

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF AT
THE LIBRARY,
24, TEME STREET,
TENBURY WELLS,
WORCESTERSHIRE

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Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Project 3014
Report 1562
WSM 37313

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Archaeological watching brief at the Library, 24, Teme Street, Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire

Darren Miller and Dennis Williams

Part 1: Project summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the construction of a “Contact Centre” at Tenbury Wells Library (NGR SO 5963 6837). It was commissioned by the Property Services section of Worcestershire County Council. The library occupies parts of two tenements established in the 13th or early 14th century, and the development was considered to have the potential to affect significant archaeological remains. The aim of the watching brief was to record remains exposed during the development and to establish their nature, date, and significance. The fieldwork focused on the excavation of foundation and sewer trenches. The excavations were observed, artefacts were recovered, and exposed surfaces were recorded. After the fieldwork, the records and artefacts were studied alongside historic maps, information from the Worcester Historic Environment Record, and a previous archaeological assessment.

In the event, the only pre-modern deposits were humic soils containing pottery and other inclusions. These soils were of natural origin but had been altered by centuries of gardening and rubbish disposal. Pottery and other artefacts suggest that deposition ended in the late 17th century, although the ground probably remained open for another century. The soil was sealed by brick rubble in one area and redeposited marl in another. Several brick walls were cut through these deposits, all of which can be identified with buildings shown on the second edition Ordnance Survey map of 1904.

Remains of this kind are often found in similar contexts elsewhere. They are not significant in relation to current research frameworks although, taken together, they provide useful information on the changing character of historic towns. In the present case, the remains suggest that the tenement lost its medieval character in the late 19th century when its open ground was landscaped and built on. The same could be said of the rest of Teme Street and the historic core of Tenbury Wells.

Part 2: Detailed report

1. Background

1.1 Planning background

The project was associated with the construction of a three-room, two-storey “Contact Centre” at the rear of the library. The development was commissioned by the Property Services section of Worcestershire County Council, who had submitted a planning application to the local authority, Malvern Hills District Council (ref. 603450). This had been passed to the Planning Advisory Service of the Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service who identified the development area as a site of archaeological interest (HER re. 19831) and recommended a watching brief, on the basis of information summarised below. This recommendation was endorsed, and the watching brief was made a condition of planning consent.

1.2 Project parameters

The project conforms to a brief prepared by the Planning Advisory Section of Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service (HEAS 2007a) and to a detailed specification prepared by the Field Section (HEAS 2007b). The project also conforms to the Institute of Field Archaeologists’ *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IFA 2001).

1.3 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to locate archaeological deposits and determine, if present, their extent, state of preservation, date, type, vulnerability and documentation. The purpose of this was to establish their significance. More specifically, the project aimed to improve existing knowledge of surviving of archaeological deposits within the town centre.

2. Methods

2.1 Documentary research

Before the fieldwork, archaeological records and historic maps were obtained from the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (HER). These were studied alongside an archaeological assessment of Tenbury Wells (Dalwood 1996). The same sources were also consulted after the fieldwork, and compared with the results.

2.2 Fieldwork

A detailed specification was prepared by the Field Section (HEAS 2007b). Fieldwork was undertaken between 2nd and 13th July 2007. The site reference number and site code is WSM 37313.

Observations were limited to major groundworks. These comprised the foundation trenches of the extension, and two service trenches to the north (Fig 2; Plates 1-6). A small sample of artefacts was recovered during the excavations. After excavation, selected deposits and features were cleaned by hand. Drawn, written, and photographic records were then compiled according to standard practice (CAS 1995). In addition, some stratigraphic information was recorded digitally on a hand-held PDA.

2.3 **Post-fieldwork analysis**

2.3.1 **Stratigraphic analysis**

Stratigraphic relationships recorded in the field were checked and Harris matrices were constructed for each trench. Some deposits and features were correlated on the basis of shared properties or characteristics.

2.3.2 **Artefact analysis**

All hand retrieved finds were examined. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* baseline or date was also established for each stratified context. All information was recorded on a Microsoft Access database.

The pottery and ceramic building material 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; Hurst 1994).

3. **Topographical and archaeological background**

The site lies on the east side of Teme Street, which was probably laid out along with most of the town centre in the 13th or early 14th century (Dalwood 1996, 5). Typically long, narrow plots or tenements were established along both sides of the street, to form the pattern still visible on modern maps (Fig 1). The present library seems to straddle the boundary between two of these tenements. From ample precedent, it can be assumed that a house or shop stood at the head of each tenement, on the street frontage, and that the rest of the plots were used for small-scale manufacturing, gardening, and rubbish disposal. Some evidence of these activities was identified 100m west of the site in 1994 (WSM 15270; Fagan, Hurst and Pearson, 1994), although most of the remains probably pre-date the developed pattern of streets and tenements. No archaeological fieldwork has taken place in the town centre since 1994, so the project afforded a rare opportunity to learn more about its medieval and later development.

