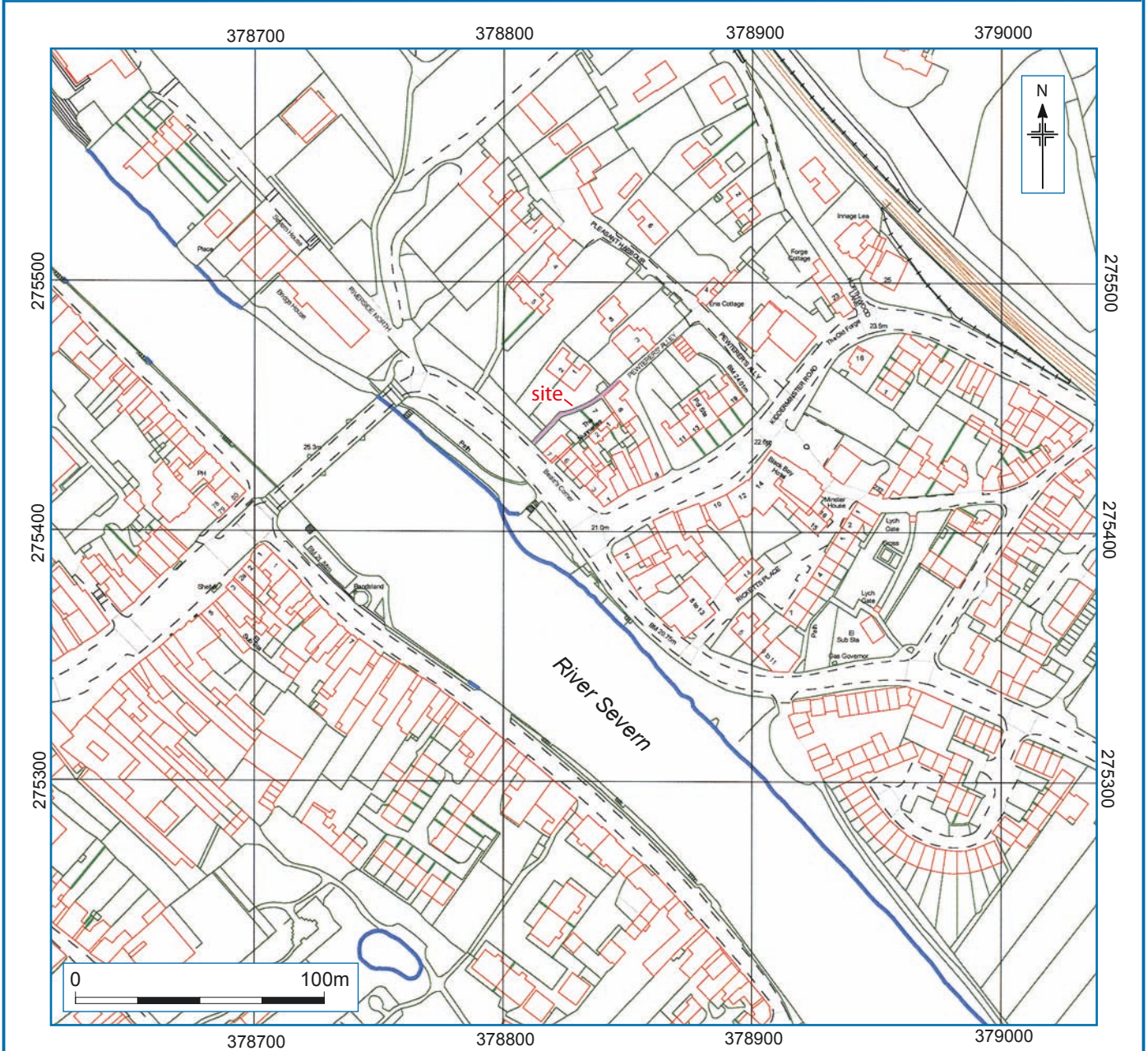
