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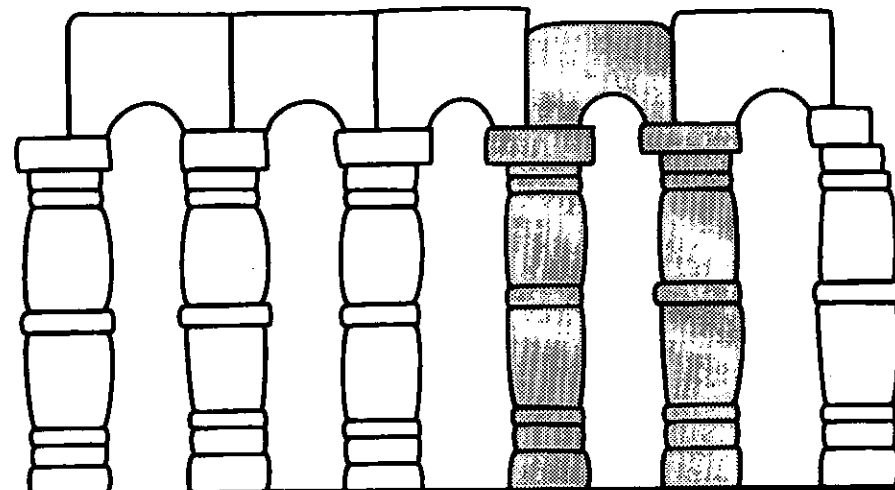
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NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
ARCHAEOLOGY



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
FEBRUARY 2004

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT
ROOKERY STREET/WELL LANE,
WEDNESFIELD, WOLVERHAMPTON
DECEMBER 2003

Acknowledgements

Northamptonshire Archaeology would like to thank Mike Shaw for his help and Wolverhampton Record Office for all their assistance.

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QUALITY CONTROL

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Checked by	Pat Chapman	<i>P Chapman</i>	17/3/04
Verified by	Andy Chapman	<i>A Chapman</i>	17/3/04
Approved by	Gary Coates	<i>G Coates</i>	17/3/04

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project title	Archaeological Evaluation at Rookery Street/Well Lane, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton December 2003	
Short description (250 words maximum)	See abstract	
Project type	Desk-based assessment & trial trenching	
Previous work	None	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	None	
Monument type and period	Post-medieval housing & industry	
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	12 th -13 th century medieval pottery sherd Possible medieval occupation	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	West Midlands	
Site address (including postcode)	Rookery Street, Wolverhampton	
Easting (use numerical 100km grid square no.)	39430	
Northing	30010	
Height OD	139-143m aOD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Mike Shaw (Black Country Archaeologist)	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Tam Webster	
Project Manager	Gary Coates	
Sponsor or funding body	Wolverhampton City Council	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	1 st December 03	
End date	1 st March 04	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical		
Paper		
Digital		
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)		
Title	Archaeological Evaluation at Rookery Street/Well Lane, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton December 2003	
Author(s)	Richard Cherrington & Gary Coates	
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Date	26 th February 2003	

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT
ROOKERY STREET/WELL LANE, WEDNESFIELD, WOLVERHAMPTON
DECEMBER 2003**

Abstract

Three trial trenches were excavated, in December 2003, at Rookery Street/Well Lane, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton. The trenches followed an initial desk-based assessment designed to identify possible activity on the site and aid the location of the trenches. The trenches were located to provide a sample of any surviving archaeological deposits associated with occupation along the Rookery Street and Well Lane frontages, as well as identifying archaeological deposits and possible property boundaries to the rear. Excavation to the east of the site, identified one pit and a posthole of medieval origin containing 12th-13th century pottery. Buried soils containing medieval pottery, including a sherd of Stafford-type ware (11th century or earlier) were also identified. The presence of this medieval pottery suggests a degree of occupation activity along the Rookery Street frontage in the medieval period, although no structural evidence survives. The evaluation area had been subject to severe truncation associated with development along the Rookery Street, Hall Street and Well Lane frontages during the 19th and 20th centuries. Islands of buried archaeological deposits do, however, survive at some considerable depth (0.9 – 1.3m) below the current ground level.

1 INTRODUCTION

Wolverhampton City Council is proposing to construct an urban square plus footway link between Wednesfield village and the Sainsbury's store, Kenmare Way (Planning application 03/1183). The proposed development area is centred on Rookery Street/Well Lane (SJ 9430 0010, Fig 1, hereafter called the site) and covers an area of c 8000 square metres (Plate 1). The site is bounded by Rookery Street to the north and Well Lane to the east. Hall Street runs through the centre of the area. The Sainsbury's store and car park lies to the south-west. The site itself lies within the historic core of Wednesfield, an area that has been developed from the time of the earliest maps of the area. An archaeological evaluation was required in advance of determination of the planning application. The aims of the evaluation were to establish the presence or absence, extent, condition, character, quality, depth of burial and date of any surviving archaeological deposits within the proposed development area. This information would then be used to develop an appropriate mitigation strategy.

Originally the scope of the work was to include a desk-based assessment, but owing to the curtailed work programme, this was not completed prior to the excavation of trial trenches. The research associated with this assessment has been included as part of this report. The location of the trenches (see Fig 2) was decided in agreement with Mike Shaw (Black Country Archaeologist) and were intended to provide an adequate archaeological sample of the Rookery Street and Well Lane frontages, and to establish property boundaries and the nature of land use in the vicinity.

The work conforms to a brief provided by Wolverhampton City Council (Shaw 2003) and a specification prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology (2003)

2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The general objective of the evaluation was to identify any evidence for the survival of buried archaeological remains that might be threatened by the proposed development of the site, and to determine the depth of burial, character, date, extent and state of preservation of any such remains.

The specific objective was as follows:

- To establish evidence for property boundaries, including the size and purpose of the plots, and to attempt to establish the use of land prior to occupation.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Desk –based Assessment

All historical maps were consulted, as were the historical sources. A survey of the available service data was made, along with the geotechnical and mining data. A walk-over survey was made of the site. As there was a limited time period between research and the start of trial trenching, the location of trial trenches was based upon the available information at the time.

3.2 Trial Trenching

The machine excavation of trial trenches was carried out using a JCB type excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket and was monitored by a suitably qualified archaeologist at all times. Excavation by hand was carried out when significant archaeological deposits were encountered, or in order to aid interpretation of the stratigraphic sequence. A written record was maintained using pro-forma record cards. The photographic record comprised monochrome and colour slide film. Plans and sections were drawn at a scale of 1:50, 1:20 and 1:10 where appropriate. These records form the site archive, which is currently stored at Northamptonshire Archaeology.

4 BACKGROUND

4.1 Archaeological Background

The site is located to the west of the historic medieval village of Wednesfield, Wolverhampton and falls within the historic core of the settlement. The placename suggests a pagan Saxon origin and is first recorded at the end of the 10th century. Settlement is first recorded by the Domesday Survey of 1086. Medieval development seems to have comprised a small village with outlying farms, some of them moated, and four open fields. It lay in the parish of St. Peter's, Wolverhampton and Wolverhampton Deanery manor.

Industrialisation arrived later in Wednesfield than in other towns in the Black Country, with many of the open fields surviving into the 19th century. The area was noted for smaller cottage industries such as key making and trap making. Large scale industry arrived in the south of Wednesfield in the late 19th century. It is known that an ironworks, manure plant and acid works were located south of Rookery Street, while the north and east of Wednesfield were largely rural.