4. **Results**

4.1 **Stratigraphy**

4.1.1 **Natural deposits**

Mercia mudstone (Keuper marl) was exposed at 0.95m below the surface in the angle of the sewer trench (context 105), and at 1.12m below the surface in the foundation trenches (context 504).

4.1.2 **Phase 1: Garden soils**

The marl in the sewer trench was sealed by a dark brown soil with frequent ceramic, bone, and charcoal inclusions (context 103; Plate 2). Similar soils were found above the marl in the foundation trenches (contexts 502 and 503; Plate 5). Soils of this kind are commonly found in historic tenements, and are usually interpreted as the products of gardening, rubbish disposal, and natural processes. The pottery and other artefacts from the sewer trench soil are described below.

4.1.3 **Phase 2: Made ground and brick walls**

The garden soil in the sewer trench was overlain by about 0.25m of brick rubble (context 104). The equivalent soils in the foundation trenches were overlain by about 0.10m of redeposited marl (context 501). Both deposits represent landscaping, while the brick rubble probably indicates the demolition of an earlier building.

It is also likely that the deposits were intended as a substrate or construction horizon. At all events, the corner of a cellar that extended to the east was cut through the brick rubble (Fig 2; context 106; Plate 3), while three walls forming part of another cellar were cut through the redeposited marl (Fig 2, contexts 508-510; Plate 6). All the walls were made of the same kind of bricks, bonded with the same kind of mortar (see below and Appendix 1). This suggests a contemporary or near-contemporary phase of construction.

4.1.4 **Phase 3: Made ground and surfaces**

The latest deposits on the site post-date the demolition of the Phase 2 walls, and probably date to 1990, when the present library was built (Sally Matthews pers comm.). In the sewer trench, the cellar walls were abutted by brick rubble (context 511), and sealed by hardcore (context 500)

4.2 **Artefacts (by Dennis Williams)**

4.2.1 **Analysis**

A small assemblage, consisting of 46 artefacts with a total weight of 7762g, was retrieved from the site. The assemblage spanned the post-medieval and modern periods. All except two of the artefacts came from context 103. The level of preservation was variable; pottery sherds were only slightly abraded, but brick was heavily abraded, and glass corroded on its surface. No metal finds were reported.

Material	Total	Weight
Bone and horn	21	2082
Brick, post-medieval	7	1237
Brick, modern	1	3960
Clay pipe	8	21
Coal	2	11
Glass	1	2
Pottery, post-medieval	2	102
Pottery, modern	1	23
Shell	1	5
Stone	2	301

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

Even if the single modern brick sample were disregarded, pottery accounted for only 3% of the assemblage by weight, and 7% by count. Two sherds from context 103 were post-medieval red wares (fabric 78), dating from the 17th to 18th centuries. One was a substantial rim section (approximately 28mm wide) bearing external traces of a yellowish glaze. This was probably from a large bowl or pancheon, with an estimated rim diameter of 360mm. The other sherd from context 103 exhibited a very dark brown glaze internally, and patches of a clear glaze externally. Its curvature and thickness were consistent with it also being from a large open vessel.

The only other pottery was from context 511, and comprised a rim sherd of a modern stone china plate (fabric 85). This displayed a pale blue, transfer-printed edge pattern on a white background, and was 19th-20th century in date.

Fabric	Material	Total	Weight (g)
78	Post-medieval red ware	2	102
85	Stone ware	1	23

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric type.

Clay pipe sherds made up 17% of the assemblage, by count. Five stem sherds were retrieved from context 103, and one incorporated a heel or pedestal. A complete bowl and two bowl sherds were also found in this context. The intact bowl had a rim inside diameter of 10mm. It was worthy of note insofar as it had a milled ring below the sloping rim, and a bulbous form and flat heel, indicating a date of manufacture in the second half of the 17th century (Ayto 2002). There were no stamps on either of the heels examined.

Broken brick was retrieved from context 103. This material had a soft, easily abraded fabric, light orange in colour. The largest piece was incomplete in width, but this would have been greater than 100mm. Its thickness range varied between 52-55mm, consistent with it being part of a hand-made brick. This thickness was significantly less than that expected for material manufactured after the introduction of the brick tax in 1784. Two smaller pieces with the same fabric showed signs of burning, and had some mortar adhering. An intact modern brick, which had a mortar-filled frog, was taken as a sample from context 106. This brick had dimensions 220 × 107 × 70mm (8⁵/₈" × 4¹/₈" × 2³/₄"), typical of bricks manufactured from the late 18th century onwards. Other possible building materials retrieved from context 103 were two small pieces of worked sandstone, one grey, and the other red.