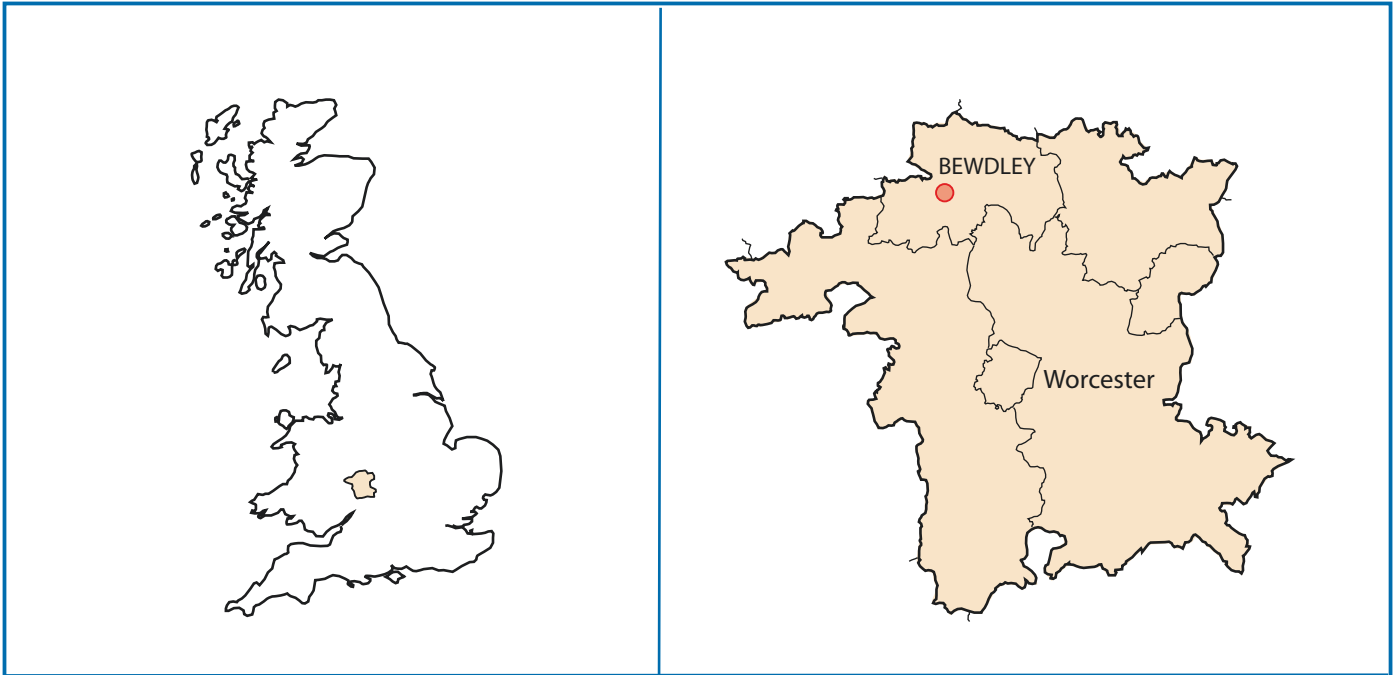
Bibliography

