

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION
AT
ALICE OTTLEY SCHOOL, UPPER
TYTHING, WORCESTER

James Goad BA AIFA and Erica Darch

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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Council

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



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Archaeological evaluation at Alice Ottley School, Upper Tything, Worcester

James Goad

Part 1 Project summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Alice Ottley School for Girls, Upper Tything, Worcester (NGR SO 8486 5571). It was undertaken on behalf of Alice Ottley School and Godwin Austen Johnson Architects, who intended to submit a planning application for a new teaching block. The siting of the new block was thought to have an impact on a site of potential archaeological interest (WCM 93509). The project aimed to determine if any archaeological remains were present and if so to indicate what their location, date and nature were.

The evaluation revealed the remnants of a possible Roman soil horizon as well as layers of dumped material cut by two pits dating to the post-medieval period. In addition to this were some probable garden features. No archaeological deposits were found from an earlier period. These results showed that the area had perhaps always been used as an agricultural area and gardens.

Part 2 Detailed report

1. Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Alice Ottley School, Upper Tything, Worcester (NGR SO 8486 5571), on behalf of Alice Ottley School and Godwin Austen Johnson Architects. The school intends to build a new teaching block and will submit a planning application to Worcester City Council, who considered that a site of archaeological interest was affected (WSM 93509).

1.2 Project parameters

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IFA 1999)

The project also conforms to a brief prepared by Worcester City Museum Archaeology Section (WCMAS 2003) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (HEAS 2003).

1.3 Aims

The aims of the evaluation were from the brief – to address a number of research questions, including the following: to locate the presence of Roman buildings, industry or other remains; to determine the extent and character of medieval buildings, cemeteries or other activity associated with St Oswald's and/or the Whiteladies priory; to assess the survival of remains of the 16th century tiling and to examine the character of other post-Dissolution activity (WCMAS 2003). The purpose of this was to establish their significance, since this would make it possible to recommend an appropriate treatment, which may then be integrated with the proposed development programme.

2. Methods

2.1 Documentary search

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). In addition the following sources were also consulted:

Cartographic sources

- Worcester. Speed 1610. BL King's Maps C7 C550: WCRO 4885/VI 899x426
- An exact ground plot of the City of Worcester as it stood fortified 3rd September 1651. Anon 1660. BL Kings Maps XLII
- Plan of Worcester City. Doharty 1742
- Plan of the City and Suburbs of Worcester from Actual Survey 1779. George Young 1779
- Plan of the City and Suburbs of Worcester. Valentine Green 1795
- Plan of the City and Suburbs of Worcester. Nash 1781/1799

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- Map of Worcester. Eaton 1810
 - A Plan of The City and Environs of Worcester. T. Eaton 1829. From “A History of Worcester”.
 - A Map of the City and Suburbs of Worcester. Crisp 1832
 - A Map of the City and Suburbs of Worcester. Clements 1835
 - Plan of Worcester. Bentley 1840
 - 1:2500 Ordnance Survey Map 1887-1888. Reproduced at 1:1000
 - 1:2500 Ordnance Survey Map 1904. Reproduced at 1:1000
 - 1:2500 Ordnance Survey Map 1924. Reproduced at 1:1000
 - 1:2500 Ordnance Survey Map 1940. Reproduced at 1:1000

Documentary sources

- County histories (VCH II)
- Watching brief record sheet describing trench monitoring at Alice Ottley in 1989. Records held by Worcester City Museum and Archaeology Section (WCM 100434) and information available through SMR search

2.2 **Fieldwork**

2.2.1 **Fieldwork strategy**

A detailed specification has been prepared by the Service (HEAS 2003).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 10th and 11th July 2003.

One trench, amounting to 30m² in area, was excavated over the site area of 600m², representing a sample of 5%. The location of the trench is indicated in Figure 2. The trench was located in a position that would not affect a number of trees, to the north and south of the test area, which were subject to Tree Preservation Orders.

The trench was marked out and de-turfed by hand, with the intention of reinstating it when the trench was backfilled. The trench was machined using a 1.5 tonne mini tracked excavator employing a toothless bucket and under archaeological supervision. Subsequent excavation was by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were cleaned in section to retrieve artefactual material as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Service practice (CAS 1995). On completion of excavation, the trench was reinstated by replacing the excavated material along with the turf.

2.2.2 **Structural analysis**

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

2.3 **Artefacts**

2.3.1 **Artefact recovery policy**

All artefacts were retrieved by hand and retained in accordance with the service manual (CAS 1995 as amended).

