

Hopwood Hall College, Rochdale

Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Brief

November 2025

Willmott Dixon Construction Limited



Evaluation and Watching Brief report

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Summary

In July 2025 Civic Heritage were commissioned by Willmott Dixon Construction Limited to undertake an archaeological investigation at the Hopwood Hall College, Rochdale

The programme of archaeological works was agreed to satisfy a planning condition (planning application 25/00519/FUL) which called for an archaeological evaluation to be carried out in the northwest part of the current car park. This was followed by a watching brief to be maintained in order to record remains of the water wheel pit uncovered during remedial works. The watching brief was recommended due to the depth of the excavations and inaccessibility of the structural remains for excavation.

The potential for significant remains as first highlighted in a heritage assessment (Civic Heritage 2025). The site had the potential to contain remains of the former Town Mill fulling mill and associated dye works. These were established during the late 18th century and are labelled on the 1851 map, which shows a weir, headrace and covered tailrace, suggesting a water wheel pit in Town Mill. The mapping suggests that the fulling mill had been converted to dyeing by 1892. The fulling mill was demolished by 1930, and the remaining dye works buildings by 1959. The college was established on the site during the 1960s.

The archaeological evaluation was commenced in July 2025. Three trenches were excavated. Trenches 1 and 2 were heavily truncated with only very fragmentary remains of the dye house and mill surviving and large substantial concrete ground beams associated with the college buildings cutting through all deposits and into natural clay. Trench 3 revealed the remains of the Town Mill water wheel pit, headrace and tailrace, which had survived due to its depth. This was not accessible due to depth and flooding, and so was recorded via a watching brief maintained during remedial works. The trenches also revealed that the entire site had been remediated prior to the construction of the college and had been levelled between the road at the north and the river bank at the south, using compact fly ash to a depth of over 2m.

The evidence suggested that the water wheel was a low breastshot-type wheel, with water entering below the half way point from the headrace to the east, and exiting in an intact stone tailrace which ran southwest from the mill.

Following completion of the evaluation and watching brief it was concluded that no further site investigation was required within the site boundary.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

1.1.1. Planning Background

In July 2025 Civic Heritage were commissioned by Willmott Dixon Construction Limited to undertake an archaeological investigation at the Hopwood Hall College, Rochdale (centred on NGR SD 89242 13429 / 389242 , 413429; Plate 1; Figure 1).



Plate 1: Site location

The proposed development comprises the following principal uses:

'The development of a new 'Block B' to replace the existing Block B, which is in poor condition and will be demolished upon completion of the new block. The new building will provide accommodation for up to approximately 900 students across subjects including Art & Design, Catering, T-Levels (including Media, Graphic Design & Gaming), Film Design and provision for teaching Higher Education courses such as Teacher Training and Healthcare. In addition, the building will include support and social spaces, including the Student-support Hub and Learning Support spaces.' Block A and the Gullwing building will be retained..

A planning condition has been recommended for planning application 25/00519/FUL. This application is for an *'Application for enabling works comprising site clearance, site remediation, archaeological investigations, temporary means of access(es) and temporary means of enclosure, installation of utility and drainage infrastructure and associated works in order to prepare the site for redevelopment'*. The application has been granted subject to conditions.

Following consultation with Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service (GMAAS), it was recommended a programme of archaeological evaluation proceed any development of the site, based on the results of a Heritage Assessment prepared by Civic Heritage for Rochdale Council (Fletcher, K, April 2025, *Hopwood Hall College, Rochdale Heritage Assessment*, Civic Heritage report reference 61082_Heritage Statement _Hopwood Hall

College, Rochdale). The purpose of the archaeological evaluation was to identify any archaeologically significant remains that survive within the site area.

Two specific sites were identified for evaluation – an 18th-century dyeworks and fulling mill (Town Mill).

Following completion of the evaluation trenches a watching brief was maintained during remediation works in the area of the Town Mill water wheel pit.

All archaeological works were carried out in line with the Project Design prepared by Civic Heritage on behalf of Willmott Dixon Construction Limited (Fletcher, K, April 2025, *Hopwood Hall College, Rochdale – Project Design: Evaluation and Watching Brief*, Civic Heritage report reference 61082/01_Project-Design_Hopwood Hall College, Rochdale_Evaluation).

1.2. Setting

1.2.1. Location

The proposed development area lies within Rochdale Town Centre and is bounded by College Road to the north, St Mary's Gate to the east, Block A, landscaping and the River Roch to the south, and an access road to the west (centred on NGR 389301 413398; Plate 1; Figs 1 and 2). The site encompasses part of Hopwood Hall College campus comprising a four-storey building referred to as 'Block B' and associated hard-standing car park to the west.

The course of the River Roch formerly ran through the site, however the course of the river was diverted in the late 1950s and lies in the south and west edge of the site. The River Spodden passes c. 300m southwest of the site and the Rochdale Canal is located c. 1.4km to the southeast.

Currently, the site is occupied by the car park of Hopwood Hall College Campus. It is bounded by College Road to the north, Hopwood Hall College to the east, the River Roch to the south and the car park access road to the west.

The site lies at a height of 120.7m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) and inclines slightly upward to the north. To the immediate north of College road the land rises steeply to a height of 134m aOD, and at the south it drops steeply to the the River Roch at 122m aOD, creating a level terrace between the two slopes.

