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Archaeological Services Ltd**

**Heritage Statement
for
St Johns Ambulance Building,
Conduit Hill,
Rye, East Sussex**

Project No. CBAS0478

**By
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Summary

A Heritage Statement has been prepared for the St Johns Ambulance Building in Conduit Hill, Rye.

The Site has a high potential for containing Medieval and Post Medieval remains. Outbuildings, probably dating from the late 18th or earlier 19th century stood on the site of the current building until the mid 20th century. Although these and the later building may have impacted on any archaeological remains on the site, it is likely that remains still survive. Evidence for the 18th-19th century outbuildings may also survive.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1** Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd has been commissioned by Marta Nowicka & Co to prepare a Heritage Statement for the St. Johns Ambulance Building, Conduit Hill, Rye, East Sussex, in order to establish the likely presence and importance of any archaeological remains that may be affected by the proposed redevelopment of the building.
- 1.2** The St Johns Ambulance Building stands on the west side of a courtyard which is situated on the west side of Conduit Hill TQ 9215 2050 (Fig. 1). On the south side of the courtyard is 1 Whitefriars, which is a Grade II Listed building dating to the 17th and 18th centuries. The site is sited within an Archaeological Notification Area that defines the historic core of the medieval and Post Medieval walled town of Rye (Fig. 2). It is also located within Rye Conservation Area.
- 1.3** The site is situated within the Historic Urban Character Area (HUCA) 6 of Rye, The importance of the surviving Medieval chapel; the visibility of much of the historic fabric; and the archaeological potential give this HUCA a high Historic Environment Value (HEV) of 4 (5 is the highest)¹.
- 1.4** The geology of the site, according to the British Geological Survey (sheet 320/321), is mudstone of the Wadhurst Clay Formation. Slightly further down Conduit Hill is an outcrop of Wadhurst sandstone.
- 1.5** The redevelopment comprises a change of use from D1 Commercial (St Johns Ambulance Building) to a single 4 bedroom residential dwelling. This will create a roof extension over the existing single storey extension and enclosing two courtyard gardens to the left and right of the property with brick walls to match the existing. A second wall will also be built in the courtyard to screen parking from the street and gates will be reinstated to the front.
- 1.6** This report initially covers the objectives and scope of the survey, the methodology used, and the archaeological and historical heritage of the area. Finally a conclusion assesses the past impacts and the potential impact of the proposed development.

¹ Harris, R.B. 2009 *Rye: Historic Character Assessment Report*, Sussex Extensive Urban Survey

2. Objectives & Scope of Report

- 2.1** The objective of this Heritage Statement is to gain information about the known or potential archaeological resource of the site and its immediate area. This will include information relating to the presence or absence of any archaeology, its character and extent, date, integrity, state of preservation, and the relative quality of the potential archaeological resource. This report meets the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 2.2** This information will allow an assessment of the merits of the archaeology in context to be made, leading to the formulation of a strategy for the recording, preservation and management of the resource or, where necessary, the formulation of a strategy for further investigation where the character and value of the resource is not sufficiently defined to permit a mitigation strategy or other response to be defined.
- 2.3** The report will consider the archaeological resource within a radius of 0.5km around the site, whilst also taking into account sites further afield where these may be considered to have an impact on or relevance to the site in its landscape setting.
- 2.4** It should be noted that this report can only take into account the existing known archaeology, and by its nature cannot provide a complete record of the archaeological resource of the site. Its intention is to provide an overview of the known archaeology in the area of the site, from which judgements can be made about the potential archaeological resource of the site itself.

3. Methodology

3.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012); the *Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-based Assessment* (Institute for Archaeologists 2012); and the *Standards for Archaeological Fieldwork, Recording and Post Excavation Work in East Sussex* (ESCC 2008).

3.2 The research for this Heritage Statement has included an analysis of the following resources:

- ESCC Historic Environment Record (Ref: 103/14)
- PastScape (formerly part of the National Monuments Record or NMR)
- The National Heritage List for England (a list of all nationally designated heritage assets)
- Portable Antiquities Scheme database
- Defence of Britain database
- Historic mapping
- Library resources (personal and public)
- British Geological Survey

3.3 The following maps were used:

- John Prowze's 1572 map of Rye Harbour (PRO MPF 212)
- Late 16th century plan of Rye (TNA MPF 1/3)
- Base map of Rye and its environs in 1771
- Yeakell and Gardner (1778-1783)
- Creighton (c.1835)
- 1st Edition OS map (1872-1874)
- 2nd Edition OS map (1898)
- 3rd Edition OS map (1909)
- 4th Edition OS map (1929)
- Later OS Maps

Information gained from the map regression exercise is contained in the Post Medieval section below.

3.4 The Monuments recorded on the HER are mentioned in the text where relevant, and are shown on Fig. 3. Historical and other sources are given as footnotes as appropriate.

4. Archaeological & Historical Background

4.0.1 This section considers each archaeological period in turn, reviewing the known archaeological resource of the Study Area, defining its location and extent, character, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality.

4.1 *Palaeolithic Period (750,000BC to 10,000BC)*

4.1.1 This period covers a huge expanse of time, during which early hominid occupation of Southern Britain was intermittent. The period is divided into warm and cold periods, with the evidence suggesting that hominid occupation occurred during some of the warm periods. Apart from a small number of exceptional sites (e.g. Boxgrove), most of the evidence for human activity in this period comes from isolated finds of stone tools, often in secondary deposits.

4.1.2 No Palaeolithic flintwork has been recovered from Rye. A Lower Palaeolithic axe and a scraper were discovered at two sites in Playden to the north of Rye whilst a Palaeolithic axe was found further to the north in Iden².

4.1.3 On the basis of the artefactual evidence, there is a very low likelihood of finding Palaeolithic material at the Site.

4.2 *Mesolithic Period (10,000BC to 4,000BC)*

4.2.1 The start of the Mesolithic period saw Britain largely covered by pine and birch woodland, which was gradually replaced by a mixed deciduous woodland that provided an ideal environment for the bands of hunter-gatherers who exploited the resources on a seasonal basis³.

4.2.2 The absence of Mesolithic finds from Rye would suggest that the Site is very unlikely to contain Mesolithic artefacts or features.

