

# Archaeological evaluation at Chanson Foods Avon Street, Bristol

Worcestershire Archaeology for  
*RPS Group on behalf of  
Victoria Hall Management Ltd*

February 2020



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# CHANSON FOODS AVON STREET BRISTOL

Archaeological evaluation report

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## SITE INFORMATION

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Site name: Chanson Foods  
Site code: P5756  
Local planning authority: Bristol City Council  
Planning reference: 19/02664/F  
Central NGR: ST 59960 72548  
Commissioning client: RPS Group  
Client project reference: JCH00757  
WA project number: P5756  
WA report number: 2780  
Oasis reference: fieldsec1-374896  
Museum accession number: BRSGM 2019/62

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### DOCUMENT CONTROL PANEL

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# Archaeological evaluation at Chanson Foods, Avon Street, Bristol

By Andrew Walsh

Illustrations by Laura Templeton

## Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) at Chanson Foods, Avon Street, Bristol in December 2019. The project was commissioned by RPS Group on behalf of Victoria Hall Management Limited in advance of proposed redevelopment of the site. The site is located approximately 200m north-east of Bristol Temple Meads railway station and 1km south-east of Bristol City Centre. The proposed development is located on the site of a lead works dating to the 18th to 19th century and an early 20<sup>th</sup> century warehouse. There is no evidence of any earlier activity.

Three trenches were opened although only limited excavation took place in Trench 1 due to the presence of in-situ concrete and a live water pipe. No archaeological features were identified in Trench 2 and a series of brick and stone structures were identified in Trench 3 approximately 1m below the present ground surface. Although no dateable finds were identified during the evaluation, comparison of the features with historic maps and plans of the site indicate they are probably related to the lead works which was in operation during the late 18th and 19th centuries, or the early 20th century warehouse.

The methods adopted allow a moderate degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Conditions were suitable in Trenches 2 and 3 to identify the presence or absence of archaeological structures and features and it is considered that the nature, density and distribution of archaeological features provides a reasonable characterisation of this part of the development site.

# Report

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) at Chanson Foods, Avon Street, Bristol in December 2019. The project was commissioned by RPS Group on behalf of Victoria Hall Management Limited in advance of proposed redevelopment of the site and comprised of three evaluation trenches. A planning application has been submitted to Bristol City Council (planning reference 19/02664/F). The archaeological advisor to the local planning authority considered that the proposed development has the potential to impact upon heritage assets.

No brief was provided but a WSI was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2019) and approved by Bristol City Council. The evaluation also conforms to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in the *Standard and guidance: for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014).

### 1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The site is located approximately 200m north-east of Bristol Temple Meads railway station and 1km south-east of Bristol City Centre (NGR ST 59960 72548). The site measures approximately 3550m<sup>2</sup> and comprises a predominantly single storey industrial building used for agricultural food production, with surrounding concrete hardstanding and a small parcel of scrub in the north-western corner. The site is broadly level, lying at a height of approximately 8.7m AOD and the underlying geology is mapped as bedrock of Redcliffe Sandstone Member overlain by superficial deposits of Tidal Flat clays and silts (BGS 2020).

## 2 Archaeological and historical background

### 2.1 Introduction

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) of the site was undertaken by CgMs (now RPS Group) in 2019, on behalf of Victoria Hall Management Ltd. (Parker 2019).

### 2.2 Prehistoric, Roman and medieval

No prehistoric, Roman or early medieval activity has been identified in the vicinity of the site. During the medieval period the site was located outside of Bristol in the neighbouring county of Gloucestershire.

### 2.3 Post-medieval and modern

During the post-medieval and modern periods Bristol expanded rapidly. It is not known when the site was first developed but it was probably during the 18th century. Documentary records indicate that by 1772 a leadworks and other buildings occupied the site (Legge Consulting 2018, section 3.2 and plate 3; taken from Chatwin 1976).

Throughout the 19th century the site went through various changes in ownership becoming the Panther Lead Company by 1883. By the early 1840s Brunel had completed the first station at Temple Meads and the associated rail infrastructure crossed St. Phillip's Marsh, to the north of the site. There was further expansion of the railway network through the mid-nineteenth century, and late 19th century historic maps and plans (Parker 2019, figs 5 and 6) show that the leadworks was connected to the railway system via a single siding which crossed the site.