1.2.2. Geology

The underlying solid geology of the development area comprises mudstone, siltstone and sandstone of the Pennine Lower Coal Measures Formation formed between 219 and 318 million years ago during the Carboniferous period. The superficial geology in the north of the site comprises Devensian till formed between 116 and 11.8 thousand years ago, during the Quaternary period. Alluvium deposited during the Quaternary period overlies the solid geology in the south of the site alongside the river (BGS 2025).

2. Historical Background

2.1. Introduction

A Heritage Assessment was produced in 2025 (Fletcher 2025). This contains a detailed description of the archaeological and historical background and historical development of the site. The following is summarised from the Assessment.

2.2. Historical background

Rochdale is first mentioned as 'Recedham' in the Domesday Survey of 1086, with place-name evidence and the dedication of its parish church to St Chad, suggesting a settlement established in the 7th to 8th centuries AD.

During the medieval period the site area was contained within the parish of Rochdale, which formed the most extensive of the parishes contained within the Hundred of Salford, an Anglo-Saxon administrative unit. The site appears to have lay within the ancient township of Spotland, which occupied the north-west part of the parish.

The church of St Chad served an enormous parish, rather than a substantial town. The oldest part of the existing church, which occupies high ground on the south side of the town overlooking the river, dates to the 13th century. However, there is evidence to suggest that an earlier church occupied the same site, and fragments of Norman masonry are said to have been discovered during renovation in 1815. In addition, a stone head sculpture was found on the head of the tower at St Chad's Parish Church, the irregularity of the stonework suggesting an Anglo-Saxon date.

By 1251, Rochdale had become important enough to have been granted a charter for a weekly market, and an annual fair on the feast of St Simon and St Jude in October and it was probably during this period that a borough was also created.

The original Rochdale Bridge (c.250m east of the site), built over the river Roch, was medieval in date, with extension was built to the east in 1667.

The woollen industry defined the post-medieval development of Rochdale, and its success prompted the growth of the town. The manufacture of woollen textiles developed rapidly from c. 1500 as a domestic-based industry. Textiles were generally manufactured in domestic-based workshops or weavers' cottages as part of the putting-out system, whereby merchants employed textile workers and supplied them with raw materials. Domestic-based textile manufacture and mining were increasingly undertaken as a supplementary income to farming in the area.

Rochdale Mill (c. 400m southwest of the site) was described in 1510 as a water corn mill. A second water corn mill was mentioned in 1532 known as Town Mill, which is believed to be around Ton Brow / Town Hill (c 350m to the south-west of the site).

In 1582, Camden described Rochdale as a 'market town well frequented'. The confiscation of the lands owned by the Whalley Abbey s following the Dissolution of the Monasteries during the 1530s followed by the 17th century sale of the Byron estates increased the land available to landlords. The hearth-tax returns of 1666 provide an insight into the importance of the parish with 228 hearths liable in Rochdale and Wardleworth, including a number of large houses.

Celia Fiennes, writing in c 1700, described Rochdale as 'a pretty neat town, built all of stone', whilst some 25 years later Defoe considered it 'a good market town, and of late much improved in the woollen manufacture, as are also the villages in its neighbourhood'. By the end of the 18th century, Rochdale had developed a formidable reputation as a centre for the production of woollen cloth, and the town benefited from a lucrative export trade in woollen goods to Holland, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Russia and Germany. It had also become an important centre for the cross-Pennine trade in woollen cloth, represented by the numerous merchant's houses, warehouses and inns that were established in the town during the late 1700s to service this trade.

During the 18th century, a fulling mill named Town Mill had been erected within the western part of the site and may have been named after the earlier corn mill.

In 1771, Samuel Curwen visited Rochdale and noted that it was 'remarkable for (its) many wool merchants; it has a large woollen market'. He also noted that 'every considerable house is a manufactory, and is supplied with a rivulet or little stream, without which the business cannot be carried'. The River Roch was exploited as a source of power during this period, although it was subject to sudden flooding.

By the 1780s, the national demand for textiles, particularly cotton, had begun to rise, resulting in a dramatic increase in mill building that transformed the Greater Manchester region into a centre for factory-based textile manufacturing. Initially, the mills were water-powered, but by the end of the 18th century, mills were being converted to steam.

The introduction of canals was an important factor in the growth of Rochdale's textile trade. Rochdale Canal was conceived in 1776 and was authorised by an Act of Parliament in 1794. The canal stretched across the Pennines linking Manchester with the ports of the East Coast via the rivers Aire and Trent and also to Liverpool via the Ashton to Bridgewater Canal. The railways eventually replaced the canal network, with the Manchester to Leeds Railway opening in 1836.

By the 19th century, cotton had replaced wool as the main industry in Rochdale. New cotton mills were established along the River Roch. Nearby cotton mills included Michael Hey Mills (c.300m west) and Oak Mill (350m south-west).