² Tyler, A. 2011. Romney Marsh and the Western River Valleys: An Archaeological Gazetteer. The Romney Marsh Research Trust. Source: <http://www.redcourt.dsl.pipex.com/gazetteer.pdf>

³ Holgate, R. 2003. 'Late Glacial and Post-glacial Hunter-gatherers in Sussex', in Rudling, D. (Ed) *The Archaeology of Sussex to AD2000*. Kings Lynn: Heritage Marketing and Publications Ltd, 29-38.

4.3 *Neolithic Period (4,000BC to 2,500BC)*

- 4.3.1 A number of changes occurred during the Neolithic, with environmental evidence from elsewhere suggesting that some woodland was being cleared for small-scale agricultural activities.
- 4.3.2 Other changes in the earlier part of the Neolithic period include the construction of large-scale monuments and the first industrial activity. However, all causewayed enclosures, burial mounds and flint mines in Sussex are sited on the South Downs⁴, so suggesting that the Neolithic population tended to settle in the river valleys or on the Coastal Plain or adjacent Weald.
- 4.3.3 Part of a prehistoric flint sickle was found at Rye (MES2185)⁵. With only one probable Neolithic artefact from Rye, there is a very low possibility that Neolithic finds will be recovered from the Site. If discovered, they are likely to be chance discoveries that represent casual exploitation of the landscape.

4.4 *The Bronze Age (2500BC to 800BC)*

- 4.4.1 There is no archaeological representation of the Bronze Age in Rye. With no finds or features to even imply the exploitation of Rye in the Bronze Age, it is very doubtful that groundwork at the Site will uncover material of this date.

4.5 *The Iron Age (800BC to 43AD)*

- 4.5.1 One major feature of the Iron Age is the hillfort, of which 20 are known from Sussex. Many of these appear to have originated in the Late Bronze Age, with some having become important centres of control and redistribution in the Middle and Late Iron Age. There are no extant hillforts in Sussex east of Belle Tout near Eastbourne, although Castle Hill and East Hill at Hastings may have held hilltop enclosures⁶.
- 4.5.2 On considering the absence of Iron Age remnants from Rye, the Site is very unlikely to produce deposits of this date.

⁴ Peter, D. 1999. 'First Farming Communities and Communal Monuments, in Leslie, K. and Short, B. (Eds) *An Historical Atlas of Sussex*. Chichester: Phillimore & Co. Ltd, 16-17.

⁵ Tyler, A. 2011. *Romney Marsh and the Western River Valleys: An Archaeological Gazetteer*. The Romney Marsh Research Trust. Source: <http://www.redcourt.dsl.pipex.com/gazetteer.pdf>

⁶ Hamilton, S. and Manley, J. 1999. 'Regional Traditions c.1000-100BC', in Leslie, K. and Short, B. (Eds) *An Historical Atlas of Sussex*. Chichester: Phillimore & Co. Ltd, 20-21.

4.6 *The Roman Period (43AD to 410AD)*

4.6.1 Evidence of a Roman presence at Rye is almost negligible. One or more Roman coins (MES2186) have been discovered within the town⁷. A watching brief (EES14718) during groundworks at The Mint House in 2010 found a few pieces of Roman tile within a thick medieval layer⁸. Although these residual finds are likely to have been re-used, they may not have travelled very far from their original location. The only other Roman artefacts from Rye are the pottery sherds that were recovered from groundworks at The Monastery on Conduit Street in 1989 (EES14240).

4.6.4 The recovery of a small number of Roman finds from near to the site means that there is low likelihood of finding Roman remains.

4.7 *The Saxon Period (410AD to 1066AD)*

4.7.1 Rye may have been a Saxon burh (MES5899) in the late 9th / early 10th century as it is one of several possible locations for Eorpeburnham. This fortified town is the fifth smallest of the 33 burhs listed in the Burghal Hideage. Rye was identified as a candidate on the basis of its Burghal Hideage assessment, length of medieval walling and the Saxon Chronicle accounts for the year 892.

4.7.2 There is, however, no archaeological evidence to substantiate the claim of a burh at Rye as the only Saxon find from the town is a silver coin of Edward the Confessor. Rye would have been a Hundred meeting place by this time⁹.

4.7.3 With just the one findspot, which may represent a casual loss, Rye was possibly still exploited rather than settled in Saxon times. There is a very low possibility of Saxon artefacts being recovered from the Site.

4.8 *The Medieval Period (1066AD to 1500AD)*

4.8.1 Rye was in existence by 1131 and possibly by 1086, although it was not mentioned by name in the Domesday Book¹⁰. Due to its excellent natural harbour, Rye prospered to

⁷ Tyler, A. 2011. Romney Marsh and the Western River Valleys: An Archaeological Gazetteer. The Romney Marsh Research Trust. Source: <http://www.redcourt.dsl.pipex.com/gazetteer.pdf>

⁸ Butler, C. 2010. *An Archaeological Watching Brief at The Mint House, Rye, East Sussex*. CBAS0097

⁹ Gardiner, M. 1999. 'Late Saxon Sussex c.650-1066', in Leslie, K. and Short, B. (Eds) *An Historical Atlas of Sussex*. Chichester: Phillimore & Co. Ltd, 30-31.

¹⁰ Martin, D. and Martin. B. 2009. *Rye Rebuilt: Regeneration and Decline within a Sussex Port Town, 1350-1660*. Domtom Publishing Ltd.

become a member of the Cinque Port Confederacy by 1190¹¹. French raids on Rye led to its town walls being built from c.1329 onwards (MES2184).

- 4.8.2 After being sacked by the French in 1377, a town wall was built (MES21664), with a gun battery being added in the 15th century. A single gateway of this wall (the Land Gate – MES16373) survives a short distance to the north of the site, at the northeast end of Tower Street, whilst remains of the wall stand at the base of Conduit Hill, in line with Cinque Ports Street (MES16372).
- 4.8.3 An Augustinian Friary was located on Conduit Hill between 1380 and its dissolution in 1538 (MES16393). A former chapel constructed around 1380 survives on the eastern side of Conduit Hill¹², just to the south of the site (MES16367).