2.3.2 **Method of analysis**

All hand-retrieved finds were examined. Artefacts were identified, quantified, dated and recorded on a Microsoft Access 97 database. The pottery was examined and recorded by fabric type according to the fabric reference series maintained by the Service (Hurst and Rees 1992).

2.4 **Environment**

2.4.1 **Sampling policy**

Due to the absence of significant archaeology from the evaluation, it was decided not to take any environmental samples.

2.5 **The methods in retrospect**

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

3. **Topographical and archaeological context**

Worcester lies in the valley of the River Severn with the historic core situated on the east bank of the river on a terrace composed of sand and gravel which rises to a height of around 26m OD (Worcester Terrace 1982) overlying Mercian Mudstone (Keuper Marl). Settlements date back to the Iron Age through to the present day (Barker 1969, 9-42).

The area under investigation is to the north of this historic core and lies outside the area of the medieval walled area.

The school lies on the east side of the Upper Tything, between St Oswald's Almshouses (WCM 96012) to the south and the Royal Grammar School to the north. The former Whiteladies priory is situated within the grounds of the Grammar school (WCMAS 2003).

The two main published accounts of the history of St Oswald's Almshouses are in VCH (II 1906, 177-9), and by Hughes (1980, 209-292).

The hospital was founded in remembrance of St Oswald and probable that it is contemporary with the planned medieval suburb of the late 11th or 12th centuries. The hospital seems to have survived through the medieval period in various forms, suffering periods of neglect until extensive repairs and rebuilding took place between 1638 and 1641. The resulting complex of buildings are those represented on George Young's map of 1779 (Figure 4).

A number of archaeological investigations have been made at St Oswald's Almshouses. Most significantly, fieldwork in 1990 and 1991 revealed a substantial stone wall dating to the medieval period. The wall was substantial enough to have supported a stone building, possibly the medieval church associated with the hospital. The excavations also produced a lot of

demolition debris from the medieval period, along with medieval and post-medieval burials (Edwards 1992).

The nunnery of the White Ladies of Aston was also known as the house of St Mary Magdalene, at Whitstones, in the parish of Claines, on the north side of the cemetery of the hospital of St Oswald. The order was founded prior to the mid 14th century, when the site was confirmed to the nuns (VCH II, 154). At the Dissolution of the monasteries the priory was given to one Richard Callowhill. Amongst some properties around Worcester it also owned a tile kiln, a brick kiln and a windmill. The White Ladies Nunnery became the Whitstone Farm and was let to different tenants. The Royal Grammar School (WCM 98016) was built on the site of the former Nunnery in the 1860's, with the orchard that made up the area of the farm under investigation now part of the Alice Ottley School (Hughes 1980).

The Alice Ottley School has been subject to only very limited archaeological investigation in the past. Shelley's 1989 watching brief on four trenches (WCM 100434) in a back yard of the school were just under a metre deep and went through post-medieval soil. The sections showed only "post-medieval rubbish" and no features were identified (Worcester City HER).

Judging by some of the maps from the 18th century, the location of the trenching for this project falls within the area of orchard mentioned as part of Whistone Farm. This places the area of evaluation within the precinct of Whistones Priory.

4. Description

The contexts excavated and recorded are presented in Table 2, with Table 1 summarising the artefacts recovered. The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figures 2 and 3.

4.1 Artefact Analysis

The assemblage came from eight contexts and included unstratified material. It ranged in date from Roman to modern and overall, the material was fairly abraded. The assemblage is recorded in Table 1.

Roman

Based on the available evidence two contexts had a *terminus post quem* (*tpq*) date in the Roman period. The two sherds of Samian ware (fabric 43) from context 110 came from a shallow bowl or dish and were moderately abraded. The sherds from 103 were locally produced Severn Valley ware (fabric 12 and 12.2) and more highly abraded.

Medieval

The only possible medieval material recovered was a type of roof tile produced between the 13th and 18th centuries, and therefore could have been medieval or post-medieval in date.

Post-medieval

Based on the available evidence contexts with a *tpq* date in the post-medieval period were 102, 104, 108, 111 and 116. The brick, tile, clay pipe and most of the pottery could not be closely dated. However, four pieces of post-medieval red ware (fabric 78) that did have some diagnostic features were probably 17th century.

Modern

Based on the available evidence the only context with a *tpq* date in the modern period was 101.