Other finds from context 103 included two fragments of coal, and a sherd of glass sheet, which had a uniform thickness (close to 2mm), but was slightly bent. This glass was pale bluish-green in colour and had corroded, iridescent surfaces, but no other large defects were observed.

Bone and horn, mainly from cattle, were found in context 103. A single oyster shell was also retrieved from this context.

4.2.2 Discussion

All finds from this site were either post-medieval or modern. The single modern pottery sherd in context 511 dated this as modern. Although all the pottery and building materials found in context 103 may all have been post-medieval, it was difficult to determine the extent of residuality (if any) in this context, owing to the absence of finds that could be clearly dated as modern. The sherd of glass from context 103 had characteristics that were consistent with this material having been produced using the manually blown crown glass technique. This was introduced to Britain during the late 17th century and remained in use until the mid 19th century, when it was superseded by thicker glass sheet production using mechanised processes.

The fabric, slip and glaze of the red ware pottery, as found in context 103, were representative of a broad post-medieval date range (17th-18th century). While the fabric and thickness of broken bricks in context 103 were typical of post-medieval examples, it was noted that 2" thick bricks were manufactured at various times from the late 13th century to the early 17th century, but with no complete standardisation of British brick sizes throughout this period.

More precise dating of context 103 could be obtained from the clay pipe finds. The intact clay pipe bowl was sufficiently distinctive in both form and size, to enable it to be dated to later than 1640, when bowl inside diameters increased to approximately ³/₈ inch (9.5mm) as a consequence of falling tobacco prices (Ayto 2002). Its latest date of manufacture was likely

to have been towards the end of the 17th century, when bowl diameters reached ½” (13mm). In the absence of any modern finds from context 103, which would confirm residuality, it is possible that it dated to the post-medieval period, and more specifically, to the latter half of the 17th century.

The main significance of this limited assemblage was its inclusion of ceramic and glass finds that suggested the possible post-medieval occupation and use of this site.

5. **Synthesis**

As described above, the stratigraphic evidence suggests that the development area was open ground for centuries before being landscaped and built on, while the artefactual evidence dates this development to a period between the late 17th and late 18th centuries. However, historic maps suggest that the development took place a century later. As shown on Figure 3, most of the area was open ground in 1885. By 1904, however, two buildings had been extended to the east, or rebuilt on a larger scale, with the effect that most of the area was built up (Fig 4). The Phase 3 walls almost certainly relate to these buildings, rather than buildings demolished before 1885. At all events, the character of the walls is more consistent with a late 19th century date, while the stratigraphy suggests a direct succession from open ground to substrate and buildings. The only problem with this interpretation is the lack of 19th century material from the garden soils, but this can easily be explained by the contemporary shift from traditional to modern rubbish disposal practices, and by the small size of the excavated sample.

6. **Research frameworks**

The main point of reference in this connection is the archaeological assessment of Tenbury Wells undertaken in 1996 as part of the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey (Dalwood 1996). Like other assessments in this series, the Tenbury Wells assessment relied heavily on historic maps and geographical concepts to describe the development of the town and provide a context for a limited amount of archaeological and architectural evidence. With regard to Teme Street, it was thought that the street and its tenements were laid out in the 13th or early 14th century (Dalwood 1996, 5). The assessment also noted several 17th and 18th century buildings along Teme Street, and found no evidence for large-scale redevelopment before the 19th century (Dalwood 1996, 8).

The results of the watching brief have added no information on the origins of Teme Street, but reinforce the perceived scale and impact of 19th century redevelopment. In particular, the watching brief has provided what might be a typical example of cellarage well behind the street frontage. If this is the case, then medieval remains along Teme Street are likely to be scarce and highly truncated, and the same may be true of the rest of the town centre.

7. **Publication summary**

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, and unless directed otherwise, the Service intends to place the following summary in an appropriate local or regional journal.

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artefacts were studied alongside historic maps, information from the Worcester Historic Environment Record, and a previous archaeological assessment.

In the event, the only pre-modern deposits were humic soils containing pottery and other inclusions. These soils were of natural origin but had been altered by centuries of gardening and rubbish disposal. Pottery and other artefacts suggest that deposition ended in the late 17th century, although the ground probably remained open for another century. The soil was sealed by brick rubble in one area and redeposited marl in another. Several brick walls were cut through these deposits, all of which can be identified with buildings shown on the second edition Ordnance Survey map of 1904.