4.9 *The Post Medieval Period (1500AD to the Present Day)*

- 4.9.1 Rye continued to boom into the 1570's, due in part to the decline of Winchelsea. Its prosperity is shown on John Prowze's map of Rye harbour in 1572. The silting up of the harbour resulted in the decline of Rye's fortunes in the late 16th and 17th centuries. This downturn is reflected in the size of its population, which declined from some 5,000 people between 1550 and 1570 to about 1,500 people in 1600¹³.
- 4.9.2 Early maps of Rye are not really detailed enough to show individual houses. However Prowze's map of 1572¹⁴ and the maps of Jeake 1666/7 (copied 1728)¹⁵ both suggest that the streets of Rye within the town walls had houses along their sides.
- 4.9.3 A report on Whitefriars by David Martin¹⁶ has suggested that part of the building dates to the 16th century, but was heavily repaired c1700. The dating of the cellar is uncertain, but Martin suggests that it is earlier than his Phase D (mid to late 18th century), which is situated above it.
- 4.9.4 Whitefriars is shown on the 1st Edition OS map of 1872 and the 1874 Town Plan (Fig. 4). The outline of the building is similar to that surviving today, although there is a projection from the north centre of the building which lines up with the hall, and presumably indicates that there was a large porch entrance to the house at this location. The Town Wall is shown running along the north side of the site, and there are formal

¹¹ Martin, D. and Martin. B. 2009. *Rye Rebuilt: Regeneration and Decline within a Sussex Port Town, 1350-1660*. Domtom Publishing Ltd.

¹² Hall, N. 2008. *Land at the rear of Tower House, Hilders Cliff, Rye, East Sussex: An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment*. Development Archaeology Services Ltd, Fig. 10.

¹³ Mayhew, G. 1987. *Tudor Rye*. Falmer: CCE, University of Sussex.

¹⁴ PRO MPF 212

¹⁵ Rye 132/15

¹⁶ Martin, D. & B. 1984 *Whitefriars, Conduit Hill, Rye, Sussex*, Rape Of Hastings Architectural Survey, Architectural Report No:- 0879

gardens at the front and back of the house. The gardens to the west also appear to be part of the same property.

- 4.9.5 There is an L-shaped building, shown divided into three, on the site of the St. Johns Ambulance building, with a greenhouse against its south side. By the time of the 3rd Edition OS map (1909), the southernmost part of this building is shown in outline only (Fig. 5), and the formal garden on its east side is no longer shown.
- 4.9.6 The 4th Edition OS map of 1929 shows the same situation, and it is clarified by a set of aerial photographs of the same date (1929) and further aerial photographs of 1932, which show the buildings to comprise at the north end a barn or cart lodge, with an open front in the centre, double doors at its south end and a single door at the north end. Next to this is a two-storey building of unknown use, and at the south end a walled garden, which may have originated as a building (Fig. 6).
- 4.9.7 Aerial photographs of 1948 suggest that the northern building had been demolished, although the two-storey building and walled garden still seem to be present (Fig. 7). By the 1971 OS map a new building has been constructed, and Whitefriars is labelled as an Ambulance Station (Fig. 8). It is possible the walled garden is still present, and as the building is shown as L-shaped, it is possible that the two-storey original building is still present.
- 4.9.8 Since 1971 the St Johns Ambulance Building has been added to at its southern end (Fig. 9) and the two-storey building demolished. The boundary wall at the south end of the site still appears to be the surviving wall from the walled garden.
- 4.9.9 An archaeological evaluation was carried out at 1 Whitefriars, in support of a planning application to develop the cellar into an inhabitable room¹⁷. The concrete floor of the cellar was found to overlie a layer of laid brick. Layers of made ground were recorded below this, all of which could have been deposited in the 17th century when the house was apparently built. A subsequent watching brief recovered artefacts dating to the 16th century and some residual medieval pottery¹⁸.
- 4.9.10 A few archaeological interventions have taken place in the immediate vicinity of the site¹⁹. Human burials and pottery of 13th century date were discovered during the construction of an air raid shelter and during later excavations in the grounds of the Friary. A watching brief undertaken in 1999 in the grounds of Rye Lodge Hotel, to the east of the site, recorded 19th century deposits and residual medieval pottery.

¹⁷ Russell, C. 2012 *An Archaeological Evaluation Excavation at 1 Whitefriars, Conduit Hill, Rye, East Sussex*. CBAS0339

¹⁸ CBAS Report forthcoming

¹⁹ Hall, N. 2008 *Land at the rear of Tower House, Hilders Cliff, Rye, East Sussex: An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment*, Development Archaeology Services Ltd, Fig. 10.

4.9.11 An evaluation excavation at Tower House, just to the east of the site, revealed a deep stratigraphy of Post Medieval layers dating from late 19th century through to the late 17th century. Below this were deposits dating from the 14th to 15th century, and a possible ditch that been finally filled-in in the mid 16th to early 17th century. A small trench in the garden also revealed a similar stratigraphy but at a shallower level, whilst a fourth trench encountered a large later 19th century kitchen midden²⁰.

²⁰ Butler, C. 2009 *An Assessment Excavation at Tower House, Rye, East Sussex*. CBAS

5. Impact of Development

- 5.1** This Heritage Statement has established that Rye witnessed limited activity in the Neolithic and Roman periods, and was perhaps a fortified town in the Saxon period although the archaeological record cannot substantiate this. The lack of archaeological evidence pre-dating the Medieval period may imply that the island-like location of Rye on the edge of marshland was only suitable for the exploitation of its natural resources, until the advantages of its harbour were realised in the Medieval period.
- 5.2** The location of the site within the Medieval town and the adjacent Augustinian Friary suggest that there is likely to be activity on the site, and buildings were likely to have been situated there during the Medieval period. The site is developed in the Post Medieval period with the construction of 1 Whitefriars, and the outbuildings related to this property, which were located on the proposed development site.
- 5.3** Given the evidence accumulated during this Heritage Statement, the probability of finding remains from each of the different archaeological periods is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1

Period	Potential
Palaeolithic	Very Low
Mesolithic	Very Low
Neolithic	Very Low
Bronze Age	Very Low
Iron Age	Very Low
Roman	Low
Saxon	Very Low
Medieval	High
Post Medieval	Very High

- 5.4** The Site has limited potential for the survival of waterlogged remains and palaeo-environmental deposits.
- 5.5** The proposed redevelopment of the building will involve some minor groundworks (Fig. 9). The excavation of any footings or pilings and associated services may disturb or destroy any archaeological remains sited within their footprint. Although the current building may have damaged or destroyed evidence for the earlier buildings or other archaeological evidence on the site, it is likely that evidence for the earlier archaeological activity will have survived outside the area of previous impact.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1** The Heritage Statement has established that the first evidence for the site being occupied was in the Post Medieval building when a number of outbuildings, connected to the adjacent 1 Whitefriars, were built, probably in the late 18th or earlier 19th century. These were demolished and replaced with the current building after the Second World War.
- 6.2** Given the location of the site within the Medieval town walls, and the adjacent Friary, it is very likely that there is evidence for activity in the Medieval and early Post Medieval periods remaining at the site.
- 6.3** Although the earlier buildings and the current building are likely to have had some impact on any archaeological remains, evidence from elsewhere in the town shows that it is only the actual wall foundations and services that will have had an impact, and elsewhere the archaeology is likely to survive.
- 6.4** It is therefore likely that archaeological remains of the earlier buildings and any previous activity will survive at the site. It is therefore recommended that a targeted watching brief is undertaken as a condition of the development. It is also recommended that a limited recording of the surviving walls around the property be carried out to assist in the dating and understanding of the Post Medieval buildings that existed on the site.