Table 1: The assemblage

Context	Material	Type	Fabric Number	Total	Weight (g)	Date range
U/S	Bone			2	175	
U/S	Tile	Flat roof tile		3	238	13th - 18th C
U/S	Pot	Miscellaneous post-medieval wares	100	1	1	Post-medieval
101	Pot	Modern stone china	85	3	19	19th C +
101	Flower pot			2	9	
101	Brick			2	45	Post-medieval / Modern
101	Coin	1928 Half Penny		1	5	Post-medieval / Modern
102	Pot	Post-medieval red wares	78	2	8	17th C
102	Clay pipe	Stem		4	4	Post-medieval
102	Slag			1	8	
102	Bone			1	9	
102	Tile	Flat roof tile		6	91	13th - 18th C
102	Flower Pot			2	12	Post-medieval / Modern
102	Glass	Window		1	1	?
103	Iron	Nail		1	7	
103	Pot	Organic tempered Severn Valley ware	12.2	1	13	1 - 2nd C
103	Pot	Severn Valley ware	12	1	5	M1 - 4th C
103	Tile			1	10	Roman
104	Tile	Flat roof tile		4	554	13th - 18th C
104	Brick			1	47	Medieval / Post-medieval
104	Pot	Post-medieval red wares	78	2	103	17th C
104	Pot	Tin glazed ware	82	1	24	Post-medieval
108	Mortar			6	186	
108	Brick			1	1108	Medieval / Post-medieval
108	Pot	Post-medieval red wares	78	1	21	Post-medieval
110	Pot	Samian	43	2	19	1st - 2 / 3rd C
111	Tile	Flat roof tile		3	132	13th - 18th C
116	Brick			11	551	Medieval / Post-medieval
116	Mortar			2	67	

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Phase 1 Natural deposits

The natural deposits exposed during the evaluation were orange sandy gravels, visible 0.75-1m from the top of the trench.

4.2.2 **Prehistoric**

No features or artefacts from this period were present.

4.2.3 **Roman**

Two sherds of Samian ware pottery were recovered from a layer dated firmly to the post-medieval period. These were in a slightly abraded condition. They were probably present in a manuring scatter and, at some stage, became incorporated in to this garden soil.

Layer 103 seems to be dateable to the Roman period in the absence of any finds from any other period. The abraded nature of the material perhaps points to their movement around in such an abrasive soil. It's possible that this layer represents the remnants of a Roman plough or subsoil.

4.2.4 **Medieval**

There were no features identified from this period. Some artefactual material that could broadly be dated to this period were found in contexts dating to the post-medieval period.

4.2.5 **Post-medieval**

All the features revealed in the trench seem to date from this period. Contexts 105 and 109 were features packed with demolition material including brick, tile and mortar fragments. Both features were visible on either side of the trench, suggesting perhaps they were either pits used for dumping demolition rubble, or backfilled, north-south orientated robber-trenches. These features cut through earlier layers which include similar material, albeit to a lesser extent. Layers 110 and 102 seem to be layers of overburden, dumped across the site during a period of landscaping. These are cut by several garden features as well as the rubble-filled pits/ditches (see Figure 3).

4.2.6 **Discussion of the artefacts**

Although the assemblage is quite small, the excavation appears to have uncovered evidence for Roman activity. The pottery recovered would be consistent with a domestic function.

There may be evidence for medieval for post-medieval structures in the form of brick and tile which may date to either period. Also some evidence for domestic activity in the post-medieval period.

5. **Significance**

Although lacking in any features from the prehistoric to the medieval periods, the site did produce possible evidence of Roman agricultural activity. The earliest stratigraphical layer, which sat directly on top of the natural, produced a few artefacts dating to the Roman period and no others from later dates. It seems possible that, although perhaps not in an area where there was any development or industrial activity in the Roman period, there is some evidence to support the idea that the area was under cultivation during this time.

There seems to be negative evidence for the presence of medieval buildings and cemeteries. It seems that the northern precinct limit of St Oswald's has remained fixed since the medieval period, as no burials or structures from the hospice of that period were found in the trench. No ecclesiastical or other structures were found suggesting that the area was developed during its ownership by Whiteladies priory, or used as anything other than agricultural or garden land.

There is ample evidence from the post-medieval period for landscaping and a phase or phases of demolition. Layers 102 and 110 seem to have been dumped over the site as levelling or make-up layers. Two features, 107 and 105, were both packed with demolition rubble and could be robber trenches or pits backfilled with demolition material. Early maps (see Figures 4 and 5) don't show any buildings in this location, but building material could have been dumped here from other locations. On arrival at the site, the lawn was observed to have been parched in many places throughout, as well as being uneven underfoot. The parching did not take any particular pattern, just a spread of irregular-shaped marks. Given the presence of these and the rubble-filled pits revealed in the trench it is possible that the whole area to the rear of the present buildings is heavily pitted, suggesting the possible demolition of a substantial building or buildings in the vicinity. The trench also revealed a few garden features dating from the same period. Like the rubbly features, these cut through the layers of overburden previously mentioned. Doubtless these were part of the orchard and gardens present on this part of the school site when it formed part of Whistone Farm.