Buteux, V, 1995 *Archaeological assessment of Bewdley Central Marches historic towns survey, Hereford and Worcester*, County Archaeological Service, Worcestershire County Council, report 3

CAS, 1995 (as amended) *Manual of Service practice: fieldwork recording manual*, County Archaeological Service, Hereford and Worcester County Council, report, 399.

Hurst, J D, and Rees, H, 1992 Pottery fabrics; a multi-period series for the county of Hereford and Worcester, in Woodiwiss, (ed), *Iron Age and Roman salt production and the medieval town of Droitwich*. *CBA Res Rep* 81, pp200-209

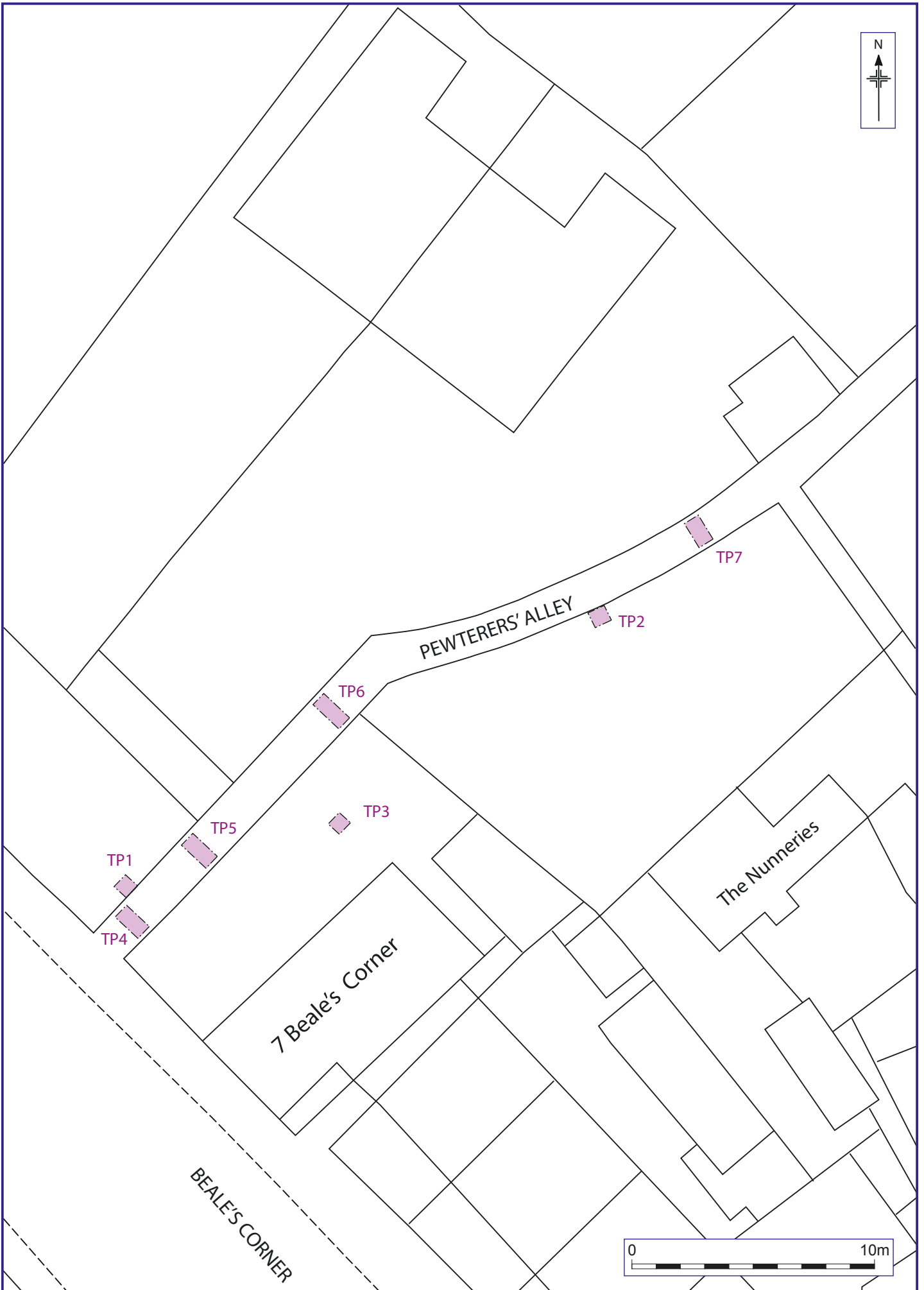
Robson-Glyde, S, 2004 *Building Recording at Tanwood House Farm, Chaddesley Corbett, Worcestershire*, Worcestershire County Council Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, report 1176



© Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Worcestershire County Council 100015914. For reference purposes only. No further copies may be made.

Location of the site.

Figure 1



© Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Worcestershire County Council 100015914. For reference purposes only. No further copies may be made.