2.3. Development of the Site

The layout of the town on the southern side of the river Roch is depicted on a Plan of the Rochdale Glebe, which was produced in 1754-7 and shows the core of the town to have been focused on the parish church, around Packer Street, King Street and what is now Drake Street. Rochdale Bridge is annotated as 'A Stone Bridge', with a second river crossing a short distance to the west named 'Cap Ogden Bridge'. The land surrounding the parish church was divided into a patchwork of fields owned by various landowners, with the site appearing to have been roughly within a parcel of land that lay north of the river Roch, labelled 'Dyehouse Holme', potentially indicating that a dyehouse had been established within the site or its immediate vicinity by the mid-18th century.

William Yates' map of Lancashire in 1786 depicts the extent of the town during the late 18th century, showing that development had expanded beyond the medieval core. Ribbon development is shown along three routes north of the river, with a denser concentration of

buildings at the meeting point of the three routes. The site was likely located on the edge on the growing town, on a bend in the river Roch.

According to a newspaper article, dated 1799, a parcel of land containing messuages, tenements, a fulling mill, dyehouses, warehouses, buildings and croft was to be sold by auction (Manchester Mercury, 30th June 1799). The industrial complex mentioned in the newspaper could be associated with 'Dyehouse Holme' labelled on the Glebe map. The newspaper mentions that the *'fulling mill was commonly known as 'Town Mill'*. The article describes that the mill also had associated dyehouses, warehouses and other buildings that were standing upon and worked by the *'River Roach'*. The mill was supplied by water from the river and was furnished with *'excellent Scouring Water'*. It was capable of working machinery to a great extent.

The Ordnance Survey map of 1851 (Plate 2; Figure 6) shows that two mills fell within the site, including Holland Street Mill in the east and Town Mill in the west. Town Mill consisted of a rectangular building that operated as a fulling mill. In addition, a dyeworks was housed in a small square building to the west of the fulling mill and may have been associated with Town Mill. The dyeworks and main mill building both had external staircases, indicating that the buildings contained cellars. The map also shows that the River Roch runs through the centre of the site with a weir built within the western half of the Site. This controlled the levels of the river, potentially built to assist with powering waterwheels at the mills and to prevent flooding. The map clearly shows a headrace and tailrace diverted from the river through Town Mill, presumably to drive the water wheel. The tailrace, heading southwest back towards the river, is labelled as *'covered'* indicating that it was carried in a below ground culvert.



Plate 2: Extract from OS map of 1851

A newspaper from 1868 advertised the sale of Town Mill, following the death of John Holt. The mill building and the woollen machinery was advertised for sale (Rochdale Observer 16th May

1868). The Rochdale Improvement Act of 1854 aimed to improve the drainage of the town and the cleansing of the river Roch. In 1870, the owners of Town Mill were prohibited from making any new sewers into the river. They were instructed to construct a floodgate to improve the state of the river. They had also enlarged a sewer called the York Street that flowed into the river above the weir (Exeter and Plymouth Gazette Daily Telegrams, 7th June 1870). The article also suggests that the weir in the site was associated with Town Mill and was known as 'Town Mill weir' (*ibid*).

The Ordnance Survey Map of 1892 (Plate 3) shows that the footprint of buildings at Town Mill remained unchanged, though the dyeworks to the west had been incorporated into Town Mills. The mill no longer functioned as a fulling mill and was instead operating as a dye works. The line of the covered tailrace is still visible on the mapping and appears to have been used as an access route. The 1891 census returns revealed many of the residents were employed in the woollen or cotton industry. The Ordnance Survey map of 1910 replicates the 1892 plan, showing that no development took place within the site.



Plate 3: Extract from OS map of 1892

The Ordnance Survey map of 1930 (Plate 4) shows that the former Town Mill had been demolished, but the dye works building to its west was still standing.