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8. **Acknowledgements**

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance: David Hayward (Property Services, Worcestershire County Council), Mike Bayliss and Dave Weaver (CJ Bayliss Ltd), Mike Glyde (Worcester Historic Environment and Archaeology Service), and Sally Matthews (Tenbury Wells Library).

9. **Personnel**

The fieldwork was undertaken by Stephen Potten and Adam Lee. The post-excavation analysis was led by Darren Miller. Dennis Williams examined and reported on the artefacts. Carolyn Hunt produced the illustrations. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan.

10. **Bibliography**

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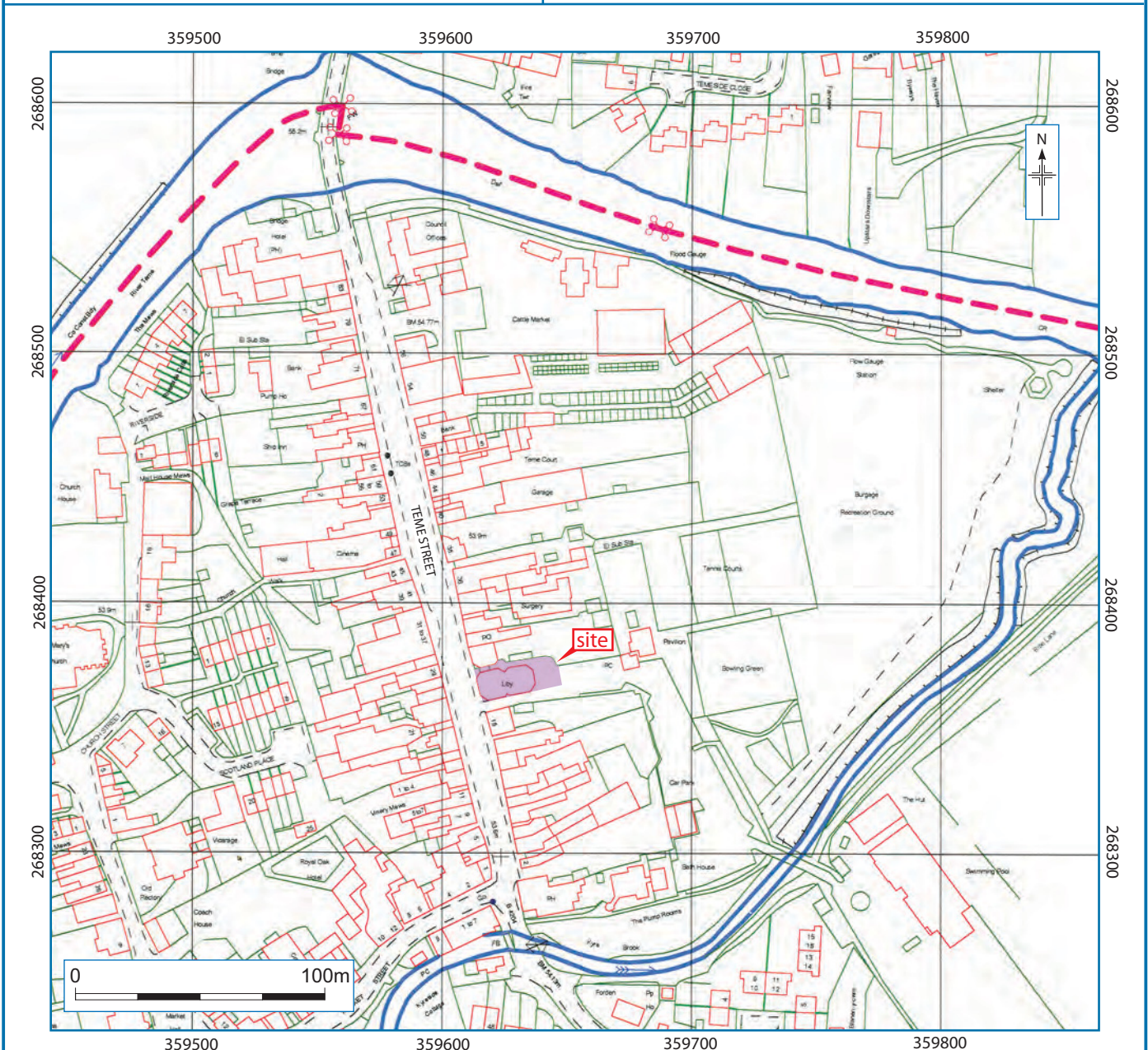
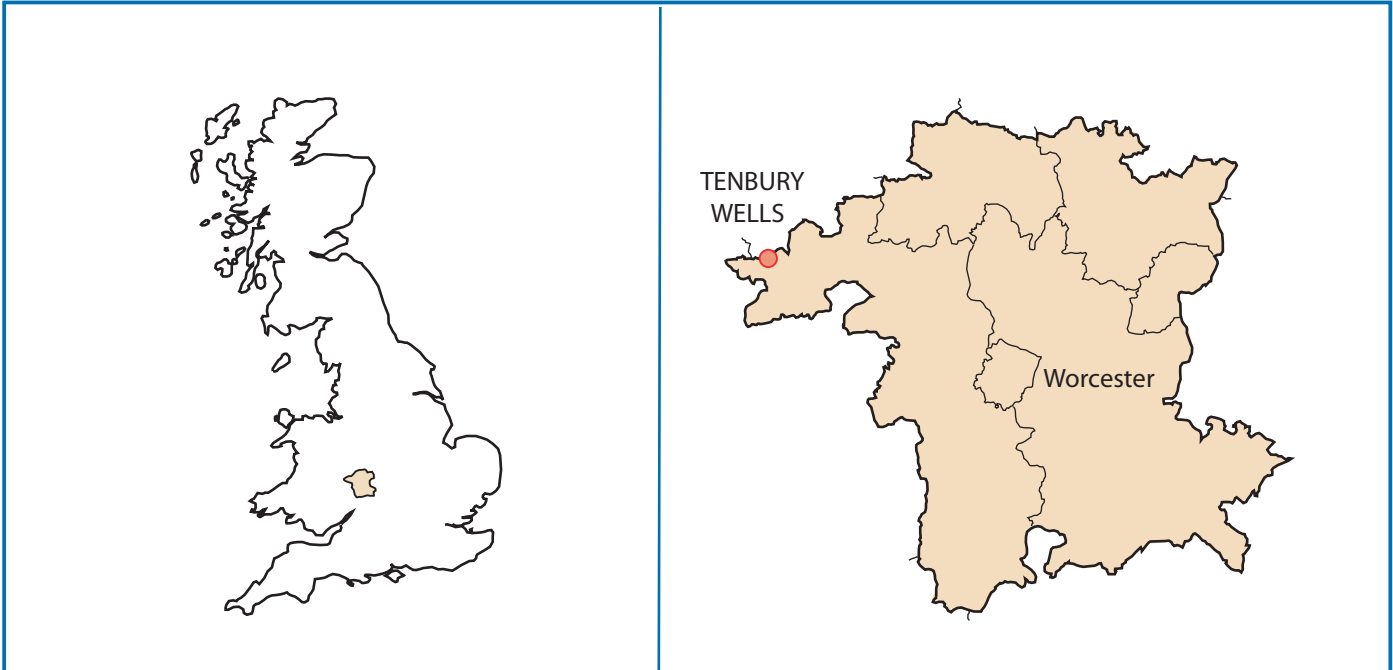
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Ordnance Survey, 1885 *Worcestershire, sheet 19.1* (25": 1 mile; 1:2,500)