Although a full archaeological survey for Wednesfield was carried out in 1996 by Oxford Archaeology (Brereton 1996), little was discovered and correspondingly, not much is understood of the location and condition of any surviving archaeological deposits. There are three entries in the SMR

relating to possible prehistoric barrows in the Wednesfield area. These SMR entries, however, are recorded as no longer visible and no excavation records are present. No Roman sites have been recorded within 2km of Wednesfield village. Evidence for Saxon activity is limited to documentary records, although it has been suggested that the barrows mentioned above may have been Saxon in date, but there is no evidence to support this. A grade II listed building, 'The Dog and Partridge Inn' has been described as being of late 16th century origins (SMR 445), but no other standing or excavated structures or features of late medieval date have been recorded in Wednesfield.

There are no SMR entries for the site itself, although Rookery Street itself crosses the Wyrley and Essington Canal, opened in 1795, to the west of the site (SMR 6939). Opposite the site, 1-5 Church Street, is a former mid-18th century house (SMR 5878) and the public House, 'The Pyle Cock', was built in 1867 (SMR 13234). South of Rookery Street is an entry for Graisle Works (SMR 8604), which was a manure works established in 1913 and closed in 1981.

4.2 Cartographic Evidence

There are very few extant early maps or plans of the Wednesfield area. The earliest map of Wednesfield providing any useful level of detail for the study area is the 1842 Tithe survey and award (Fig 3). The map depicts a burgeoning collection of small mixed use structures and associated outbuildings along the Rookery Street frontage. The extensive plots of open land to the rear are probably a mixture of tenement plots and agricultural land.

By the time of the publication of the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map in 1887 (Fig 4), Wednesfield had begun to develop into an industrialised town. New housing had appeared to the west of the village, presumably to house the workers at the Manure and Acid Works and The Imperial Galvanised Iron Works to the south. Land to the north and east of Wednesfield remained largely agricultural in nature. Within the study area, the majority of the buildings shown in 1842 were still extant. The Rookery Street frontage had been divided by the addition of Hall Street running parallel with Well Lane. Development along the Rookery Street, Hall Street and Well Lane frontages continued apace. Portions of the open land to the rear of the study area had now been turned over to industry. To the south, The Imperial Galvanised Iron Works fronted onto the Bentley canal, and to the west, The Manure and Acid Works was served by a branch line to the Walsall-Wolverhampton Railway. By 1887 two Public Houses had appeared to the west and east of the study area, presumably frequented by the increasing number of factory workers in the area, conversely, a Temperance Hall had appeared on Hall Street. A Smithy is also depicted on the Well Lane frontage.

The 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map of 1902/3 (Fig 5) shows little change to the Rookery Street, Hall Street and Well Lane frontages. The only major change is the replacement of the Manure and Acid Works with a Chocolate and Confectionery Works. The site of The Imperial Galvanised Iron Works is no longer listed as such and it may be the case that the site had been purchased by the Chocolate and Confectionery Works, although a cartographic oversight cannot be ruled out.

The Ordnance Survey map of 1919 (Fig 6) again shows little change to the study area, although plot boundaries to the rear of the Rookery Street frontage are no longer depicted. The site of the Chocolate and Confectionery Works had been extended and a Music Hall is listed on Hall Street.

By 1938, the Ordnance Survey map (Fig 7) lists the site of the Chocolate and Confectionery Works as a Foundry. To the north, a new building had appeared and the branch line is no longer depicted, perhaps evidence of a greater reliance on road transport. The open land at the centre of the study area had been further encroached upon by the construction of outbuildings to the rear of Rookery Street. The 1955 and 1971 edition Ordnance Survey maps (Figs 8 and 9), seem to depict a fossilisation of the

study area in terms of development. The structures are listed as mixed use, mainly dwellings and industrial buildings. By 1971, along Hall Street, many of the buildings have been cleared to provide what appears to be an open space.

5 EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

5.1 Trench 1 (Fig 10; Plate 2)

Trench 1 was aligned north-south, measured 53m x 1.8m, and was located on the eastern side of the proposed development area, with the northern extent returning to the north-west along the Rookery Street frontage.

The natural subsoil (107) was approximately 0.9m to 1.3m below the modern ground surface and comprised mid brown and pinkish clays with occasional grey clay lenses and sandstone pieces.

The natural subsoil was cut by several pits (112, 114, 116, 118, 120), services and brick structures. Pit 112 comprised a probable oval cut, half of which was obscured by the eastern section of the trench. The excavated portion measured 0.7m in length and 0.6m in width and was of uncertain depth. The fill of the pit (113) comprised a dark grey-brown loam containing animal bones, stones and pebbles. Pit 114 measured 1.1m in diameter and was of uncertain depth, the fill (115) comprised a dark grey-brown loam containing animal bones (juvenile pig and cattle, Karen Deighton pers comm), stones and pebbles. Pit 116 comprised a sub-circular cut 0.9m in diameter and up to 0.5m in depth and was filled by a light brown sandy loam (117) with frequent inclusions of sandstone, pebbles and stones. Pit 118 was circular in shape and measured 0.3m in diameter and 0.3m in depth, the fill (119) comprised a brown sandy loam with frequent stones and pebbles. Pit 120 was circular in shape and measured 0.3m in diameter and 0.1m in depth, the fill comprised a dark brown sandy loam with frequent stones, pebbles and charcoal lumps. In addition to the pits, the natural had also been cut by two water pipes and the demolished remains of two brick walls running east-west across the trench.

These features were overlain by several layers of buried soils (106, 105 and 104) and dump of ash (103) combining to a depth of up to 0.7m. The buried soils were characterised by brown-dark grey brown sandy loams with frequent inclusions of charcoal, sandstone and occasional red brick. The buried soils (105 and 104) and the natural subsoil (107) had been cut by two pits, 108 and 110, and the remains of a probable cellar. The excavated portion of the larger pit, 108, measured 13.3m in length and 0.85m in depth, the pit fill (109) comprised a mixed demolition deposit containing ash, charcoal, red brick and mortar. The smaller pit, 110, measured 3.7m in diameter and 0.7m in depth, the pit fill (111) comprised a mid-grey brown sandy loam with stones, pebbles and brick fragments. The truncated remains of a probable brick-built cellar survived to a height of 0.9m. The brickwork comprised two skins of machine-cut red brick bonded with cemented mortar in an L-shaped plan.

Immediately above these features was a layer of demolition debris (102) comprising sand, rubble and ash up to 0.7m in depth. This was overlain by a topsoil layer (101) of brown sandy loam up to 0.2m in depth.

The earliest activity in this trench is represented by pit 116 which cut the natural subsoil (107) and contained one pottery sherd of 12-13th century date and another less diagnostic medieval sherd. Pits 112 and 114 contained the articulated remains of deliberately buried animals. The buried soils (104, 105 and 106) may represent agricultural activity in the medieval and post-medieval period, or may reflect attempts to make-up and level the area prior to 18th and 19th century development and may have

been imported. Pits 108 and 110 contained little diagnostic material, but the presence of red brick fragments would suggest an 18th century, or more likely, 19th century date for these features. Layer 102 probably represents an episode of building demolition on the site, of which only the cellar remains survive. No further features or deposits of significant archaeological interest were encountered and no finds were recovered.

5.2 Trench 2 (Plate 3)

Trench 2 measured 7.5m x 1.8m and was located to the north of the proposed development area along the Rookery Street frontage. It was aligned north-south.