6. **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 evaluation was undertaken on behalf of Alice Ottley School and Godwin Austen Johnson Architects at Alice Ottley School, Upper Tything, Worcester (NGR SO 8486 5571; WCM 93509). The evaluation succeeded in exposing a possible Roman soil horizon towards the base of the trench. Abraded pottery within the layer suggest this could be the remnants of a Roman ploughsoil. There was also plenty of evidence for post-medieval activity in the form of landscaping, pitting and the deposition of demolition material, as well as garden features.

7. **The archive**

The archive consists of:

2	Fieldwork progress records AS2
1	Photographic records AS3
12	Colour digital photographs
1	Matrix sheets AS7
3	Scale drawings
1	Box of finds
1	Computer disk

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum

Hartlebury Castle

Hartlebury

Near Kidderminster

Worcestershire DY11 7XZ

Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416

8. Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Alice Ottley School, Godwin Austen Johnson and James Dinn.

9. Personnel

The fieldwork and report preparation was led by James Goad. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Simon Woodiwiss. Fieldwork was undertaken by James Goad and Adam Mindykowski, finds analysis by Erica Darch and illustration by Carolyn Hunt.

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11. Abbreviations

BSB	Break of slope to the base
BST	Break of slope to the top
WCMAS	Worcester City Museums Archaeology Section
WCM	Numbers prefixed with 'WSM' are the primary reference numbers used by the Worcester City Sites and Monuments Record.
NMR	National Monuments Record.

SMR

Sites and Monuments Record.