The Panther Lead Company went bankrupt in 1896 and the site was sold off. A sale plan shows the site comprised of six smelting furnaces and other buildings located around a central yard (Parker 2019, fig 6). Historic mapping shows the site was completely redeveloped after it was sold as the



1902 Ordnance Survey map illustrates the entire site occupied by a single building called *Avonside Goods Warehouse No 3* (cf Parker 2019, figs 5 and 7).

Historic maps appear to show the Avonside Goods Warehouse building was cleared by the late 1940s and the site was largely undeveloped. The current building was constructed in the 1970s and was originally used as a Post Office Depot.

### 3 Project aims

The aims and scope of the project, as outlined in the WSI, are to undertake sufficient fieldwork to:

- determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits beyond reasonable doubt;
- identify their location, nature date and preservation;
- assess their significance;
- assess the likely impact of the proposed development.

### 4 Project methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2019). Fieldwork was undertaken between 16 and 18 December 2019.

Three trenches, amounting to 40m<sup>2</sup> in area, were excavated at the site. The trenches were positioned in areas of car parking to the north of the extant building (Figure 2). The car parking comprised of concrete hardstanding which was cut and removed using a JCB 3CX wheeled excavator with a pecker and toothed bucket. The remaining deposits were removed under constant archaeological supervision, employing a toothless bucket. Due to the depth of the deposits encountered in Trench 2 it was stepped in to prevent collapse. Surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated and cleaned to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012) and trench and feature locations were surveyed using a differential GPS with an accuracy limit set at <0.04m. On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

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

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Worcestershire Archaeology. Subject to the agreement of the landowner it is anticipated that it will be deposited at Bristol Museum and Art Gallery.

### 5 Archaeological results

#### 5.1 Introduction

The features recorded in the trenches are shown in Figures 2 and 3 and Plates 1 to 8. The trench and context inventory is presented in Appendix 1.

#### 5.2 Trench 1

This trench was only partially excavated. Cutting, breaking and removal of the concrete (100) revealed further layers of solid concrete at the northern (105) and southern (104) ends of the trench (Figure 2 and Plate 1) along with three brick walls (101, 102 and 103). A live water pipe was also encountered, and rubble 106 may be the fill of a cut for this and/or other service trenches. The engineer's surveys of the site indicated that concrete 104 and potentially wall 101 may be associated

with possible fuel tanks in this area. Given the nature of the features identified no further excavations were undertaken.

### 5.3 Trench 2

The earliest deposit identified in this trench was a slightly orangey brown sandy clay natural (203; Figure 2 and Plates 3 and 4). The top of this deposit was at 7.1m AOD, 1.5m below the present ground surface. Above this were layers of undifferentiated overburden (202), comprising brick and stone rubble, ash, sand and soil (Plate 4). This measured approximately 1.2m in depth and no structures or features were identified in the deposit apart from a silted up ceramic waste pipe. Above the overburden was a layer of hardcore (201) and the concrete (200).

### 5.4 Trench 3

The earliest features identified in this trench were a series of walls (Figure 2 and Plates 5 and 6). The exposed tops of these walls were typically located at around 7.7m AOD, 1.0m below the present ground surface. Most of the walls were constructed of brick although 305 and 307 were formed of stone blocks (Plate 7), and 308 was a surface formed of a single course of bricks (Plate 8). The walls were generally orientated on a north-east to south-west axis, perpendicular to the orientation of Avon Street. Between the structures were various deposits of ash, sand, rubble, and soil.

Above these structures and deposits were layers of undifferentiated overburden (301). Above the overburden was a layer of hardcore (315) and the concrete (300).

## 6 Artefactual evidence

Recovery of artefacts was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no artefacts were identified which were considered to be suitable for analysis.

## 7 Environmental evidence

Environmental sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no deposits were identified which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

## 8 Discussion

No dateable finds were identified so it is difficult to attribute a date for the walls, structures and deposits identified during the evaluation. Overlaying the trenches on the 1896 sale plan of the Panther Leadworks appears to indicate that Trench 1 was located across a wall dividing the smelting furnaces from a 'Smith's Shop' and other ancillary areas, Trench 2 was located across the site of a furnace, and Trench 3 in the 'Old Resilvering House' and part of the 'New Resilvering House' (Figure 3). However, the accuracy of this overlay is uncertain due to a lack of surviving features to compare the plan and other OS maps to, and the level of inaccuracy in the original plan. Given this, and the fact the site was redeveloped around 1900 and then again in the 1970s, it is difficult to confidently ascribe any of the identified walls with those on the sale plan and other historic maps.