7. Acknowledgements

- 7.1** I would like to thank Marta Nowicka & Co for commissioning this Heritage Statement. Sophie Unger, HER Officer at ESCC, provided copies of the East Sussex HER.

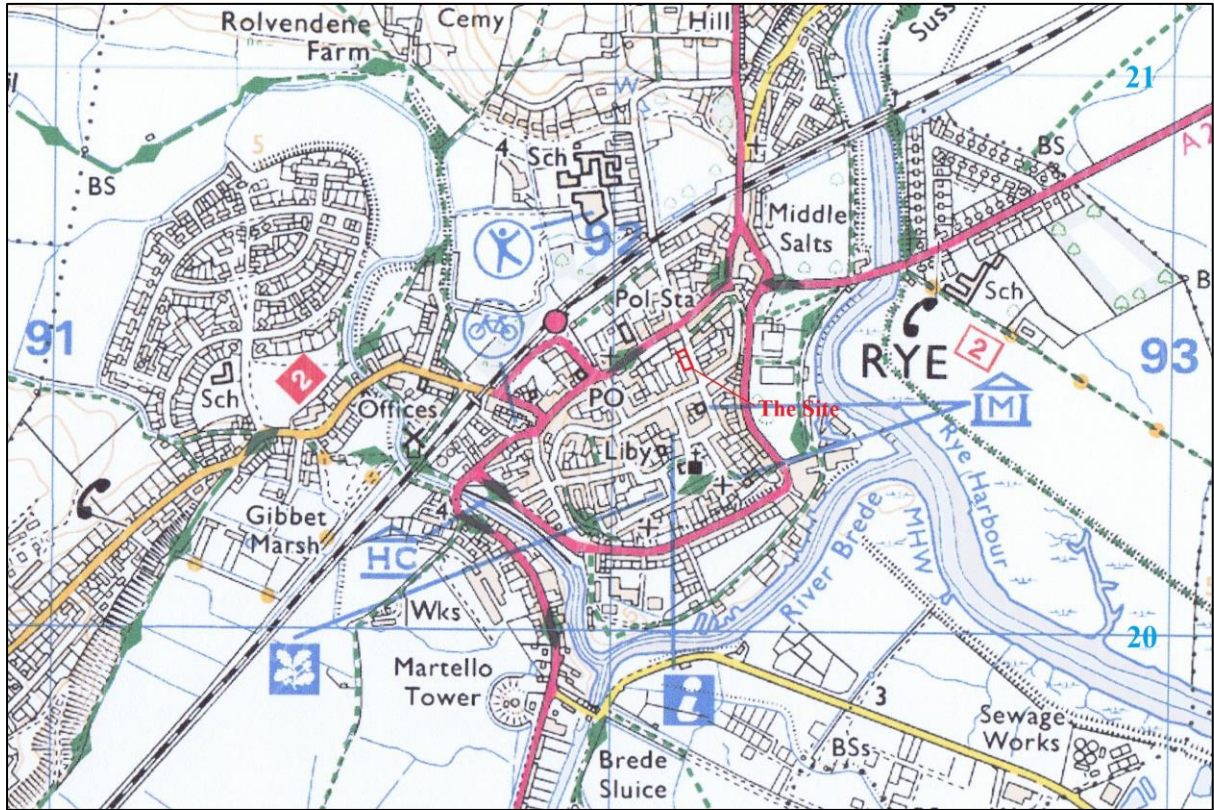


Fig. 1: St Johns Ambulance Building, Rye: Site location Map
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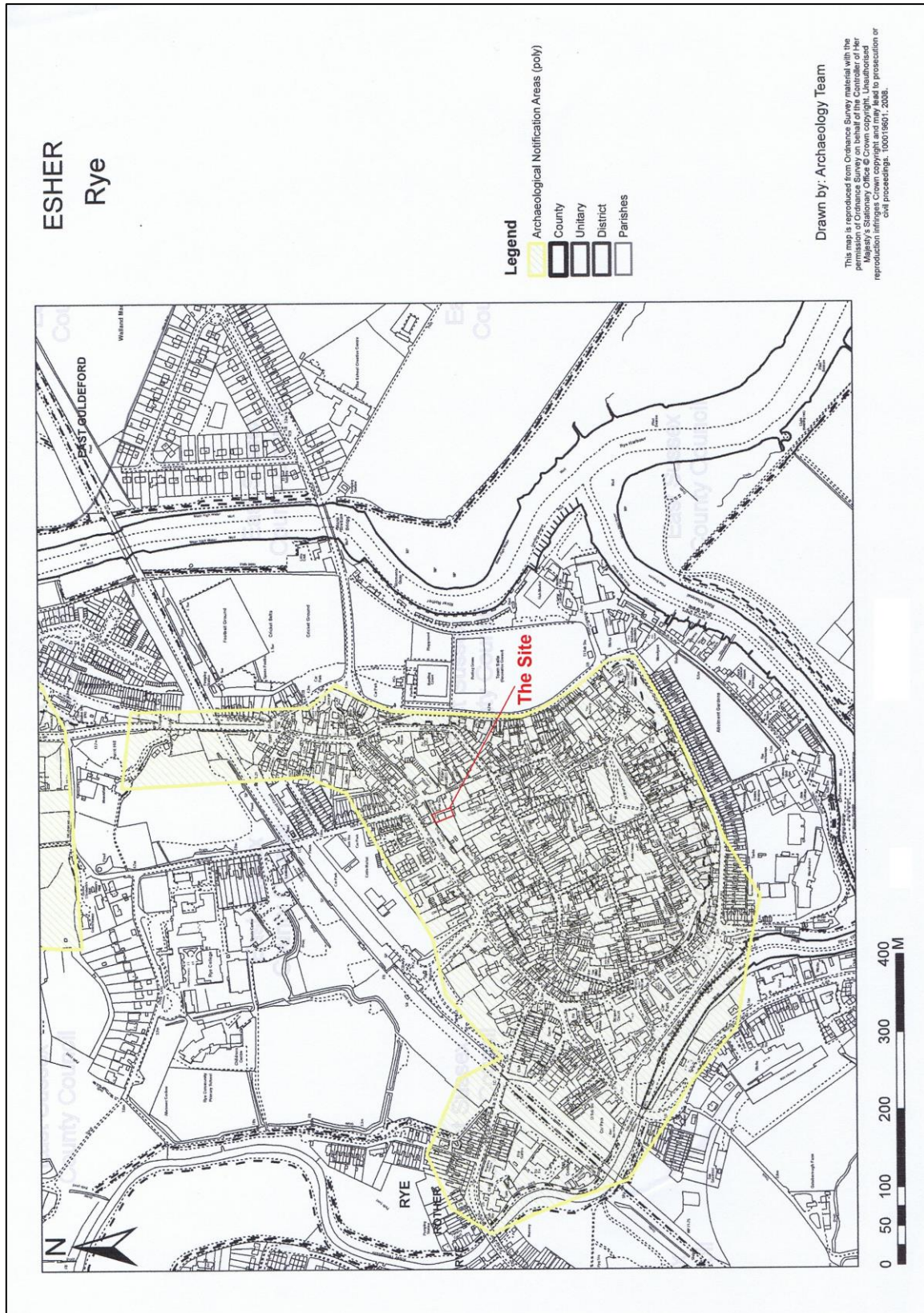