Location of Test Pits

Figure 2

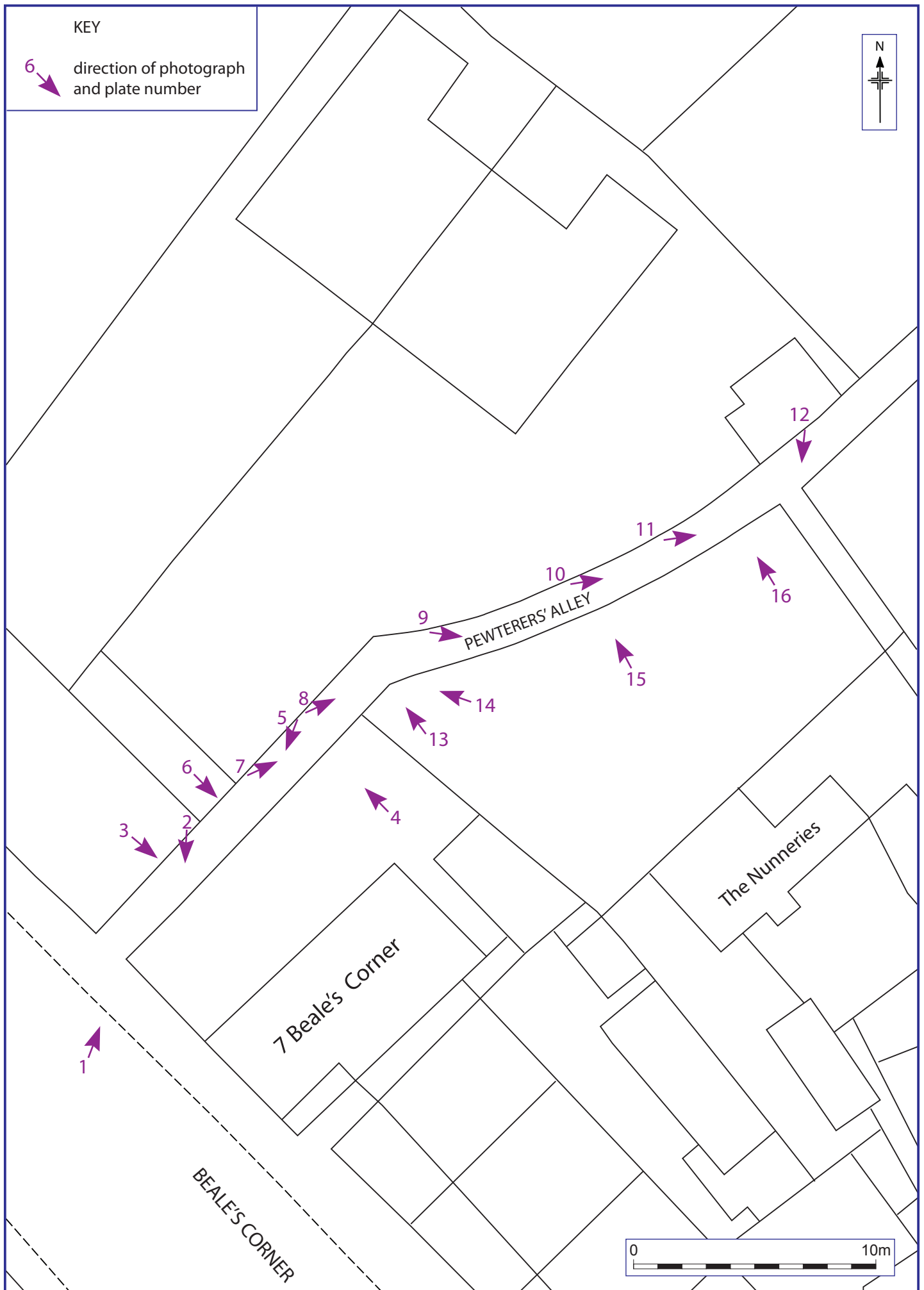




Plate 1 General shot of the south west end of Pewterers Alley.



Plate 2 General shot of wall (see Figure 3 for location).