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Table 2

Alice Ottley trench

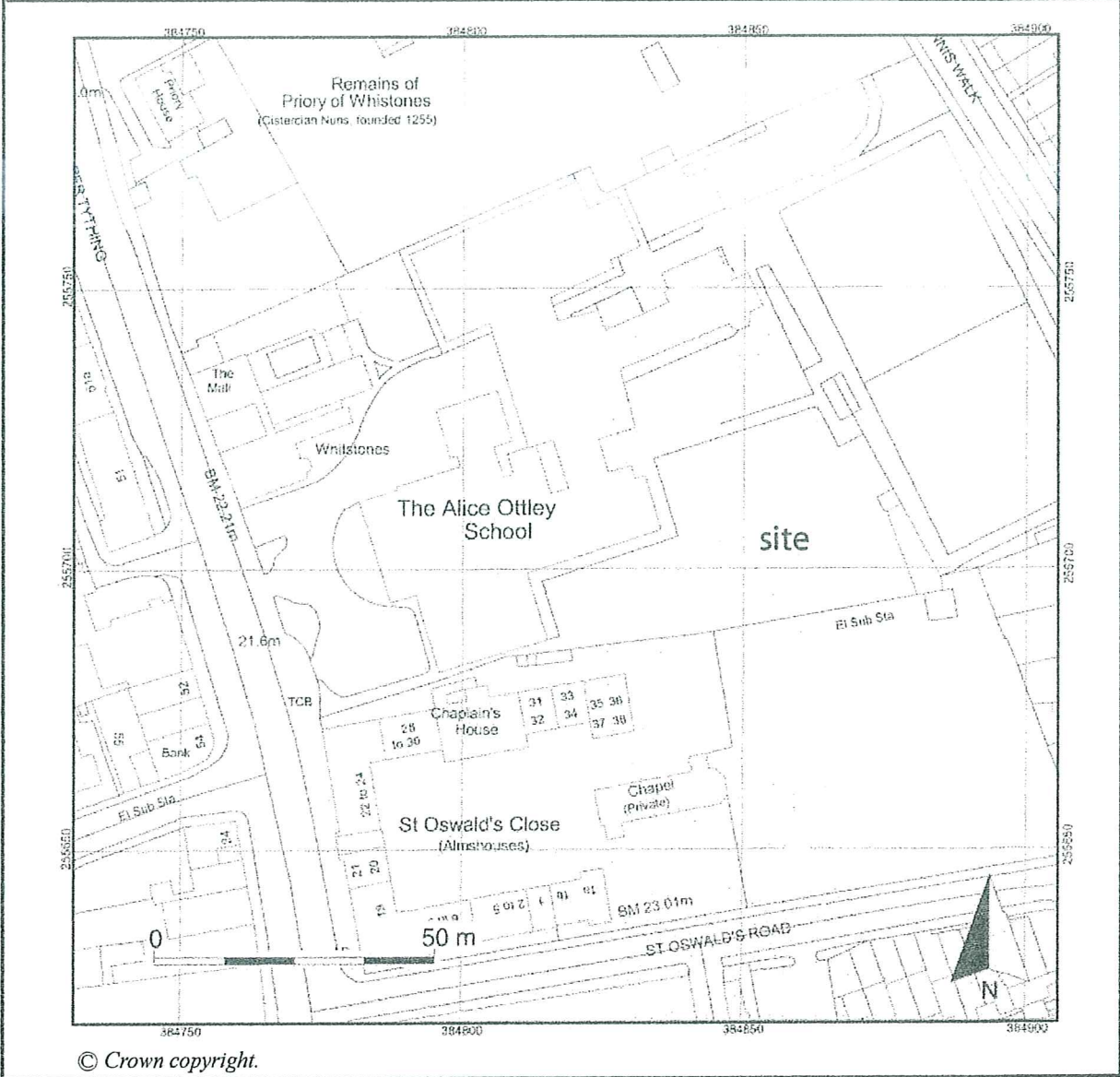
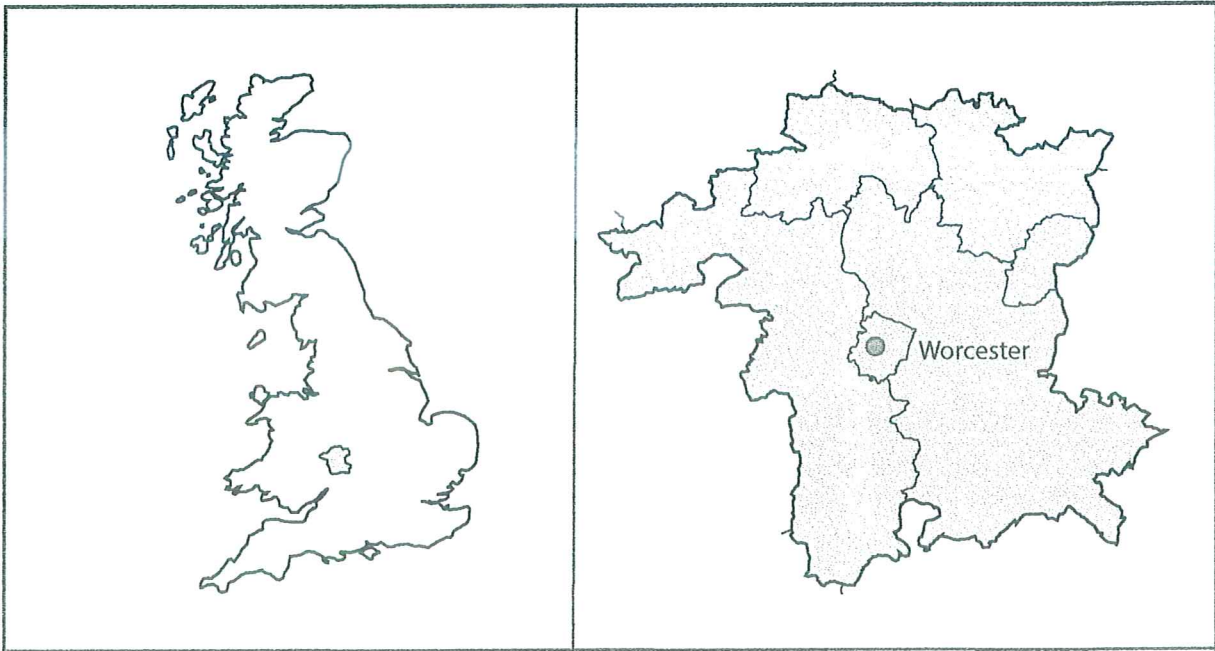
Maximum dimensions: Length: 20m Width: 1.5m Depth: 0.75-1.12m