Fig. 2: St Johns Ambulance Building, Rye: Archaeological Notification Area
(Adapted from map provided by ESCC)
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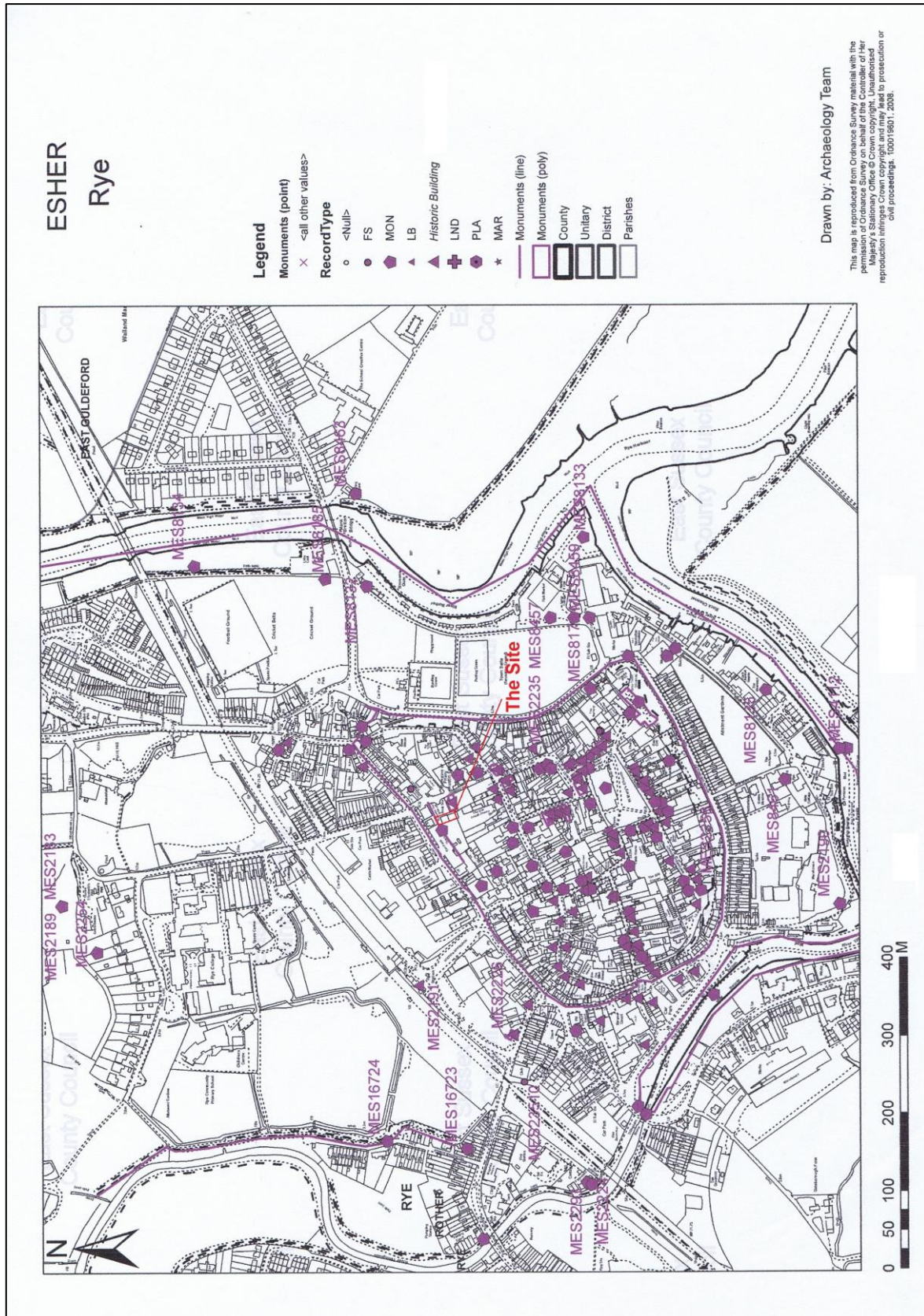