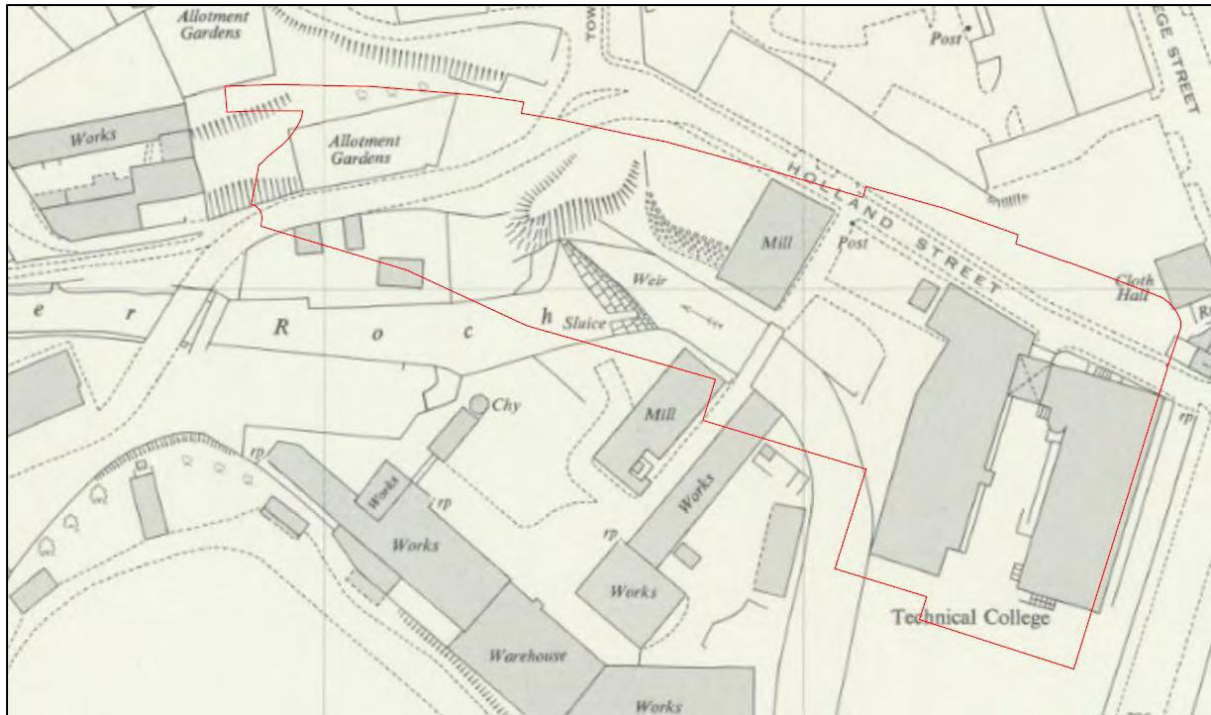


Plate 4: Extract from OS map of 1930

An aerial photograph taken in 1949 shows the site and its environs (available to view at Britanfromabove.org ref: EAW022018). The photograph shows the river Roch running through the site, with the former area of Town Mill as flat brownfield land and the weir clearly visible next to the site of the former Town Mill.

All the remaining buildings associated with Town Mill, and all the surrounding workers housing, had been demolished by 1959. Holland Street Mill had been converted into a Technical College by this time. The weir was demolished in 1960 and the river altered to follow its current course. In 1964 two college buildings were erected, with a large rectangular block occupying most of the current car park area. This was demolished in the early 21st century to create the car park.

3. Aims and Objectives

3.1. Aims

The main aim of the archaeological evaluation was to identify any archaeologically significant remains that survive within the site through the excavation of three evaluation trenches (Figure 2).

Following on from the evaluation, the aim of the watching brief was to make a record of any remains of the Town Mill water wheel pit revealed by remediation excavations.

The specific aims of the investigation were:

- to identify any archaeologically significant remains that survive within the site;
- to provide sufficient information to enable an informed decision to be made about the need for any additional archaeological mitigation;
- to identify the survival of buried remains associated with Town Mill and its associated dye works;
- to record any remains of the water wheel pit revealed by remediation excavations;
- to produce a report detailing the results of the investigation;
- to make available the results of the work.

3.2. North West Regional Framework

The specific research agendas set out within the North West Regional Research Framework (NWRRF 2024) were taken into account at all stages of the investigation.

4. Method Statement

4.1 Methodology

All archaeological work was conducted following the Standards for Archaeological Field Evaluation (ClfA 2023c), Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (ClfA 2023d), Standards for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording (ClfA 2023e) and Guidance for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording (ClfA 2023f). Before commencement all interested parties agreed an acceptable method of proceeding.

Prior to the commencement of any works, the location of the areas targeted for archaeological investigation were laid out accurately with respect to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

The trenches were excavated using a 13 ton tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The topsoil and any demonstrably modern overburden were excavated down to the first significant archaeological horizon or geological deposits, whichever was reached first. Thereafter, remains were cleaned manually to define their extent, nature, form and, where possible, date.

Planning

The precise location of the trench and all the excavated remains encountered therein was surveyed using GPS survey. This process generated scaled plans within AutoCAD, which were then subject to manual survey enhancement. All information was georectified to the Ordnance Survey National Grid and all levels tied into Ordnance Datum.

Context Recording

All contexts were recorded using pro-forma sheets, allowing details to be incorporated into a Harris matrix. All written recording of survey data, contexts, photographs, artefacts and ecofacts were cross-referenced from record sheets using sequential numbering.

Photography

A full and detailed photographic record of individual contexts was maintained along with general views from standard viewpoints of the overall site at all stages of the excavation. Photography was undertaken in accordance with HE guidance, Digital Image Capture and File Storage Guidelines for Best Practice (July 2015). All frames included a visible, graduated metric scale. Photographs records were maintained on photographic pro-forma sheets.

Finds Policy

No finds were retrieved from the site. 20th century artefacts were noted and discarded.

5. Results

5.1. Introduction

Three trenches were excavated in the northwestern area of the college car park targeting the former Town Mill and associated dye works (Figure 2).

The depth of the trenches precluded entry and so recording had to be carried out from the top of the trench.

The watching brief was carried out during the re-opening and expansion of trench 3 in order to infill the wheel pit with inert aggregate. The description in 5.5 below includes the results of both the evaluation trench and watching brief.

5.2. General Soils and Ground Conditions

Natural clay (**09**) was encountered in trench 1, at a depth of 3m below ground level (bgl). This comprised a mid-yellowish brown to brownish grey firm clay with occasional small pebbles.

Archaeological remains in each trench were buried beneath demolition rubble overburden, described in the individual trench descriptions below. Above this overburden most of the site appeared to have been capped with a c. 2m thick deposit of very compact grey fly ash (**04**). This was not encountered in trench 2, at the furthest northern edge of the site, and was slightly thicker in trench 3 than in trench 1, so it was assumed that this was levelling out a slope down to the river to create a terrace on which to build the college (Plate 5).