Orientation: East-west

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
101	Topsoil	Friable to loose dark grey silty sand. Moderate light rooting. Moderate small sub-rounded stones. Occasional tile, brick and mortar	0-0.22m
102	Layer, probably make-up/overburden for landscaping	Loose light grey silty sand. Moderate small to medium-sized rounded stone inclusions. Moderate small mortar flecks and lumps. Moderate light rooting	0.20-0.70m
103	Layer. Possible remnant of Roman plough or subsoil	Loose dark brown sand. Occasional medium-sized sub-rounded stones	0.42-1.00m
104	Fill of pit/ditch 105. Latest of three fills	Loose dark brown silty sand. Abundant medium to large demolition rubble and mortar. Moderate small to medium-sized rounded stones	0.27-0.40m
105	Pit full of demolition rubble or a robber trench, filled by 104, 115 and 116	BST-West side, sharp. East side-gradual Sides-West side, vertical. East side-convex BSB-Gradual Base-Flat Orientated north-south.	0.26-0.80m
106	Lead pipe and fill of pipe trench	Running roughly north-south	0.74m
107	Construction cut for lead pipe service 106	Straight-sided pipe trench cut	0.22m-
108	Pit/ditch fill of 109	Compact demolition rubble at west end of trench. Mixed with loose dark brown silty sand. Very similar brick and mortar that's present in 104.	0.23m-

109	Pit/ditch, filled by 108	BST-Gradual Sides-Slightly concave	0.23m-
110	Layer, make-up or overburden	Similar to 102 albeit with less mortar fragments. Loose light greyish brown silty sand.	0.28-0.84m
111	Fill of 112	Loose mid brown silty sand.	0.22-0.73m
112	Probable garden feature, cut filled by 111	BST-Sharp Sides-Slightly concave BSB-Sharp Base-Flat	0.22-0.73m
113	Fill of 114	Loose mid brown silty sand	0.22m-
114	Cut of garden feature, filled by 113	BST-Sharp Sides-Irregular	0.22m-
115	Secondary fill of pit/robber trench 105	Friable light greyish brown silty sand.	0.40-0.56m
116	Primary fill of 105	Abundant medium-sized rounded stones. Abundant demolition material in the form of brick, tile and mortar	0.56-0.80m
117	Natural	Orange and yellow sand. Occasional to moderate medium-sized rounded stones.	0.75-1.05m



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Location of the site.