Ordnance Survey, 1904 *Worcestershire, sheet 19.1* (25": 1 mile; 1:2,500)

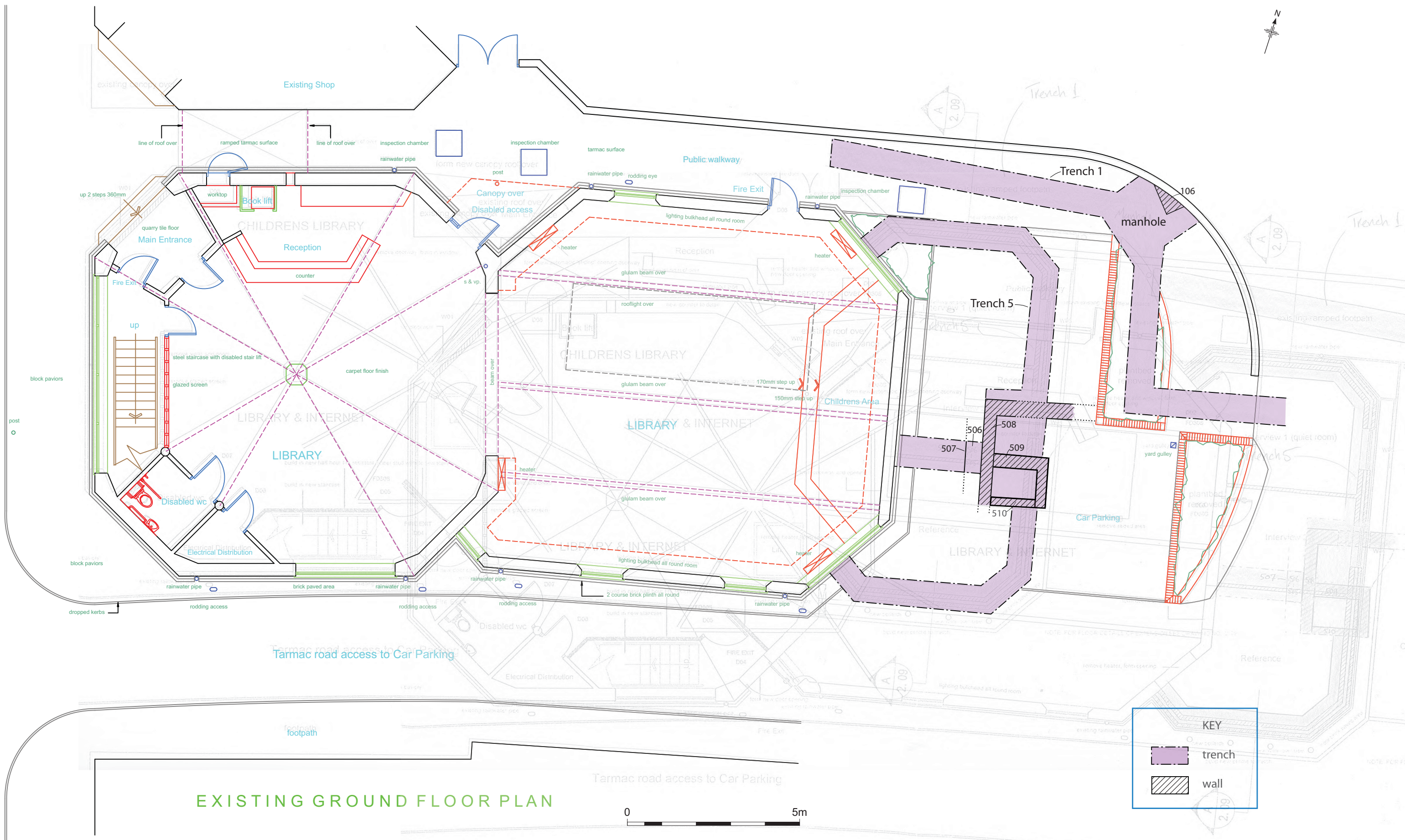
Figures