Plate 5: Fly ash levelling material 04 in trench 1, looking northwest

The fly ash was overlain by up to 0.25m of compact crushed rubble hardcore (**03**), above which was 0.2m of aggregate bedding (**02**) and 0.1m of tarmac (**01**), creating the car park surface.

5.3. Trench 1

This trench measured 12m by 8m and was located in the northwestern part of the car park to examine the former dye works (Figure 3). It was entirely covered by tarmac, bedding, hardcore and a fly ash capping, as described in 5.2 above. Below the fly ash was a 0.4m thick deposit of mixed loose demolition rubble (**05**), presumably resulting from the demolition of the dye works.

At the north side of the trench were two substantial reinforced concrete ground beams, serving as foundations for the former college building. These were encountered at a depth of c. 0.5m, and had been cut through the fly ash and into the natural clay, removing all remains in the northern 5.4m of the trench.

The fragmentary remains of a floor surface (**07**) and a drain (**08**) were observed at a depth of 3m. Both appeared to be constructed from hand-made bricks bonded with white lime mortar. The brick floor was built directly onto the natural clay (**09**), and the drain was cut into the clay (Plate 6).



Plate 6: Trench 1 looking northwest

5.4. Trench 2

This trench measured 12m by 2.1m and was located to the east of trench 1, at the northern edge of the car park, located to examine the northern half of Town Mill (Figure 4). It was covered with tarmac, bedding and hardcore as described in 5.2, but the fly ash capping did not extend to this area, presumably as it was at the base of the slope above to the north.

Below the hardcore layer was the same concrete ground beam encountered at the northern side of trench 1, extending across the entire length of the trench. A further ground beam was encountered to the north of this, also running along the length of the trench. A manhole lay at the east end of the trench, and a second at the west end with an electricity cable entering it from the south. Between the two beams was a 1.5m wide and 9.3m long gap which was excavated to a depth of c. 1.9m bgl (Plate 7).



Plate 7: Ground beams in trench 2, looking east

A 1.1m high section of brick wall (**11**) was encountered half way along the trench, extending northwest for 1.2m. It was two courses wide and built from hand-made bricks with white lime mortar. The wall had been truncated at both ends by the concrete ground beams (Plate 8).



Plate 8: Wall 11, looking southwest

The wall was buried within a mixed loose demolition rubble backfill (**10**). Natural ground was not reached in this trench due to the confined nature of the working area.

5.5. Trench 3

This trench measured 15m by 3.5m and was located to the south of trench 2, and to the southeast of trench 1, located to examine the place where the mapping suggested a waterwheel pit to be located within the former Town Mill (Figure 3).

At the northwest end of the trench a substantial stone wall (**12**) was encountered at a depth of 1.8m, the position of which matched the external wall of Town Mill. Immediately to the southeast of this wall were a series of stone walls forming the waterwheel pit. The walls were built from square and rectangular stone blocks of varying dimensions. The upper surviving portions of these walls lay at a depth of 3m to 3.2m below the current ground level. The walls were able to be recorded to a depth of 4.1m bgl (the upper 1m of the walls), at which point constant flooding meant that the base of the wheel pit was not observed (Plate 9).



Plate 9: Flooding during excavation, looking north

Wall **13** abutted wall **12** at its southeast side, and contained a stone arch running below wall **12** to the northwest, forming the start of the tailrace culvert. Within the trench 2.4m width of the arch was visible, with the top of the voussoirs c. 1m below the top of wall **13** (Plate 10).



Plate 10: Walls 12, 13 and 14, looking northwest

One of the visible voussoirs appeared to be the tallest, suggesting that it was the keystone. If so, this lay towards the southwest edge of the trench, some 2.1m from the northeast side of the arch, suggesting a full width of c. 4m (Plate 11).



Plate 11: Voussoirs in wall 13, looking northwest

Wall **14** formed the northeast wall of the wheel pit, and wall **16** the southwest wall. Only a short section of the southwest wall was visible, running northwest from the headrace wall **17** for c. 1.5m, at which point it turned southwest into the trench edge, widening the wheel pit (Plate 12).



Plate 12: Wall 16 turning back into the trench edge, sluice gate housing visible, looking southwest

Two larger stone blocks were observed within the northeast wall **14**, to either side of the central point of the wall. Although heavily truncated it was felt that this formed the remains of the housing for the central axle (Plate 13).



Plate 13: Larger block in wall 14, possibly part of axle housing, looking east

Observed at the southeast end of both walls **14** and **16**, and opposite each other, were two narrow vertical grooves carved into the stone blocks. These lay just beyond the headrace and were likely the housing for a sluice gate (Plates **12** and **14**).



Plate 14: sluice gate housing in wall 14, looking east

At the southeast side of the trench walls **15** and **17** formed the sides of the headrace. These angled inwards from the wheel pit walls, narrowing the entrance to the headrace from 3.5m in the wheel pit to 2.6m wide just inside the headrace, before widening again to the southeast, creating an hourglass shape in plan (Plate 15).