Figure 1

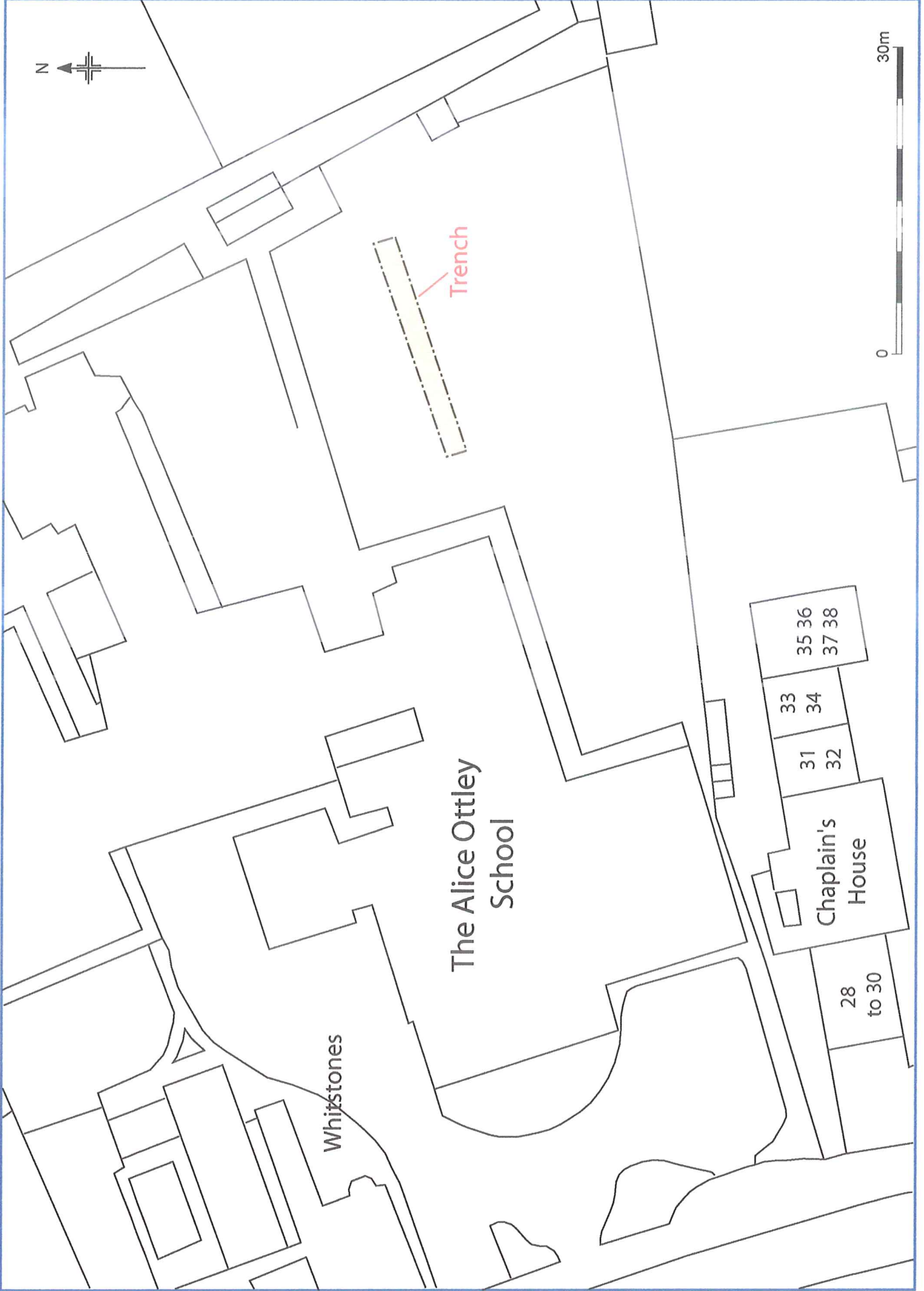
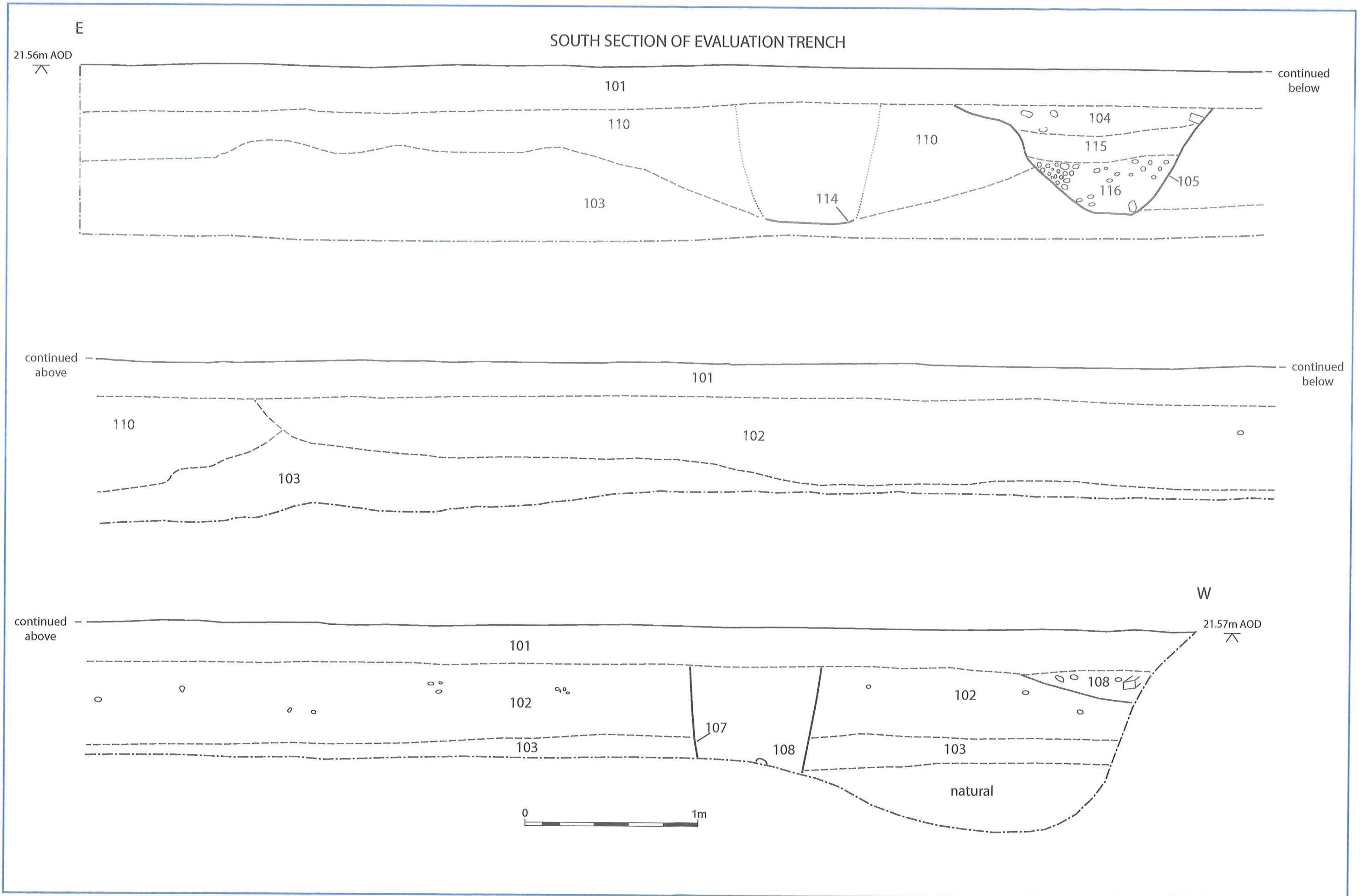


Figure 2

Trench location plan.