The natural subsoil (205) in the southern half of the trench was approximately 1.0m from the modern ground surface. The natural subsoil comprised orange and brown clays. This was overlain by a deposit of green clay and sandstone (203) up to 0.3m in depth. Immediately above this was a layer of black silty sand (203) up to 0.6m in depth. This was overlain by a deposit of demolition rubble (202) up to 0.25m in depth. These deposits had been truncated by the construction of a brick wall, 206. The truncated brickwork comprised a T-shaped arrangement of two skins of machine-cut red bricks bonded with cemented mortar surviving to a height of 1.0m. The immediate area around the brickwork contained a deposit of demolition rubble (207) chiefly comprising bricks and mortar up to 0.6m in depth. This wall and rubble appeared to represent a backfilled cellar associated with properties fronting onto Rookery Street. Immediately above was a topsoil layer of brown sandy loam 0.12m in depth.

The deposits in this trench reflect significant ground intrusion along the Rookery Street frontage in the post-medieval period. Analysis of the brickwork from the demolished red brick-built structure, 206, and the presence of cement suggests a late 19th century date for this structure. The green clay deposit (204) is likely to be the up-cast from the excavation of the footings for the brick building 206. The black sand deposit (203) does not appear to occur naturally on the site and may have been imported to serve an industrial purpose such as a moulding agent for metal-casting. No further features or deposits of significant archaeological interest were encountered and no finds were recovered.

5.3 Trench 3 (Plate 4)

Trench 3 was L-shaped and measured 8m x 1.8m on both the north-south and east-west axis. The trench was located to the north-west of the proposed development area along the Rookery Street frontage.

The natural subsoil (305) comprised mixed deposits of brown sands and dark brown clays and was approximately 1.0m below the modern ground surface. This had been cut by two backfilled red brick-built cellars, 303. The brickwork comprised machine-cut red bricks bonded with cemented mortar. The cellars fronted onto Rookery Street and were centrally divided by a 0.8m gap. The interior of the structure had been backfilled with demolition debris (304) chiefly comprising red bricks and mortar fragments and, where emptied, was found to be 1.7m below the current ground surface. To the south of the trench the natural subsoil had been overlain by a deposit of black silty sand (306) up to 0.5m in depth. This deposit was very similar to that noted in Trench 2. Immediately above this was a layer of brick rubble (302) up to 0.3m in depth. This was overlain by a topsoil layer of brown sandy loam up to 0.15m in depth.

5.4 Pottery by Iain Soden

The evaluation produced thirteen sherds of pottery dating between the 11th and 20th centuries. None are of intrinsic value. However, their occurrence points to the site being of predominantly late post-medieval to modern date. Almost all of the early wares are abraded sherds, which have been repeatedly disturbed. However, their presence suggests that there is either late-Saxon to medieval occupation nearby or that there has been an import of soil containing such material in more recent times.

The pottery, all from Trench 1, comprises

- Context 104 One abraded sherd of iron-rich sandy ware, probably 13th-14th centuries (Ford 1995, 32)
 One very abraded sherd of Stafford-type ware, also known as Chester-type ware, 11th century or possibly earlier (ibid, 29; Cane and Cane 1985).
 One tiny abraded sherd of ?Deritend-type ware, 13th to early 14th century, white slipped. (Ratkai and Soden 1998)
- Context 111 One sherd of Midlands Blackware 17th- 18th century. Probably a Wednesbury product.
 One abraded sherd of Midlands whiteware type 13th- to 14th-century. Possibly a Chilvers Coton, Nuneaton product (Ford 1995, 32; Mayes and Scott 1984).
- Context 115 Four sherds of underglaze blue transfer-printed earthenwares. 19th or 20th century, factory made.
 One sherd of yellow glazed stoneware of 19th or 20th century.
- Context 117 One sherd of iron-rich sandy utilitarian ware. A cooking pot rim, heavily sooted internally. A rim-sherd, the form of which suggests 12th- 13th century. The only pre-19th century rim-sherd in the assemblage.

 One sherd of quartz-tempered coarseware. The fabric contains poorly-sorted, abundant angular and sub-angular clear quartz and milky quartzite. There are sparse sandstone lumps. The inner surface is grey, the outer dark red, with a pink core. This probable base-sherd has a hackly fracture. Medieval.
- Context 121 One sherd of Midlands yellow ware. 16th to 18th century (Woodfield 1984).

6 CONCLUSIONS

Trench 1 provided the only evidence of any significant archaeological activity pre-dating the 19th century. A total of six sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from Trench 1; two sherds from pit 116 and one from pit 110. A further three sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from a buried or re-deposited soil (104). Pit 110 appeared to have a post-medieval origin as it cut through layers of post-medieval soils. The presence of medieval pottery in these features suggest occupation along the Rookery Street frontage in the medieval period, although no structural evidence remains. The presence of the buried soils containing medieval material points to agricultural activity taking place to the rear of the Rookery Street frontage.

The majority of deposits within Trenches 1, 2 and 3 relate to a succession of ground levelling, construction and demolition processes, primarily during the 19th century. Some deposits, such as the

black sand (203), are probably industrial in nature and may directly relate to the industrial buildings depicted on the 19th and 20th century Ordnance Survey maps. The evidence for cellars in Trenches 2 and 3 correlates with the cartographic evidence through the 19th and 20th centuries.

7 ARCHIVE

The records and finds will be compiled to form an integrated project archive, Site Code (WLWW 03). This will be stored at Northamptonshire Archaeology.