Plate 15: Wheel pit and head race, looking north

The headrace was also stone culverted but the arched culver roof was removed during the remediation works. Although the base of the wheel pit was not reached it is possible that the base of the headrace was encountered. Flooding meant that this could not be observed but the plant operator stated that in the headrace his bucket was scraping what felt more like a solid surface than compacted rubble. This was at a depth of c. 4.8m.

The wheel pit had been infilled with a loose mixed demolition rubble (**06**). It was not possible to bottom this deposit but it was excavated to c. 3m below the water level, or 7.1m below the current surface of the car park. Above infill 06 was a further infilling deposit of rubble and refuse (**18**). This was c. 1.2m in thickness, infilling from the top of the wheel pit to the top of the external mill wall. This contained a large quantity of shredded plastic, suggesting it was deposited no earlier than the 1950s.

Above deposit **18** was 1.8m to 2m of the compact fly ash **04**, with hardcore, bedding and tarmac above (Plate 16).



Plate 16: Overburden and fly ash capping, looking west

5.6. Finds Summary

No artefacts were recovered from any of the trenches. The overburden contained a mixture of rubble and 20th century material.

No material suitable for environmental analysis was recovered from any of the trenches.

6. Discussion

6.1. Reliability of Field Investigation

The results of the field investigation are considered to be reliable as the project was conducted in accordance with the methodology outlined above and any subsequent results confirmed and signed off by GMAAS.

6.2. Objectives and Results

The investigation can be seen to have fulfilled its aims and objectives by assessing the potential for archaeological remains, determining that construction of the former college had removed most of the remains across the site, and recording those deeper remains of the water wheel pit that were revealed during remediation works.

6.3. Interpretation

Although the water wheel pit had survived, it was too deep to allow safe access for recording and so had to be recorded from the top of the trench during a watching brief.

Part of the external stone mill wall survived, with the walls for the wheel pit c. 1.2m to 1.4m lower than the external wall, suggesting that it may have been housed in a partial basement. From northwest to southeast the wheel pit was 6.1m in length, or almost exactly 20'. Although the full extent of the wheel pit was not revealed, the presence of the tailrace culvert voussoirs and possible keystone suggest a 4m wide culvert with 0.5m between the edge of the culvert and the northeast wheel pit wall. This would suggest total dimensions for the wheel pit of 6.1m by 5m, or 20' by 16.5'. At the southeast side of the wheel pit the southwest wall stepped back in, reducing its width to 3.5m, with the sluice gate housing just beyond it. This would reduce the maximum possible dimensions of the wheel to 4.8m by 5m, or roughly 15.5' diameter by 16.5' width. Additionally, the position of the possible axle housing was located almost exactly at the centre point between the tailrace entrance and the point where the southwest wall stepped back inwards.

If this wheel size is accurate then it would suggest that the base of the wheel was 2.4m below the axle housing. This was located c. 0.6m below the surviving top level of the waterwheel wall, or at a depth of c. 3.6m bgl. In turn this would place the base of the wheel at c. 6m bgl.

The possible axle housing was suggested by the two larger blocks observed within the northeast wall, and the position of this structure in the centre of the main wheel pit. The wall at this point had been heavily damaged, but this may be due to the removal of the cast iron axle housing prior to demolition.

The height of water exiting the headrace was too low in comparison to the wheel position for it to have been an overshot or backshot wheel. An undershot wheel would be unusual for the late 18th century, and would also require very little clearance between the base of the wheel pit and the bottom of the wheel itself. This did not appear to be the case on site, with the base of the pit not reached at 6.5m.

The water exited the headrace at a height of c. 4.8m bgl, and the wheel centre was at 3.6m bgl. This suggests that the water was exiting the headrace and hitting the wheel 1.2m below its centre point. Although unusual for a standard breastshot wheel, where the water exits the headrace at the midpoint of the wheel, with a stone or wooden 'breast' below, it would fit with a low breastshot wheel that used water hitting the wheel below its midpoint.

The tailrace was intact at the point it exited the wheel pit. Its position is shown on the 1851 mapping, labelled as 'covered'. Its line continues to be visible on mapping as a trackway beside the river until the 1960s. The stretch of covered headrace is still traceable to the immediate west of the site, as the short access road into the western car park.

6.4. Conclusions

All remains encountered within the investigation area have been examined and recorded to the fullest extent allowed by the circumstances.

The remains of the Town Mill water wheel pit were recorded in order to mitigate its loss during remedial works.

The remainder of the site appeared to have been heavily truncated by the construction of the college in the 1960s and therefore it is recommended that no further field investigation will be required within the site boundary.