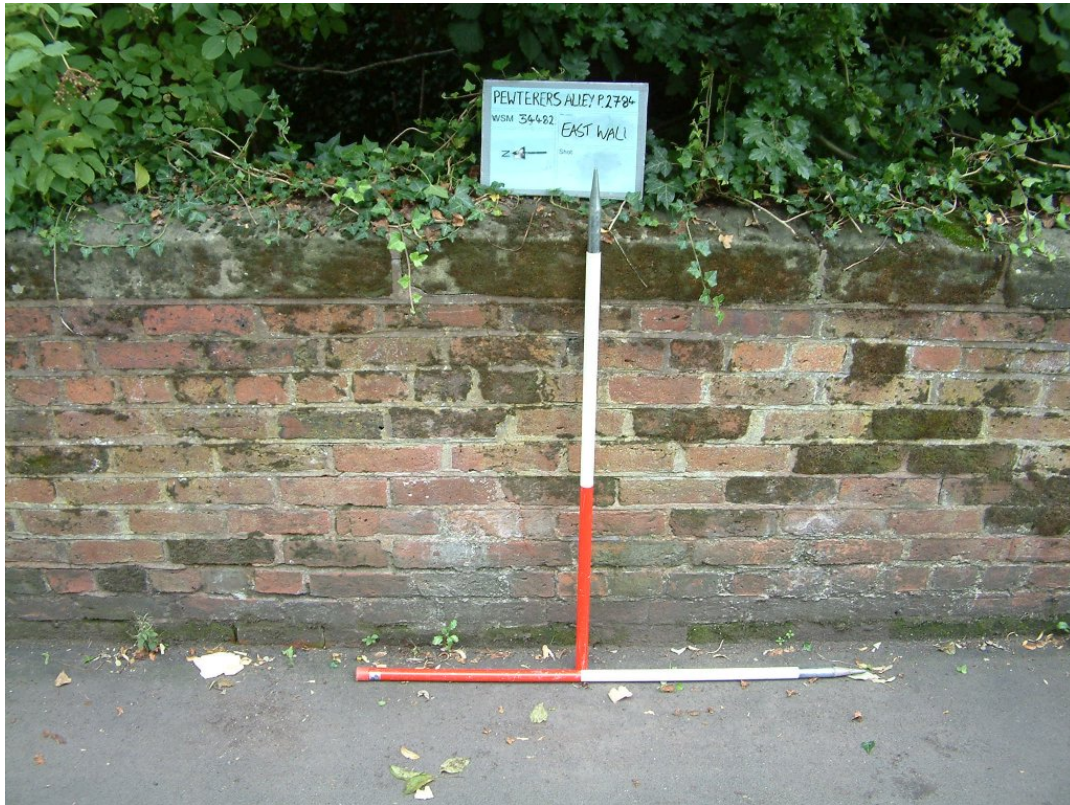


Plate 3 General shot of wall (see Figure 3 for location).



Plate 4 General shot of wall (see Figure 3 for location).



Plate 5 General shot of wall (see Figure 3 for location).



Plate 6 General shot of wall (see Figure 3 for location).



Plate 7 General shot of wall (see Figure 3 for location).



Plate 8 General shot of wall (see Figure 3 for location).



Plate 9 General shot of wall (see Figure 3 for location).



Plate 10 General shot of wall (see Figure 3 for location).



Plate 11 General shot of wall (see Figure 3 for location).



Plate 12 General shot of wall (see Figure 3 for location).



Plate 13 General shot of wall (see Figure 3 for location).



Plate 14 General shot of wall (see Figure 3 for location).



Plate 15 General shot of wall (see Figure 3 for location).



Plate 16 General shot of wall (see Figure 3 for location).



Plate 17 General shot of test pit 1, facing south east.



Plate 18 Sandstone foundation or early stone wall footings in test pit 2, facing north.



Plate 19 General shot of test pit 3, facing north west.



Plate 20 South west facing section of test pit 4.



Plate 21 South west facing section of test pit 5.



Plate 22 general shot of test pit 6 facing north east.



Plate 23 South west facing section of test pit 7.



Plate 24 Dumped material at north end of underpass below road.



Plate 25 Late 18th century brick wall with sandstone foundation at Tanwood House, Chaddesley Corbett (Robson-Glyde 2004)