The brick walls in Trench 1 (101, 102 and 103), which survived immediately below the concrete, would appear more likely to be associated with later redevelopment of the site. The 1976 1:1250 OS map illustrates a small structure in this area. No evidence of the furnace was identified in Trench 2, which appeared to largely comprise of undifferentiated deposits to natural levels. The walls and structures in Trench 3, appeared to have been truncated at a depth of around 1.0m below the present ground level, and all these features are probably associated with the 18th to 19th century leadworks, or the 20th century warehouse.

## 9 Significance

The structures relating to the 18th to 19th century leadworks and early 20th century warehouse are of local significance as they have the potential to enhance our understanding of the industrial expansion and development of Bristol. They also have the potential to enhance our understanding of the processing and transportation of minerals in the area (Webster 2007, Research Aim 38(k)). The features associated with the former Post Office depot dating to the 1970s are of negligible significance.

## 10 Conclusions

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Chanson Foods, Avon Street, Bristol. Three trenches were opened although only limited excavation took place in Trench 1 due to the presence of in-situ concrete and a live water pipe. No archaeological features were identified in Trench 2 and a series of brick and stone structures were identified in Trench 3 approximately 1m below the present ground surface. Although no dateable finds were identified during the evaluation, comparison of the features with historic maps and plans of the site indicate they are probably related to a lead works which was in operation during the late 18th and 19th centuries, or an early 20th century warehouse.

The methods adopted allow a moderate degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Conditions were suitable in Trenches 2 and 3 to identify the presence or absence of archaeological structures and features and it is considered that the nature, density and distribution of archaeological features provides a reasonable characterisation of this part of the development site.

## 11 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Andrew Walsh, assisted by Beth Williams. The project was managed by Tom Rogers. The report was produced and collated by Andrew Walsh.

## 12 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for the successful conclusion of the project: Susanna Parker of RPS Group for commissioning the project and Mr Chan and the staff of Chanson Foods for their help throughout the project.