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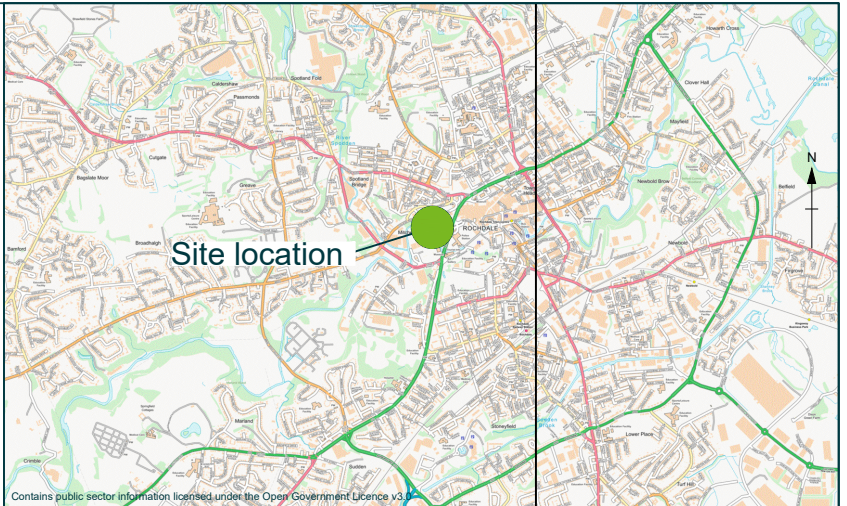
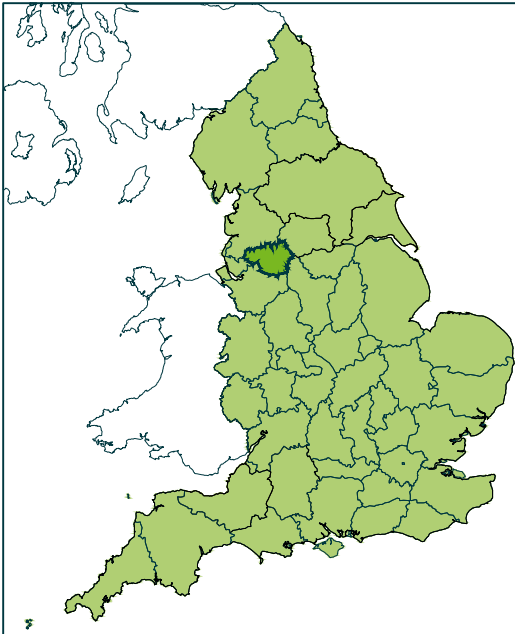
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The excavation was conducted by Graham Mottershead and Ollie Cook, and the watching brief carried out by Paula Whittaker. The report was written and illustrated by Sarah Mottershead, and edited by Graham Mottershead who also managed the project.