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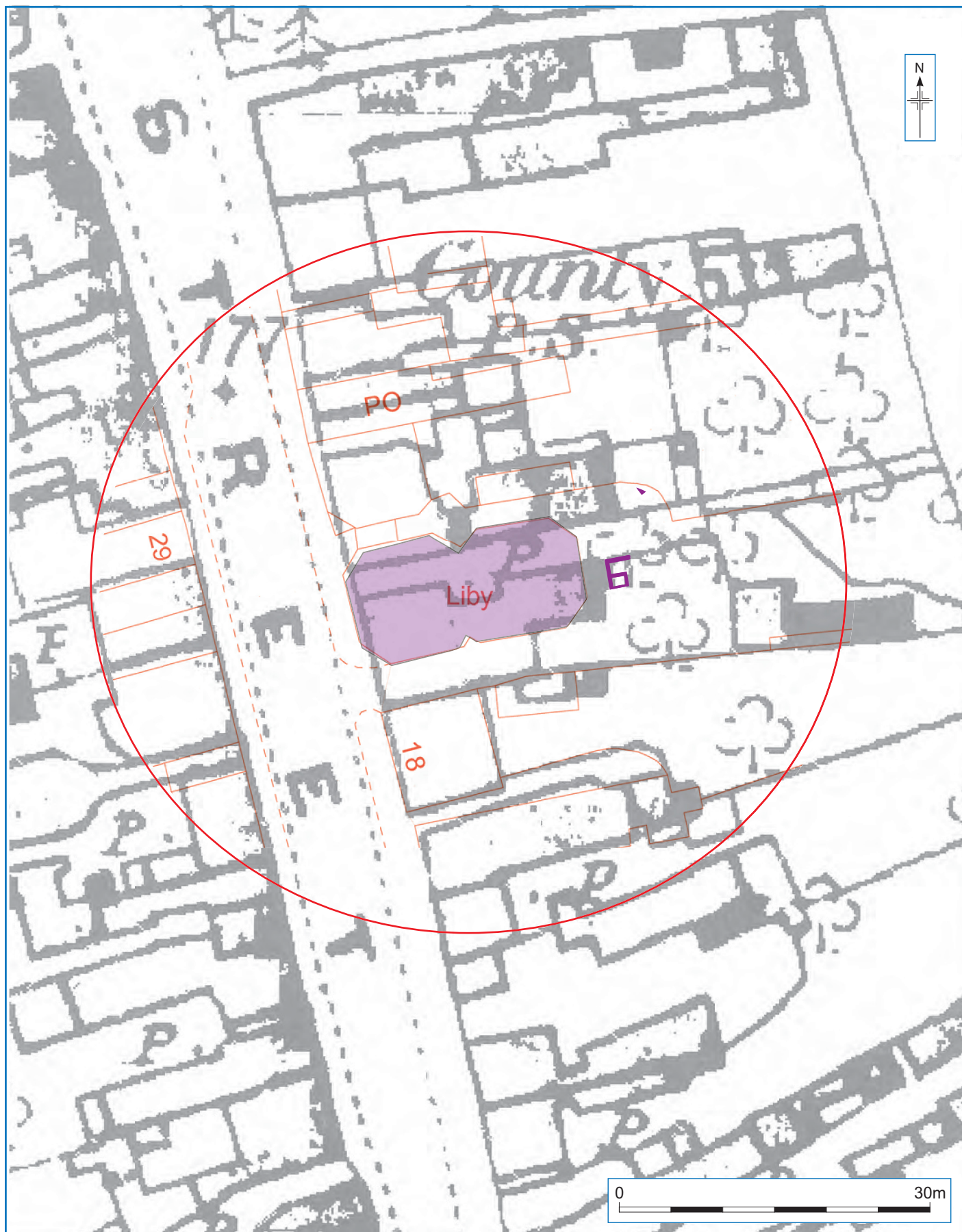
Location of the site.