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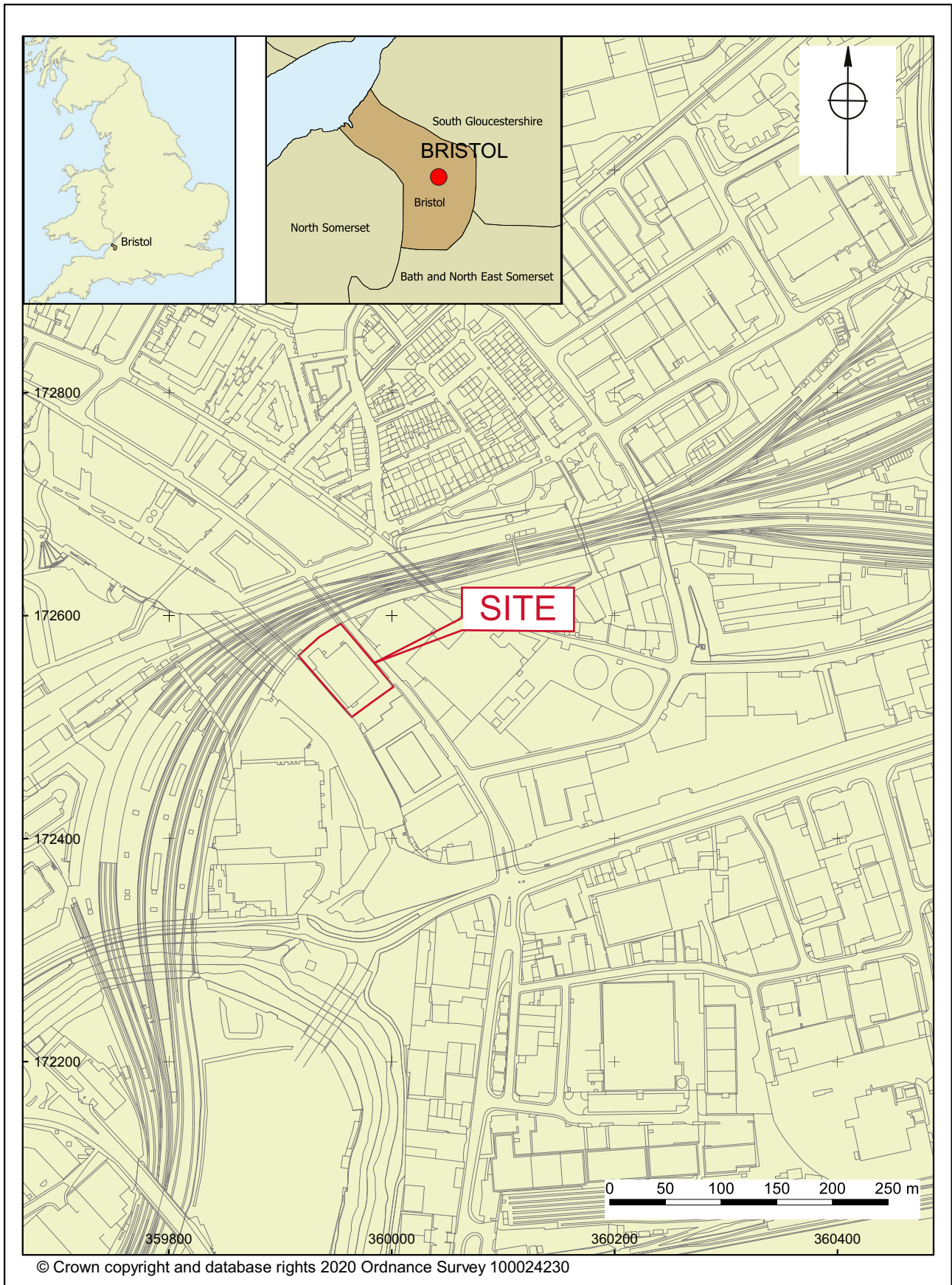
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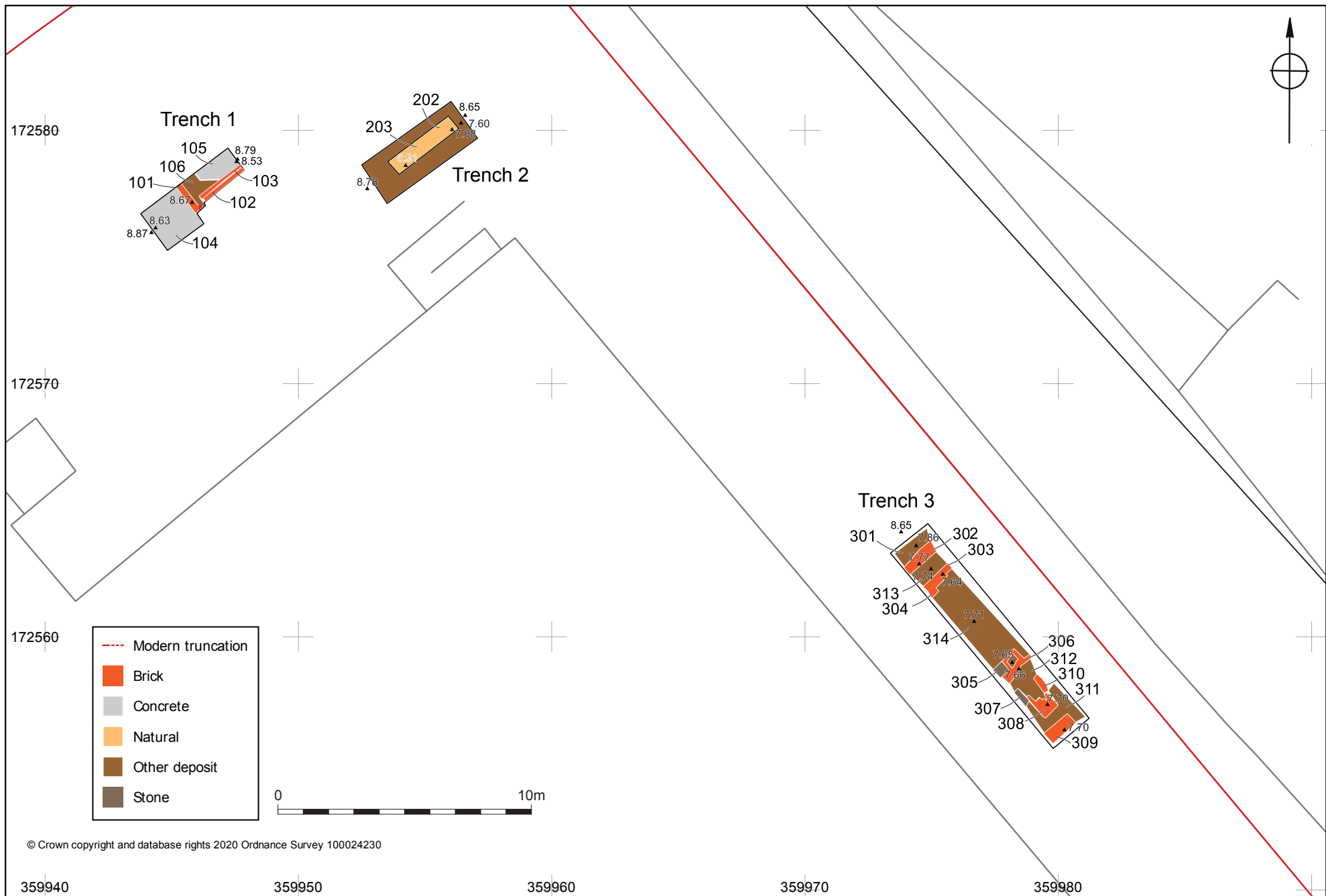
## Figures