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South section of evaluation trench.

Figure 3



Extract from Valentine Green's map, 1795

Figure 4

255800

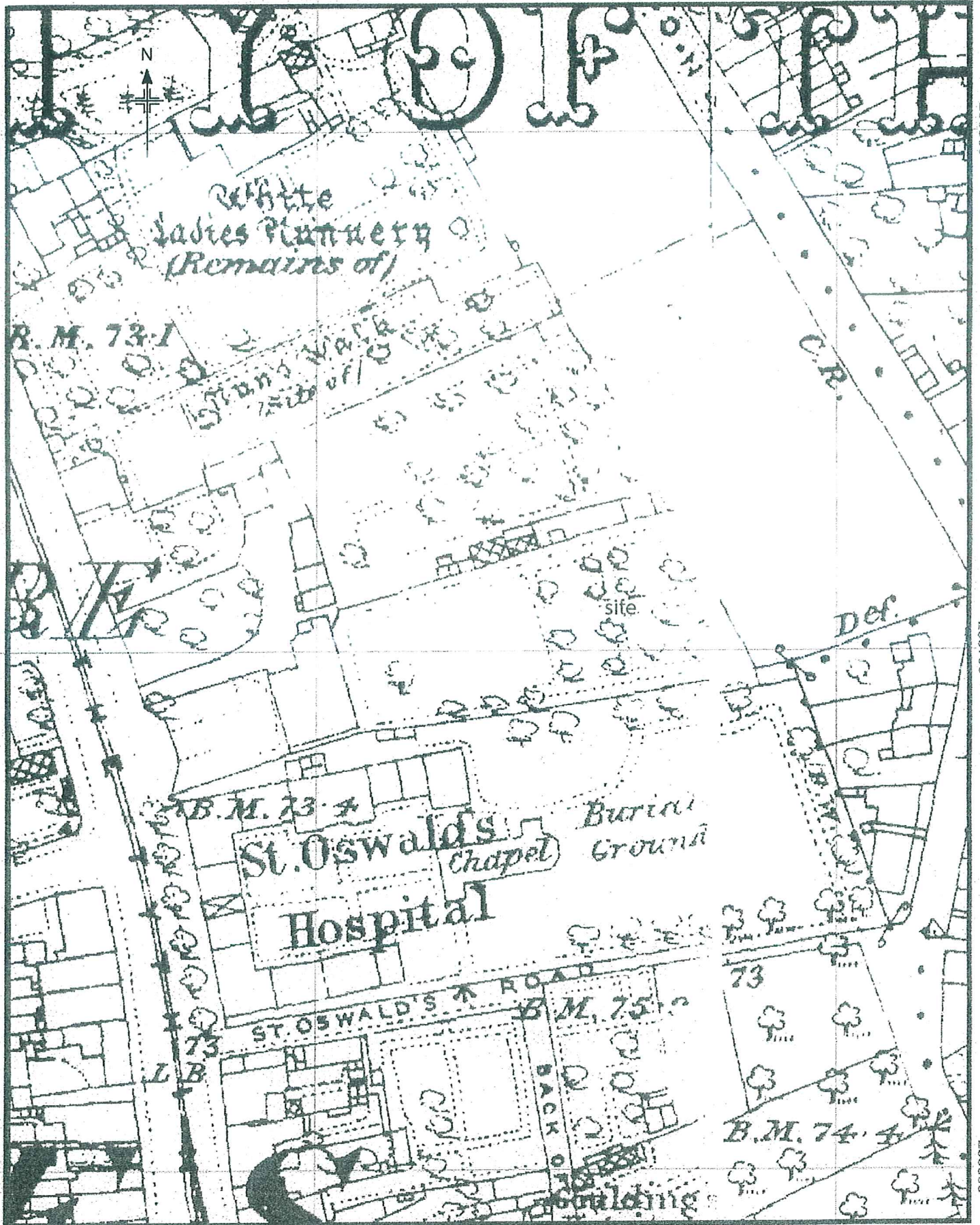
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0 50m 384900

Figure 5

Extract from 1st edition Ordnance Survey, 1:2500 mapping (reproduced at 1:1000)