Fig. 3: St Johns Ambulance Building, Rye: Sites on the HER
(Adapted from map provided by ESCC)
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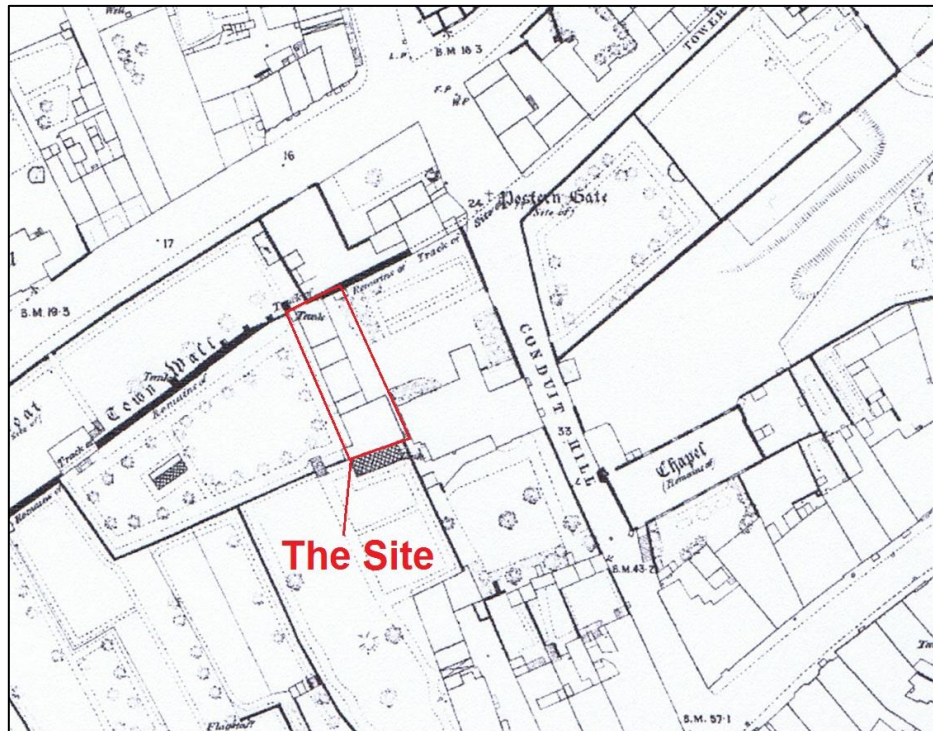