Figure 1



Location of sewer and foundation trenches (based upon Worcestershire County Council Property Services Project No. 300899 49 Dwg No 2.01)

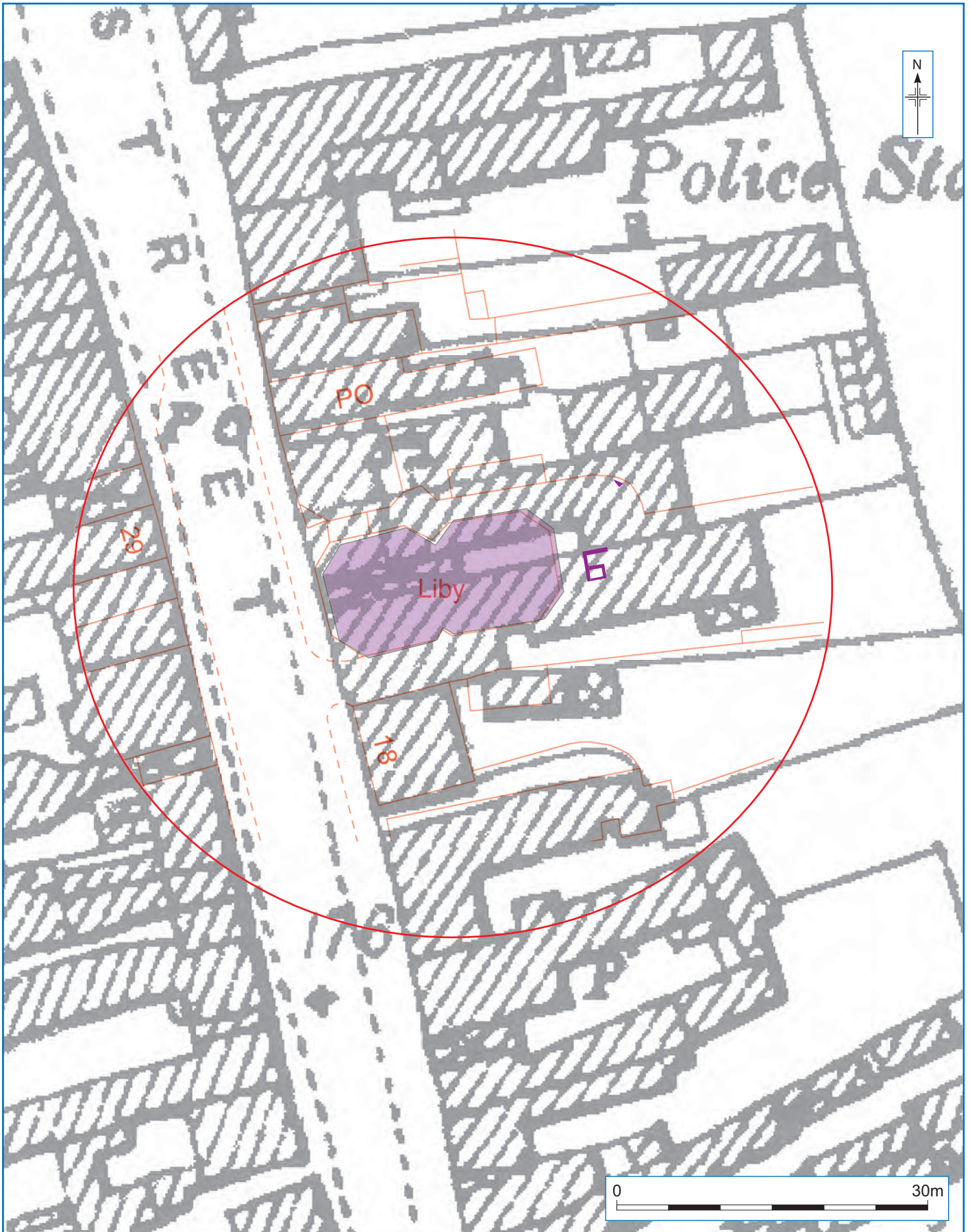
Figure 2



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Extract from 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map (1885) overlain with modern buildings, boundaries and excavated walls.

Figure 3



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Extract from 1904 Ordnance Survey map, overlain with modern buildings, boundaries and excavated walls. Figure 4

Plates



Plate 1, General view of (backfilled) sewer trench and manhole



Plate 2, North-east facing section of manhole showing garden soil (context 103) between marl and modern made ground



Plate 3, South-east facing section of manhole showing late 19th century cellar walls (context 106)



Plate 4, General view of foundation trenches facing south-west



Plate 5, North facing section of foundation trench showing garden soils (contexts 502 and 503) between marl and made ground



Plate 6, 19th century cellar walls (contexts 508-510) facing south-east

Appendix 1: Stratigraphy

Trench 1 (Sewer trench and manhole)

Maximum depth 2.25m. For other dimensions, see Fig. 2

Main deposits/features

Context	Classification	Description	Depth
100	Surface	Tarmac	0-0.10m
101	Made ground	Hardcore	0.10-0.25m
102	Topsoil	Firm dark brown silt loam	0.25-0.45m
103	Garden soil	Firm mid brownish grey silty clay with common inclusions (small stones, ceramics, bone, and charcoal)	0.45-0.95m
104	Made ground	Loose brick rubble	0.45-0.70m
105	Natural	Stiff mid reddish brown marl	0.95-2.25m+
106	Wall	Corner of wall made of machine-made bricks (8¼ × 4½ × 2¾ inches) bonded with hard off-white mortar. 14 courses visible in section.	0.45-2.25m+

Trench 5 (foundation trenches)

Maximum dimensions: Length: c12m Width: 0.60m Depth: 1.32m

Orientation: Longest axis north-south

Main deposits/features

Context	Classification	Description	Depth
500	Topsoil	Compact mid brown silty clay with frequent inclusions of stone, brick/tile, and mortar.	0-0.50m
501	Made ground	Compact light reddish brown clay with occasional small to medium stones and occasional small charcoal fragments and flecks.	0.50-0.60m
502	Garden soil	Compact mid greyish brown silty clay with frequent charcoal, brick/tile, and mortar fragments.	0.60-0.80m
503	Garden soil	Compact mid to dark brown silty clay with moderate charcoal, brick, tile, mortar, and stone inclusions.	0.80-1.12m
504	Natural	Compact reddish brown silty clay.	1.12-1.32m
505	Fill of 507	Concrete	0.80—1.15m
506	Made ground	Compact light reddish brown silty clay with occasional charcoal, mortar, brick./tile, and stone inclusions.	0.30-0.80m
507	Foundation trench	Linear, parallel sided cut observed in section (Width: 0.45m)	0.30-1.15m

Context	Classification	Description	Depth
508	Cellar wall	Wall made of two skins of machine-made bricks (9×4½×2¾ inches), bonded with hard off-white mortar.	0.30-0.50m
509	Cellar wall	Wall made of two skins of machine-made bricks (9×4½×2¾ inches), bonded with hard off-white mortar.	0.30-0.50m
510	Wall	Wall made of two skins of machine-made bricks (9×4½×2¾ inches), bonded with hard off-white mortar.	1.40-1.60m
511	Fill of cellar	Loose bricks and brick rubble abutting 508 and 509	0.30-0.50m

Appendix 2: The archive

The archive consists of:

2	Fieldwork progress sheets AS2
1	Context number catalogue AS5
4	Trench record sheets AS 41
5	A4 notes on archives
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