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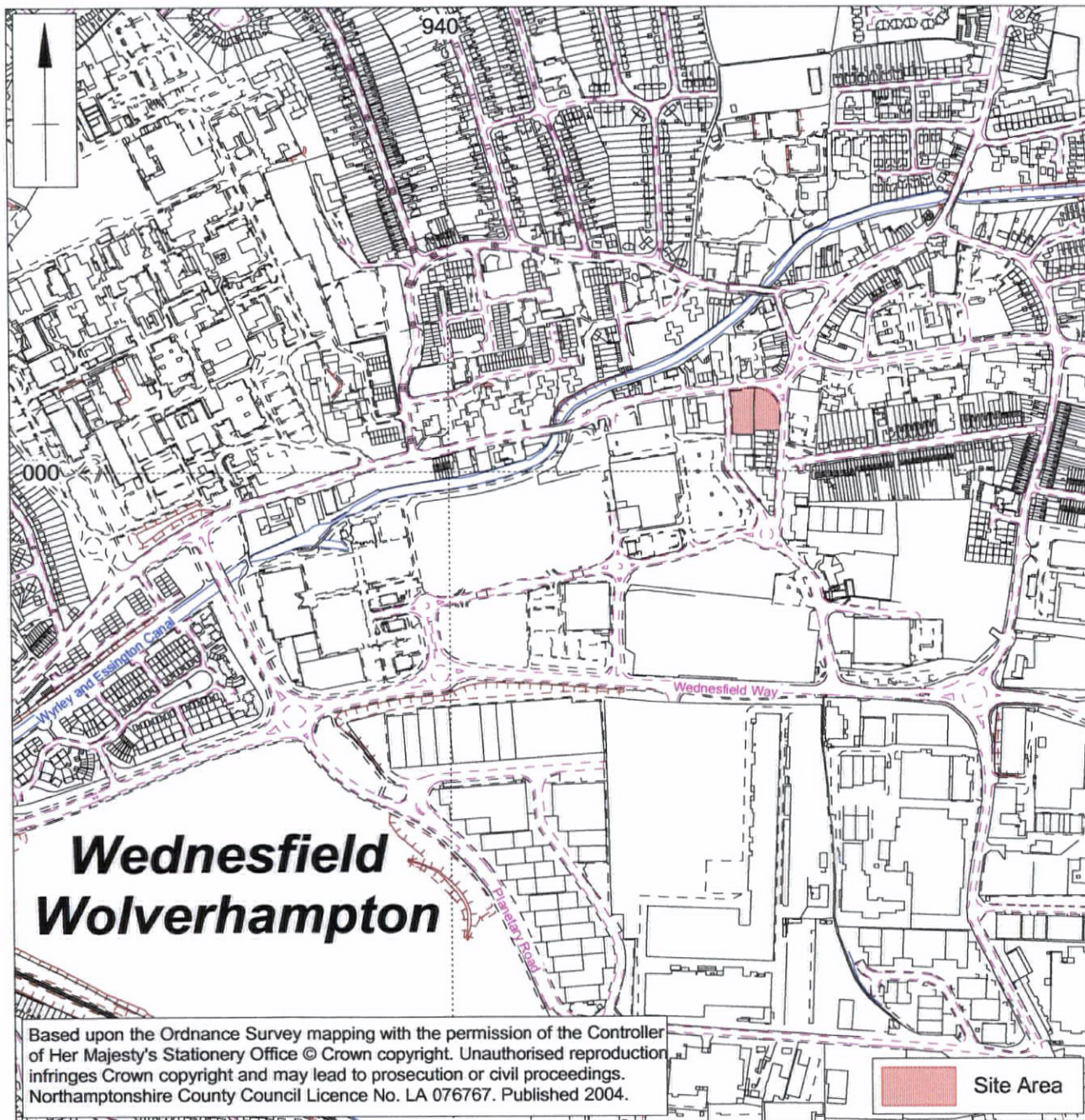
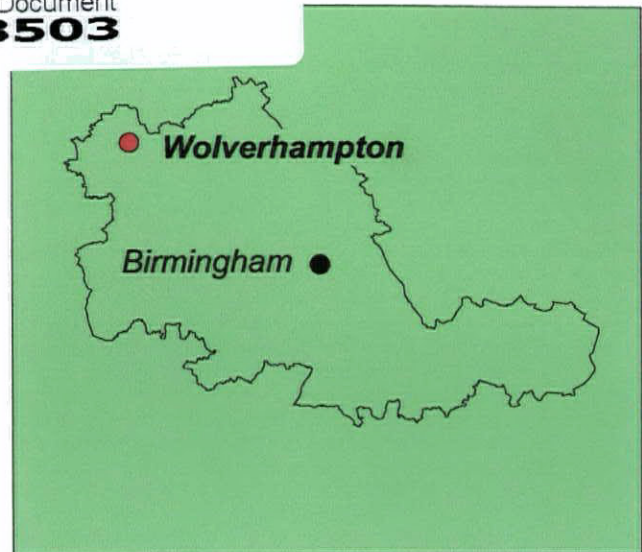
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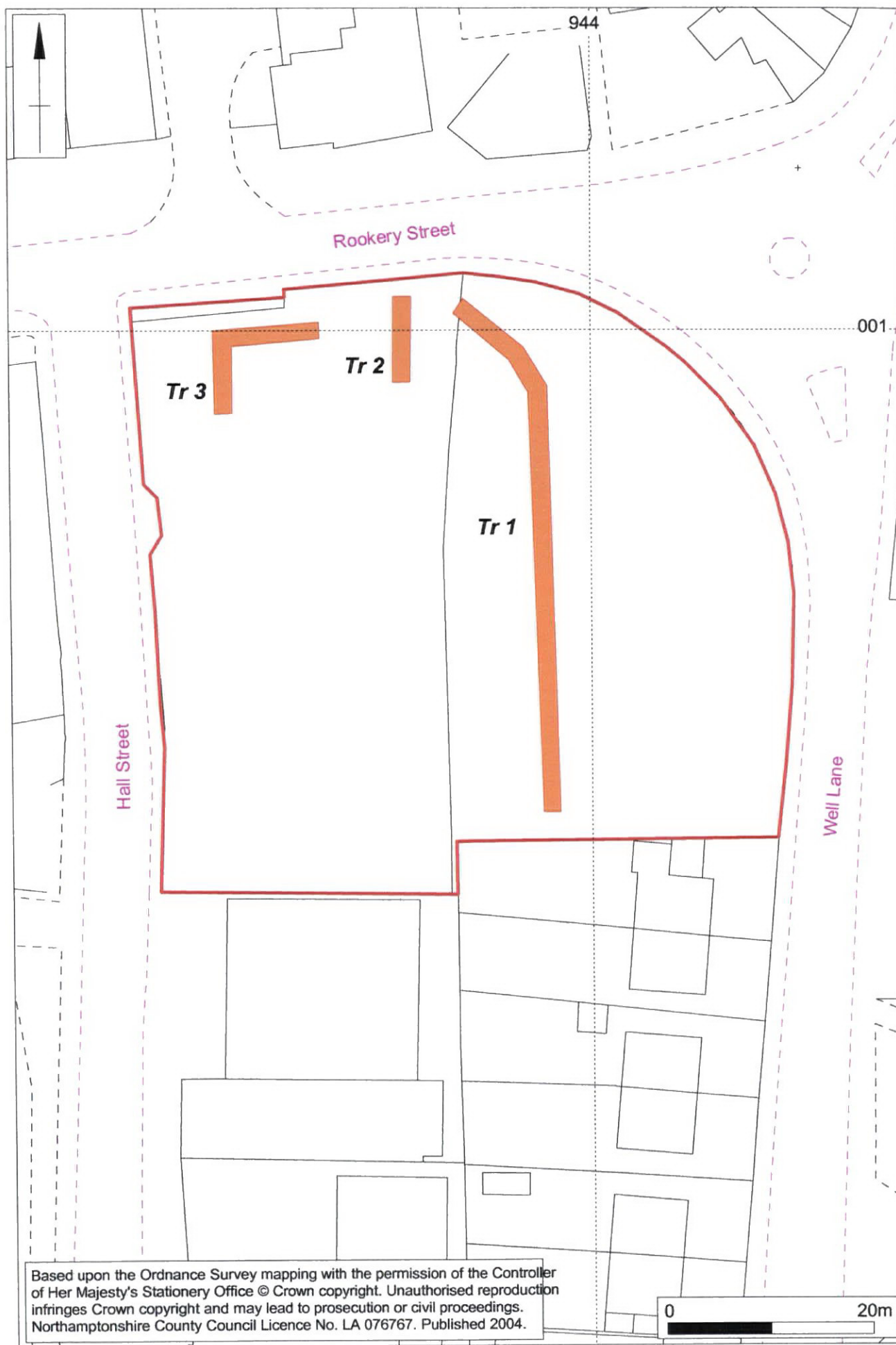