Fig. 4: St Johns Ambulance Building, Rye: 1874 Town Plan

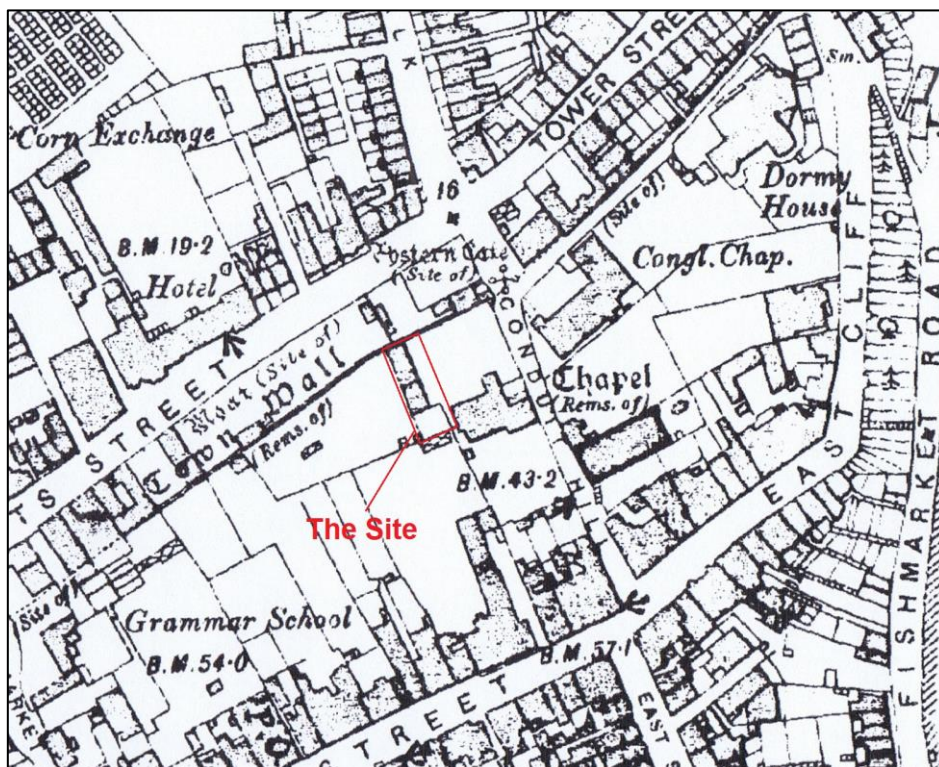


Fig. 5: St Johns Ambulance Building, Rye: 3rd Edition OS Map 1909

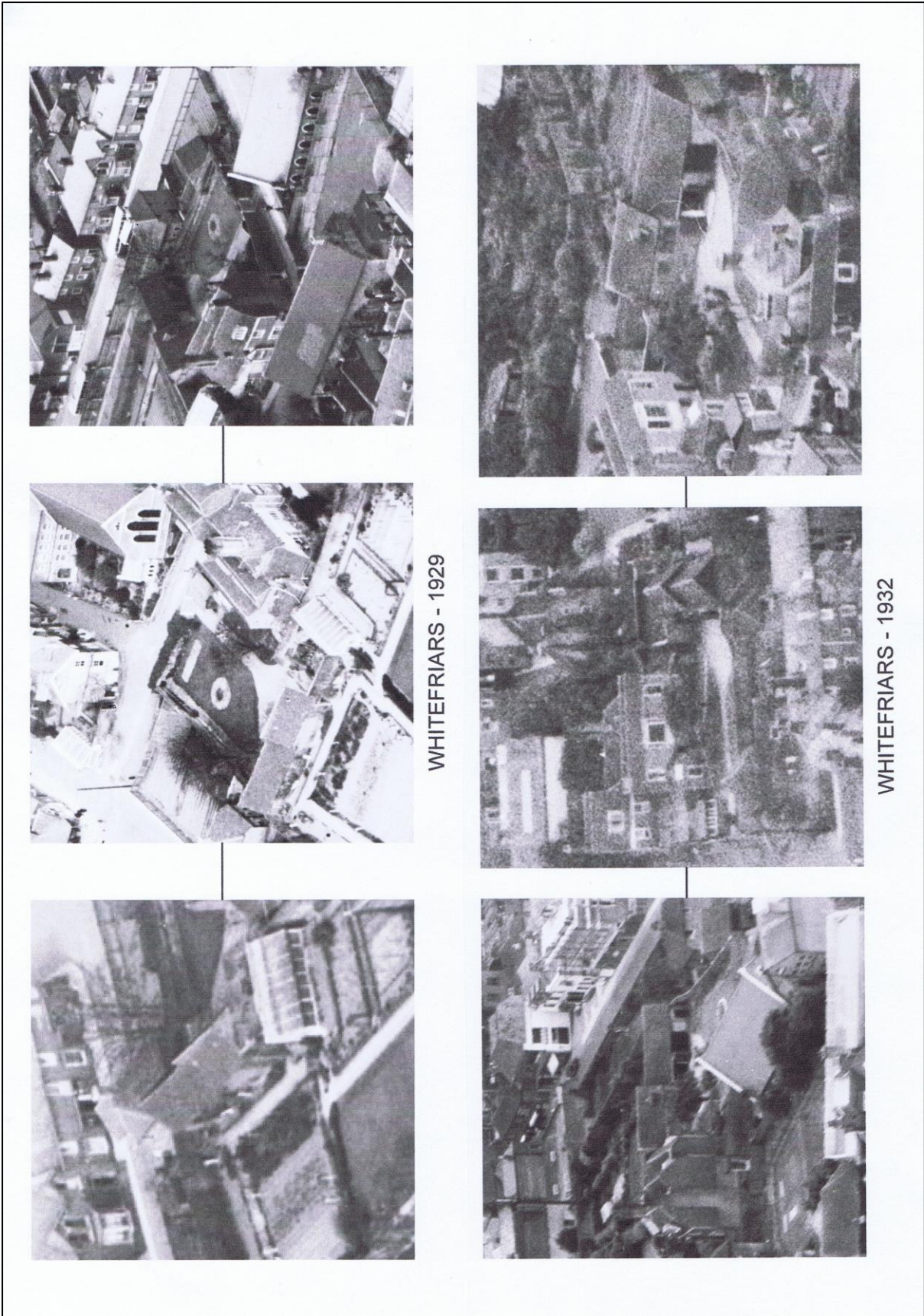


Fig. 6: St Johns Ambulance Building, Rye: 1929 & 1932 Aerial Photographs
(<http://www.britainfromabove.org.uk>)

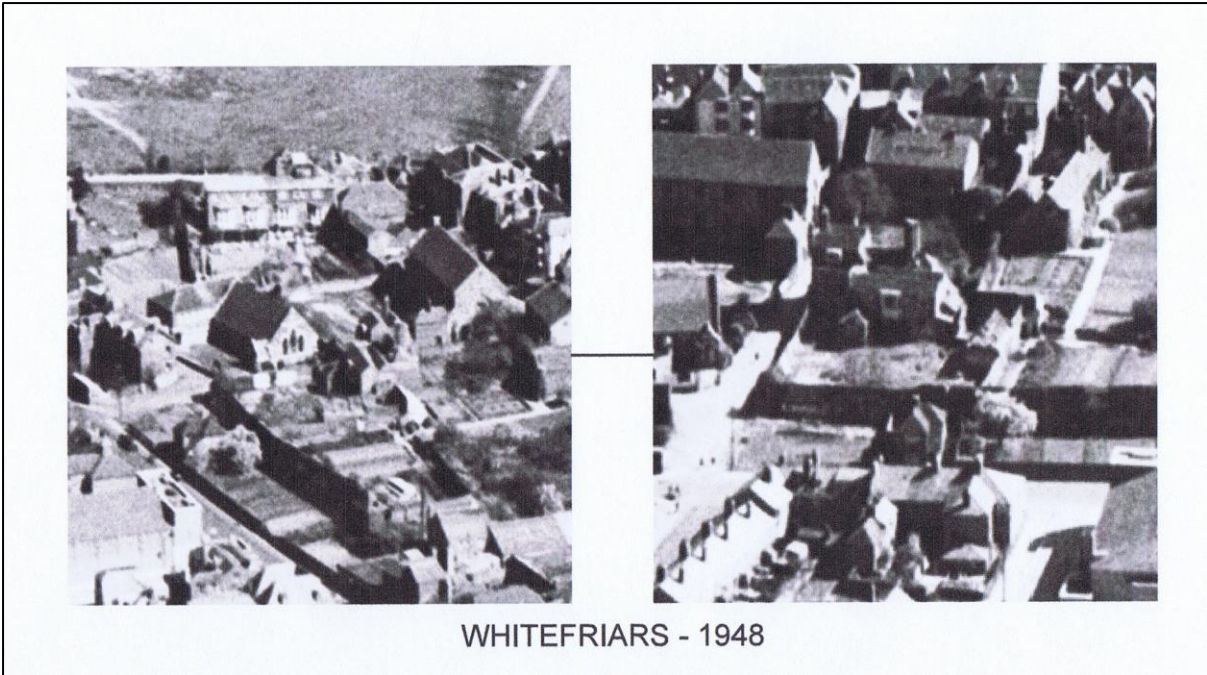


Fig. 7: St Johns Ambulance Building, Rye: 1948 Aerial Photographs
(<http://www.britainfromabove.org.uk>)