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Location of the site

Figure 1



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Archaeological features

Figure 2



Features overlaid on 1896 sale plan

Figure 3



## Plates



Plate 1: Trench 1 looking north-east. Concrete layers 104 and 105 are visible at either end of the trench.



Plate 2: Trench 1 looking south-east. Walls 101, 102 and 103 are visible.



*Plate 3: Trench 2 looking north-east.*



*Plate 4: Trench 2 looking north*



Plate 5: Trench 3 looking north-west, showing some of the identified features



Plate 6: Trench 3 looking south-east, showing some of the identified features



*Plate 7: Brick structure 306 and stone structures 305 and 307 in Trench 3. Photo looking south-west*



*Plate 8: Brick structure 308 (centre) and wall 309 (left), in Trench 3. Photo looking south-west*



## Appendix 1: Trench descriptions

### Trench 1

Length: 5m                  Width: 2m                  Orientation: NE-SW

#### Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth
100	Layer	Layer	Concrete	0.2m
101	Layer	Structure	NW-SE wall	Not exc
102	Layer	Structure	NE-SW wall	Not exc
103	Layer	Structure	NE-SW wall partially covered by concrete 100	Not exc
104	Layer	Layer	Concrete under 100 at SW end of trench	Not exc
105	Layer	Layer	Concrete under 100 at NE end of trench	Not exc
106	Layer	Layer	Rubble between walls 101, 102 and concrete 105	Not exc

### Trench 2

Length: 5m                  Width: 2m                  Orientation: NE-SW

#### Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth
200	Layer	Layer	Concrete	0.2m
201	Layer	Layer	Hardcore	0.1m
202	Layer	Layer	Overburden	c.1.2m
203	Natural	Layer	Natural	0.2m (exc)

### Trench 3

Length: 10m                  Width: 2m                  Orientation: NW-SE

#### Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth
300	Layer	Layer	Concrete	0.2m
301	Layer	Layer	Overburden	0.7m
302	Wall	Structure	Wall running NE-SW at NW end of trench	Not exc
303	Wall	Structure	Wall running NE-SW at NW end of trench	Not exc
304	Wall	Structure	Wall (?) abutting southern edge of wall 303	Not exc
305	Wall	Structure	Stone wall (?) abutting NW edge of structure 306	Not exc

306	Wall	Structure	Square-ish structure/wall enclosing blank space.	Not exc
307	Wall	Structure	Stone wall (?) at NW edge of structure 308.	Not exc
308	Wall	Structure	Rectangular flat structure (surface?) formed of a single course of bricks	Not exc
309	Wall	Structure	Wall (and surface?) at SE edge of Trench.	Not exc
310	Wall	Structure	Large boulder/stone to the SE of structure 306.	Not exc
311	Layer	Layer	Layer of dark material and large slag fragments.	Not exc
312	Layer	Layer	Earth that was underneath NW section of 308.	Not exc
313	Layer	Layer	Earth with some slag between walls 303 and 302.	Not exc
314	Layer	Layer	Ashy layer at the centre of the Trench	Not exc
315	Layer	Layer	Hardcore	0.1m

## Appendix 2: Summary of project archive

TYPE	DETAILS*
Artefacts and Environmental	None
Paper	Context sheet, Diary (Field progress form)
Digital	GIS, Images raster/digital photography, Survey, Text

\*OASIS terminology