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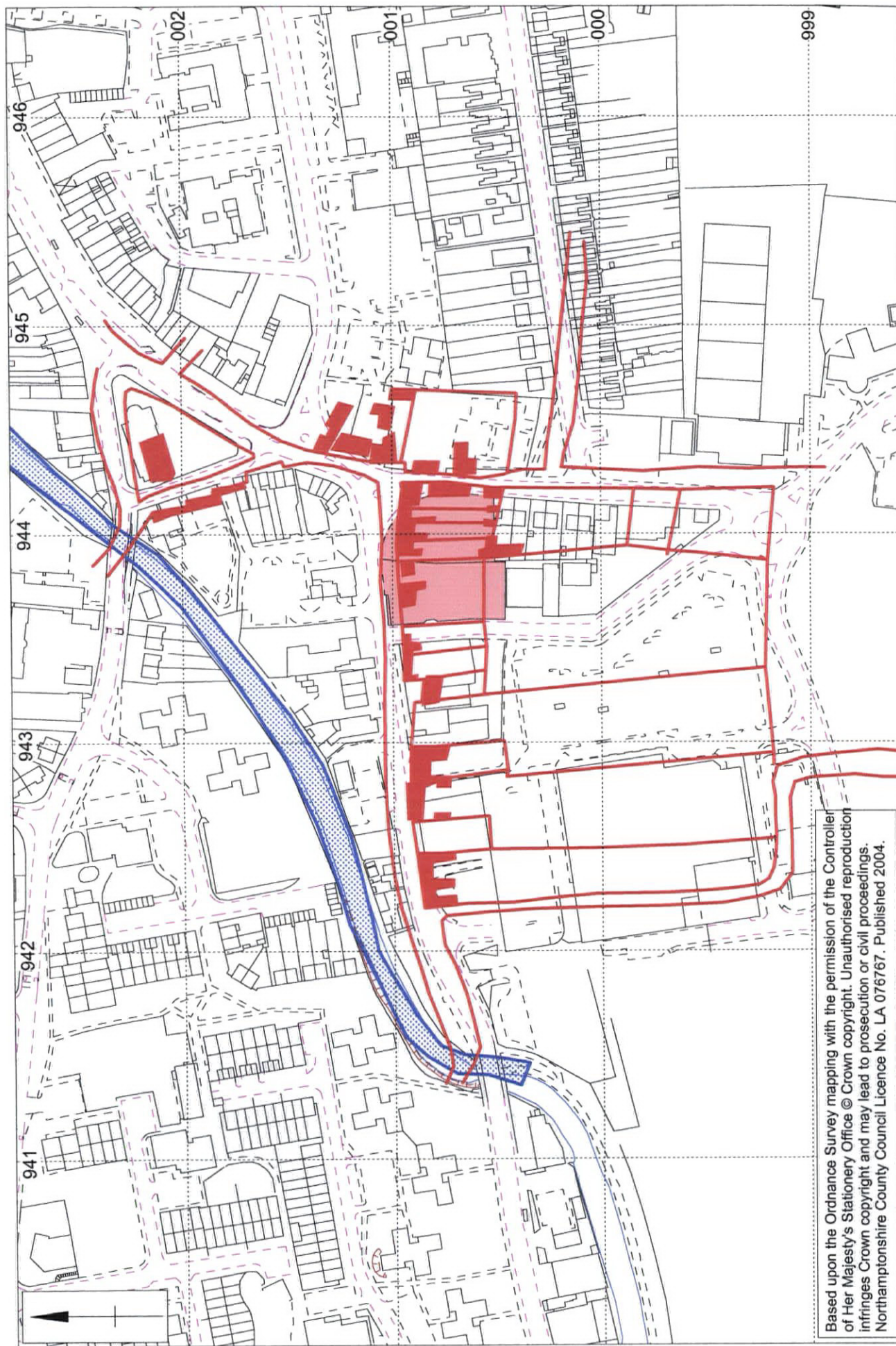
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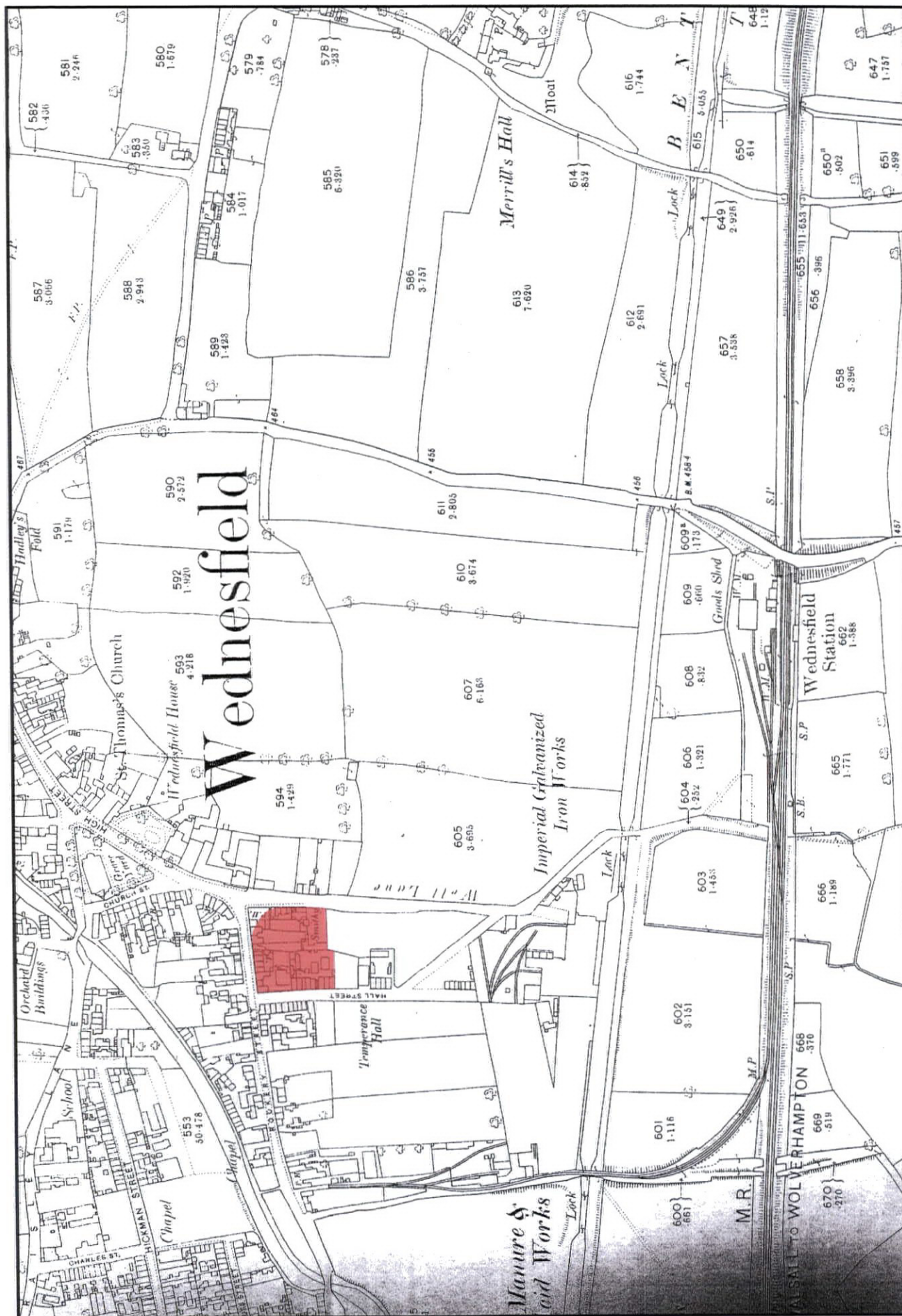
Fig. 2