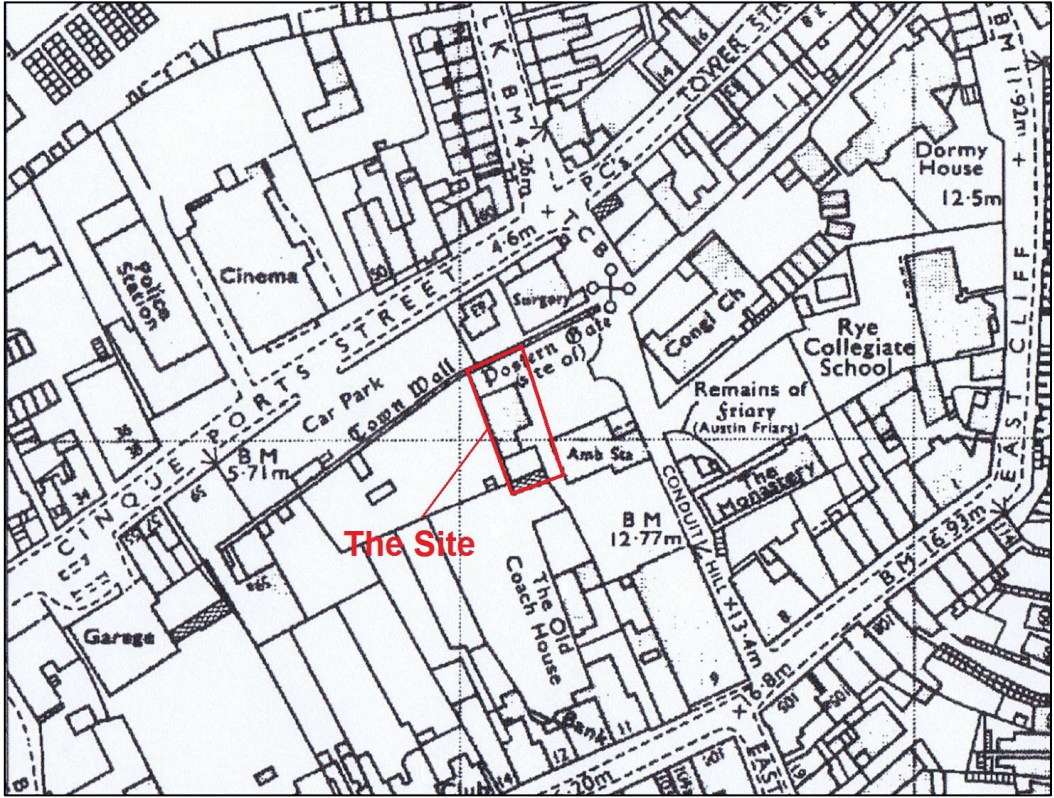


Fig. 8: St Johns Ambulance Building, Rye: 1971 OS Map

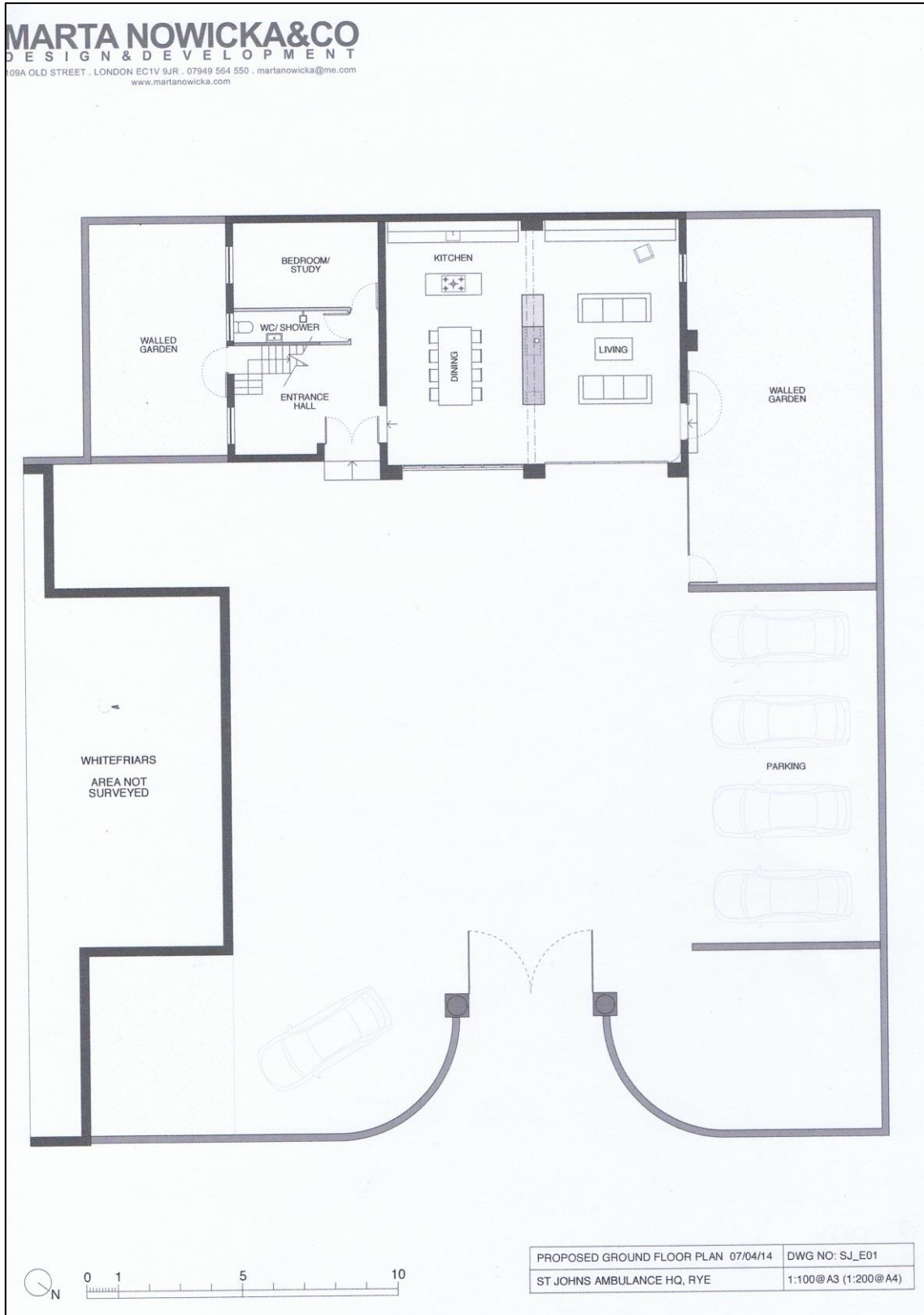


Fig. 9: St Johns Ambulance Building, Rye: Proposed Development Plan

Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd

Chris Butler has been an archaeologist since 1985, and formed the Mid Sussex Field Archaeological Team in 1987, since when it has carried out numerous fieldwork projects, and was runner up in the Pitt-Rivers Award at the British Archaeological Awards in 1996. Having previously worked as a Pensions Technical Manager and Administration Director in the financial services industry, Chris formed **Chris Butler Archaeological Services** at the beginning of 2002.

Chris is a Member of the Institute for Archaeologists, and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London, and was a part time lecturer in Archaeology at the University of Sussex, and until recently taught A-Level Archaeology at Bexhill 6th Form College.

Chris specialises in prehistoric flintwork analysis, but has directed excavations, landscape surveys, watching briefs and evaluations, including the excavation of a Beaker Bowl Barrow, a Saxon cemetery and settlement, Roman pottery kilns, and a Mesolithic hunting camp. Chris is Co-Director of the Barcombe Roman Villa excavations. He has also recently undertaken an archaeological survey of Ashdown Forest and Broadwater Warren.

Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd is available for Flintwork Analysis, Project Management, Military Archaeology, Desktop Assessments, Field Evaluations, Excavation work, Watching Briefs, Fieldwalking, Landscape & Woodland surveys, Post Excavation Services and Report Writing.

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