1842 Tithe Map of 'Wednesfield'

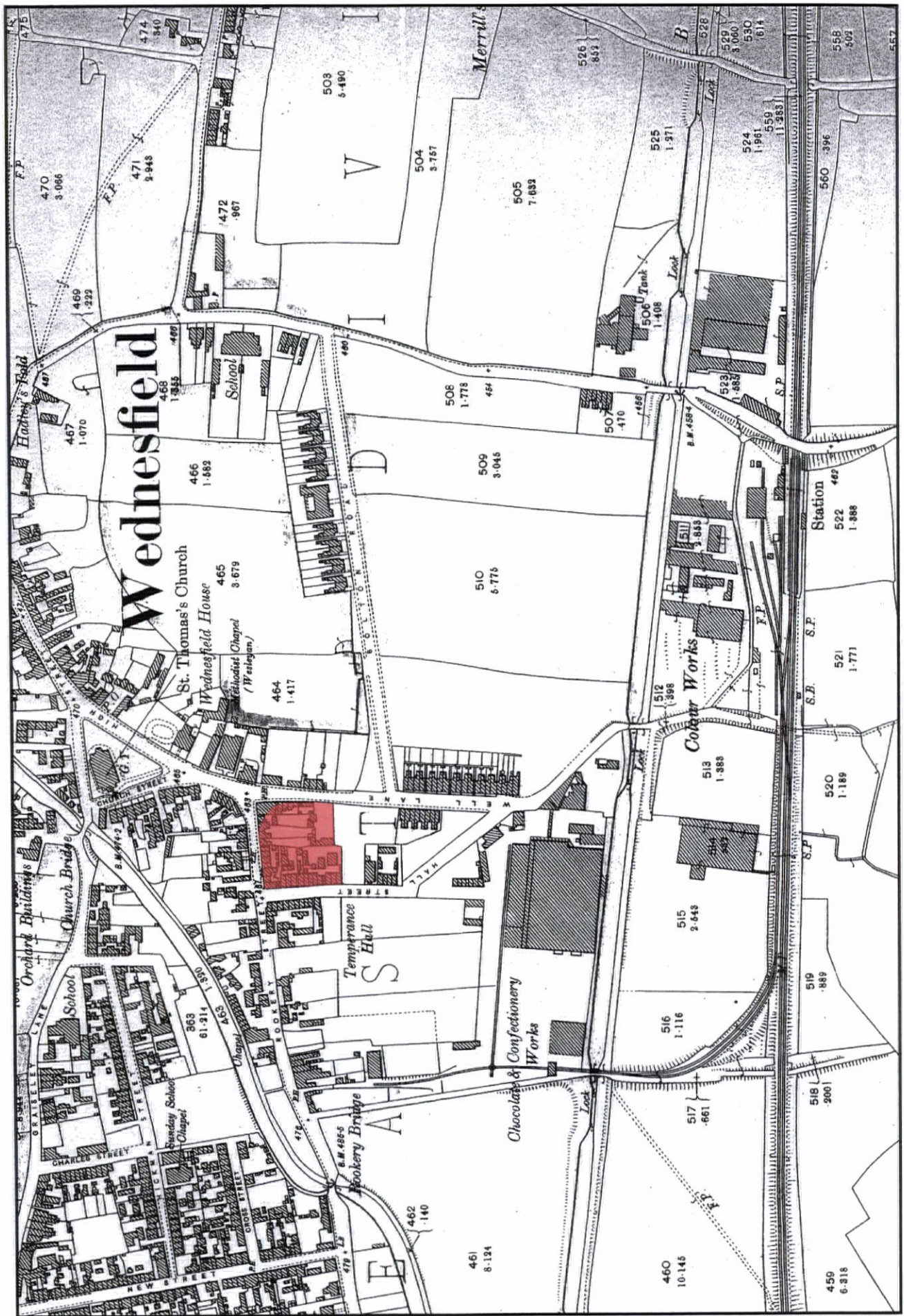
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Fig. 3



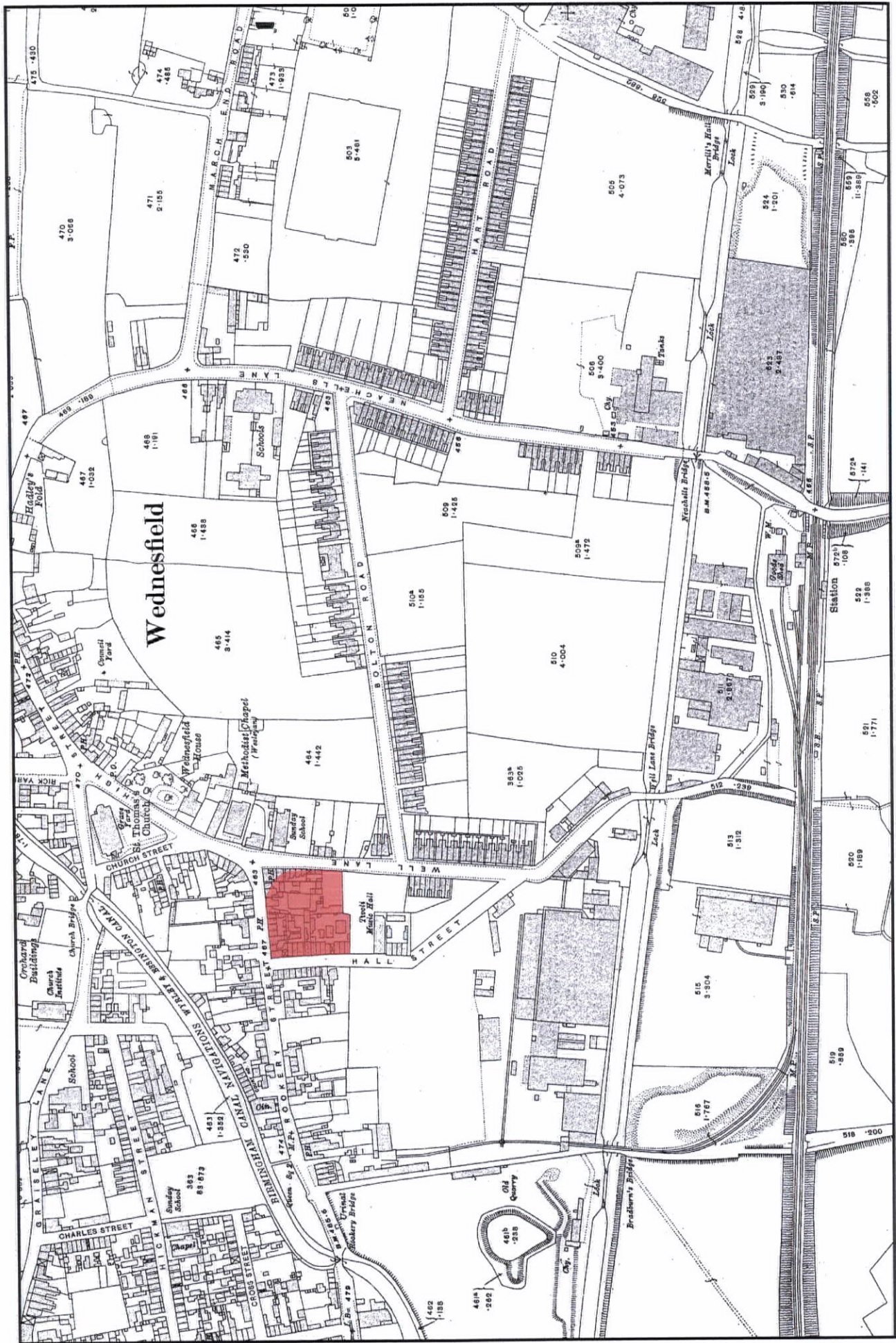
1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map

Fig. 4



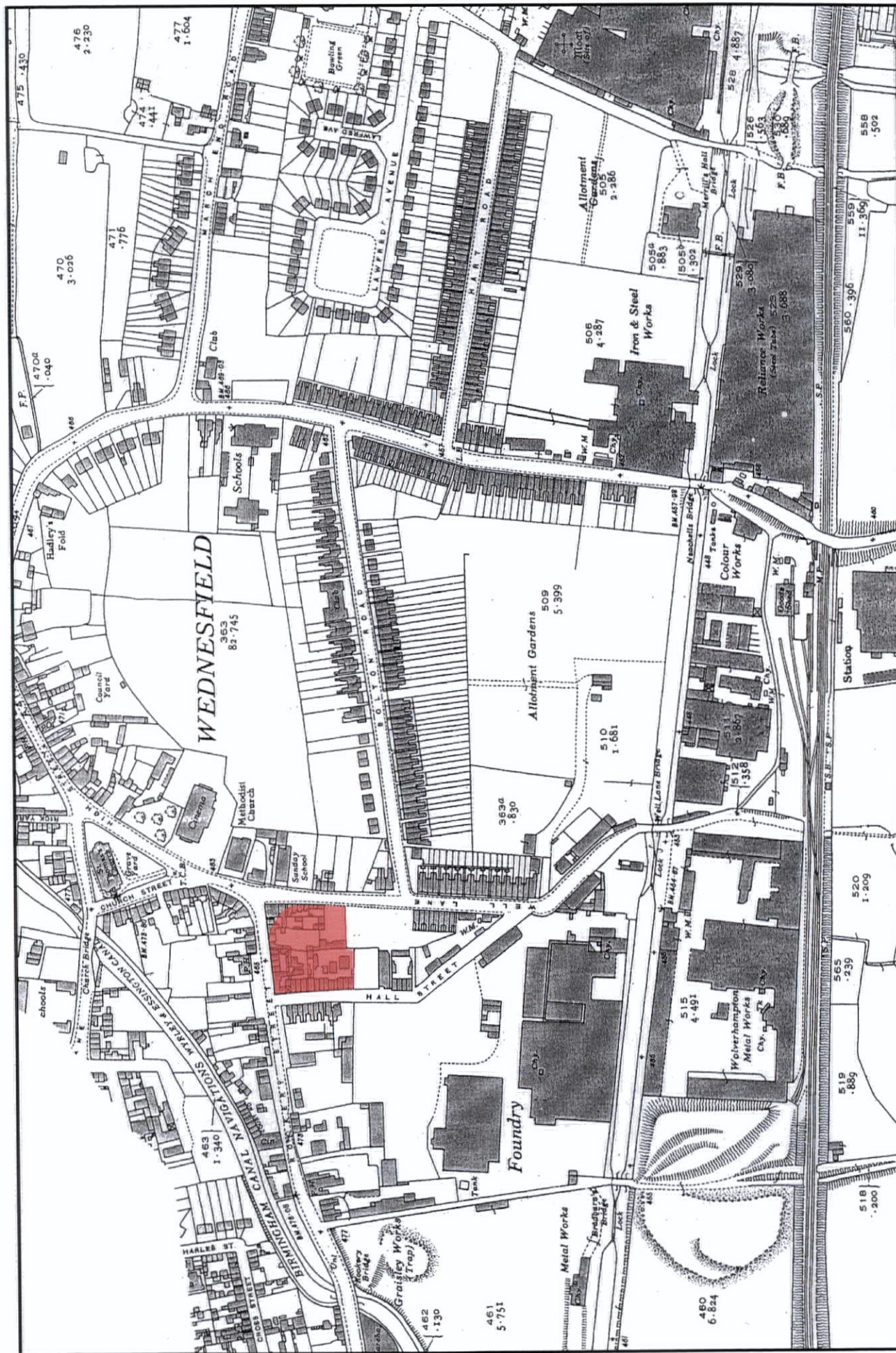
1902/3 Ordnance Survey Map

Fig. 5



1919 Ordnance Survey Map

Fig. 6



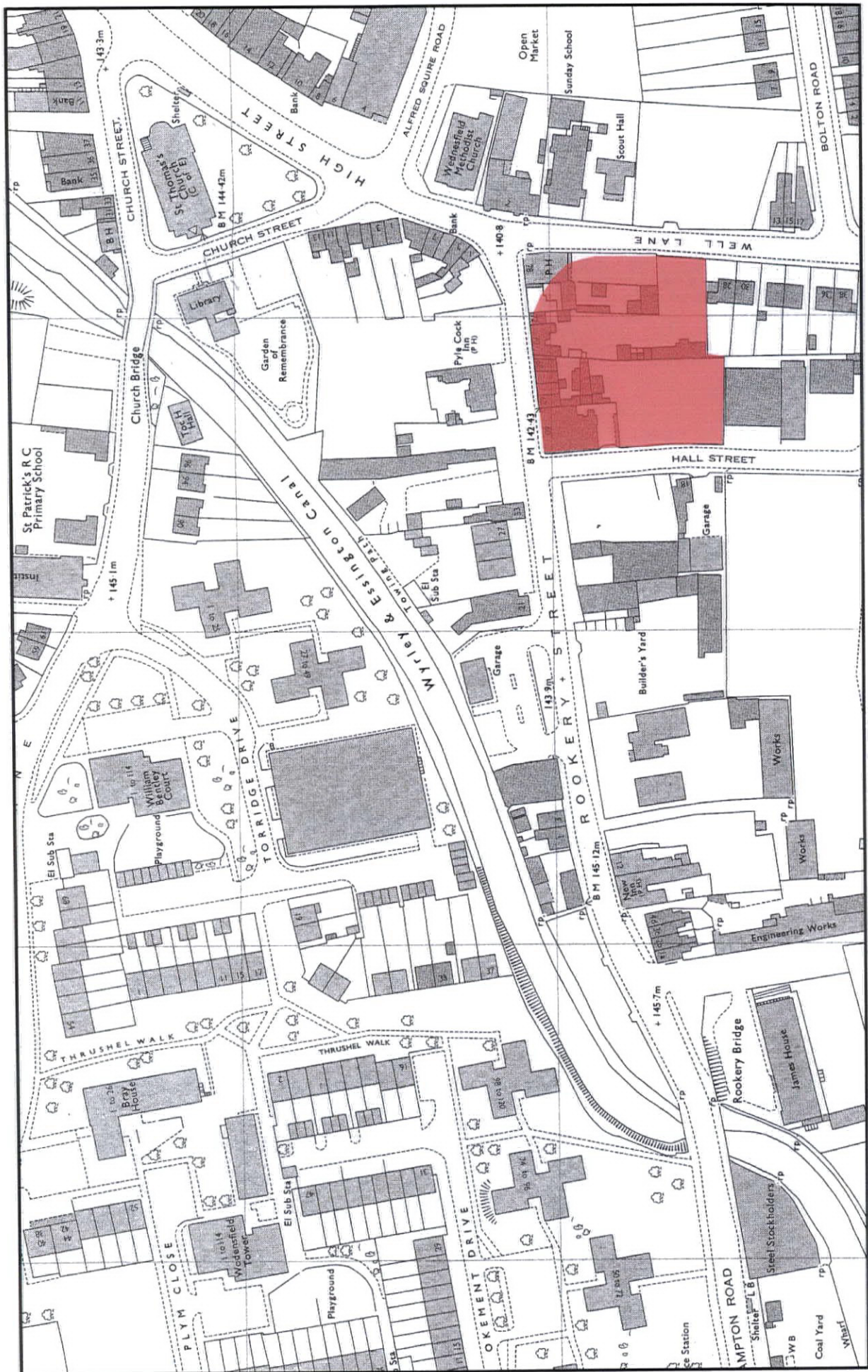
1938 Ordnance Survey Map

Fig. 7



1955 Ordnance Survey Map

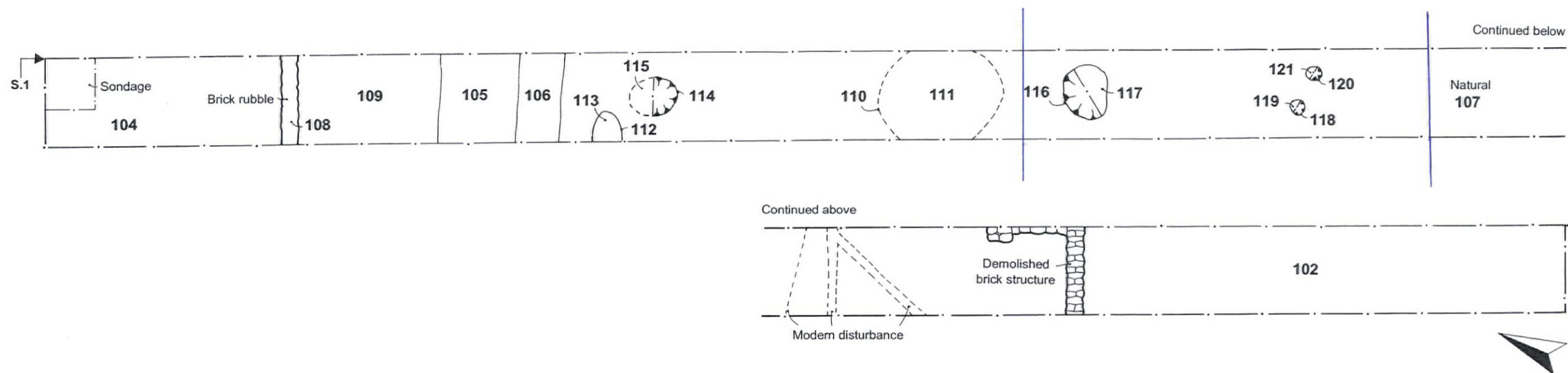
Fig. 8



1971 Ordnance Survey Map

Fig. 9

Plan 1 – Trench 1



Section 1 – Trench 1

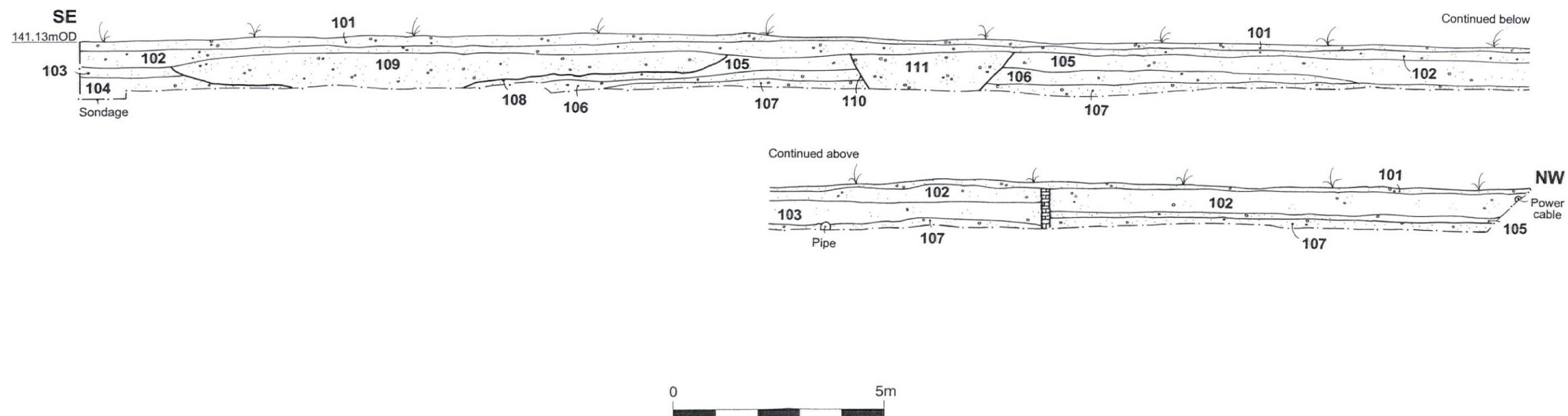


Fig. 10



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4

Rookery Street/Well Lane, Wednesfield

Questions on report *Archaeological Evaluation at Rookery Street/Well Lane, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton, December 2003*, Northamptonshire Archaeology, February 2004

Buried soils 104, 105, 106; Ash 103

Only mention of pottery from these is three sherds of medieval wares – is there any later pottery or other artefacts indicating a later date – brick, clay pipe etc

Beneath the buried soils were three pits 112 (fill 113), 114 (fill 115), 116 (fill 117); postholes 118 (fill 119), 120 (fill 121)

The only pottery mentioned from these is medieval pottery from 116/117; late med/early post-med from 120/121 but 19th-20th cen pottery from 114/115.

Is there any other indication of later material from these pits/PHs - pottery, brick, clay pipes etc? Obviously the pottery from 114/115 seems a little odd as it would then suggest that the overlying layers (105/106?) were 19th/20th cen also. Any chances that the pottery from 114/115 is intrusive – or that pit 114 cuts 105/106?

Mike Shaw 15th August 2005

Rookery Street/Well Lane, Wednesfield

Questions on report *Archaeological Evaluation at Rookery Street/Well Lane, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton, December 2003*, Northamptonshire Archaeology, February 2004

Buried soils 104, 105, 106; Ash 103

- 1 Only mention of pottery from these is three sherds of medieval wares – is there any later pottery or other artefacts indicating a later date – brick, clay pipe etc

Answer: Mike there are no other finds from these contexts

- 2 Beneath the buried soils were three pits 112 (fill 113), 114 (fill 115), 116 (fill 117); postholes 118 (fill 119), 120 (fill 121)

The only pottery mentioned from these is medieval pottery from 116/117; late med/early post-med from 120/121 but 19th-20th cen pottery from 114/115.

Is there any other indication of later material from these pits/PHs - pottery, brick, clay pipes etc? Obviously the pottery from 114/115 seems a little odd as it would then suggest that the overlying layers (105/106?) were 19th/20th cen also. Any chances that the pottery from 114/115 is intrusive – or that pit 114 cuts 105/106?

Answer:

Context 113 produced 3 small pieces of modern brick and some animal bones (look quite recent).

Context 115 produced 1 fragment of modern bottle glass and some animal bone (looks quite recent).

I would imagine that the pit cut through 105/106

I hope this helps.

If you need any more info, just let me know.

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