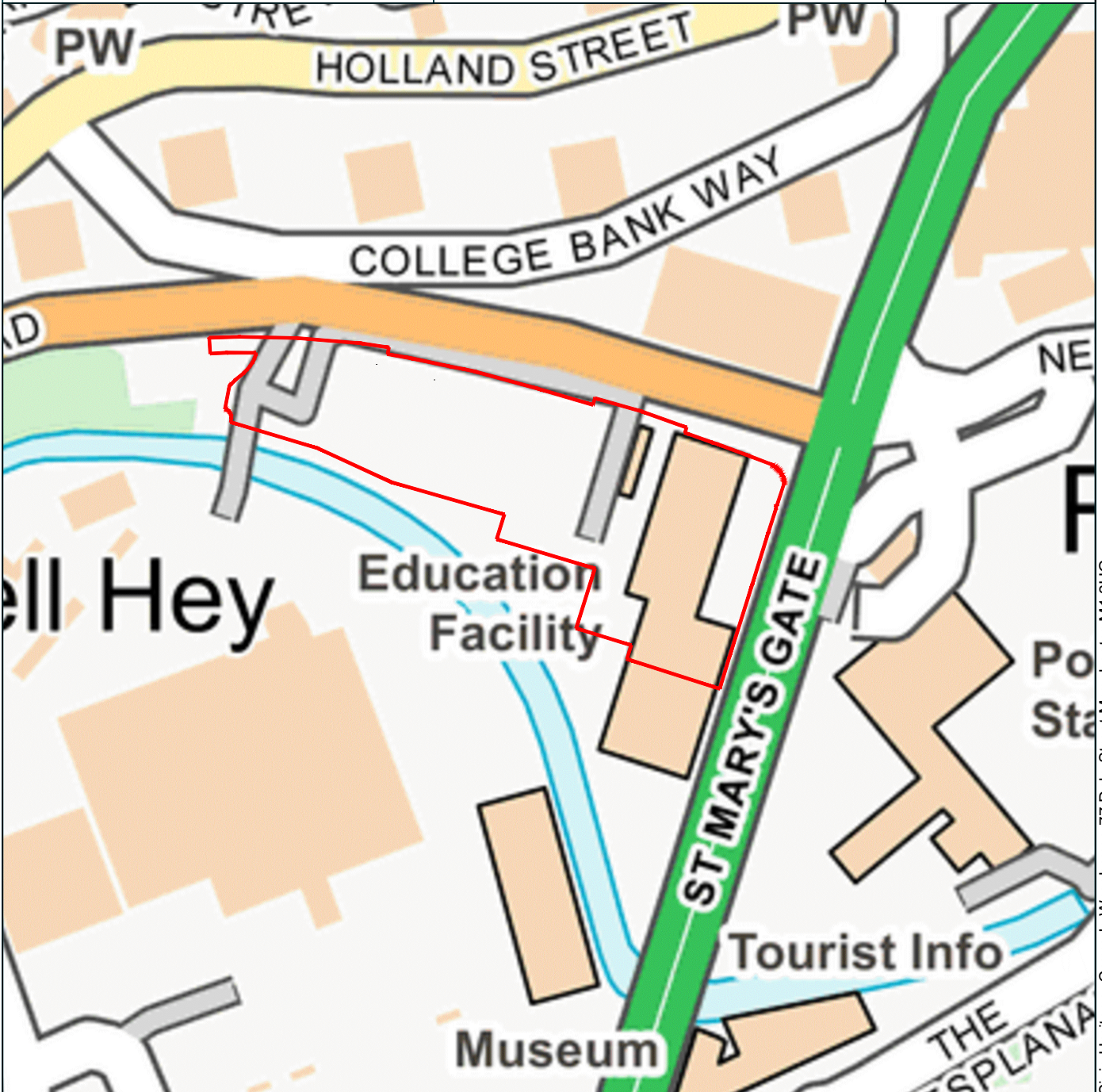
Appendix 1: Figures

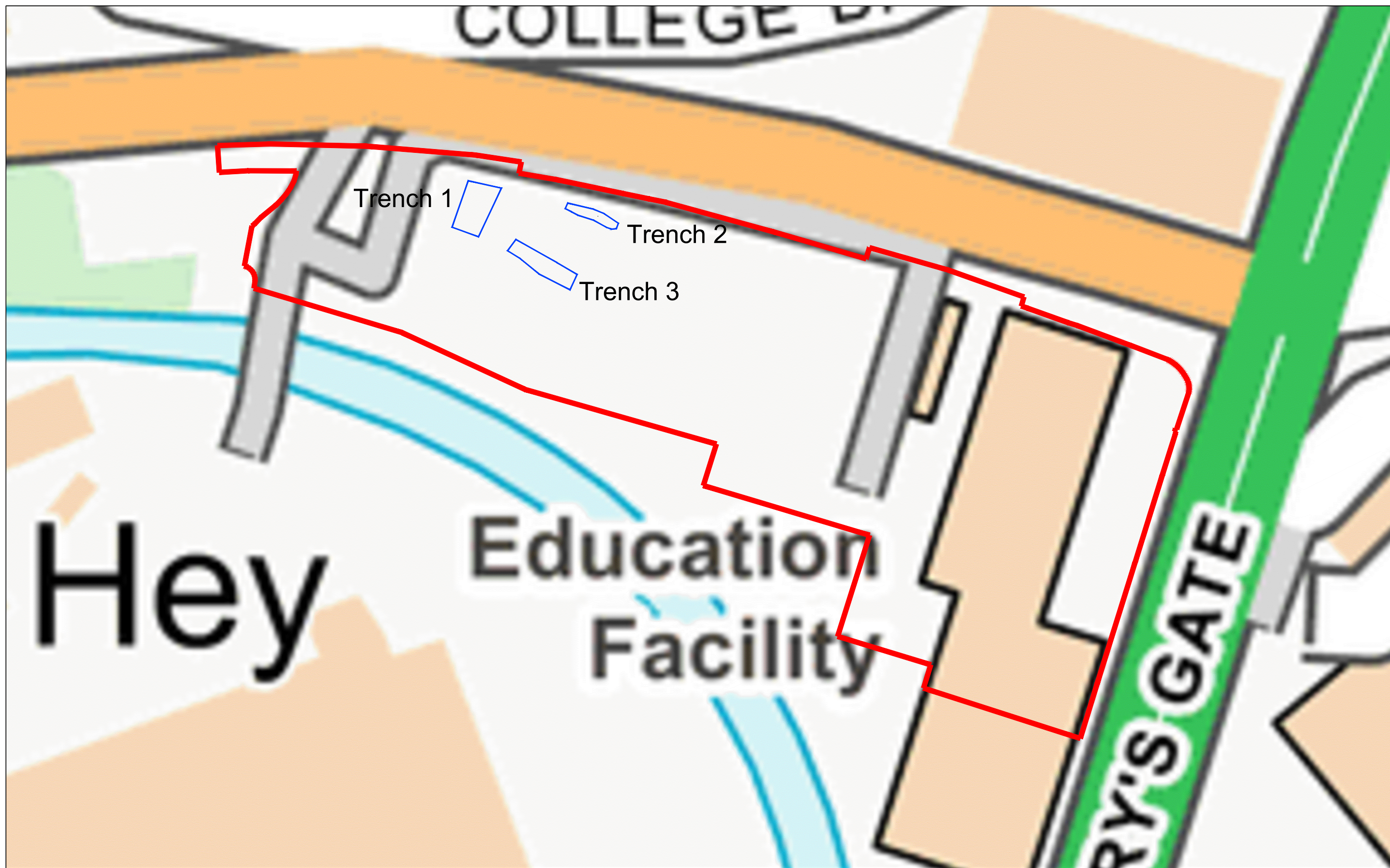
- Figure 1: Site location
- Figure 2: Trench location
- Figure 3: Plan of trench 1 with contexts and levels annotated
- Figure 4: Plan of trench 2 with contexts and levels annotated
- Figure 5: Plan of trench 3 with contexts and levels annotated
- Figure 6: Trenches superimposed onto OS mapping of 1851

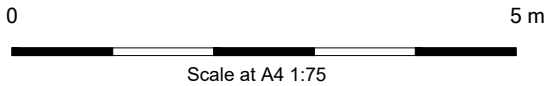
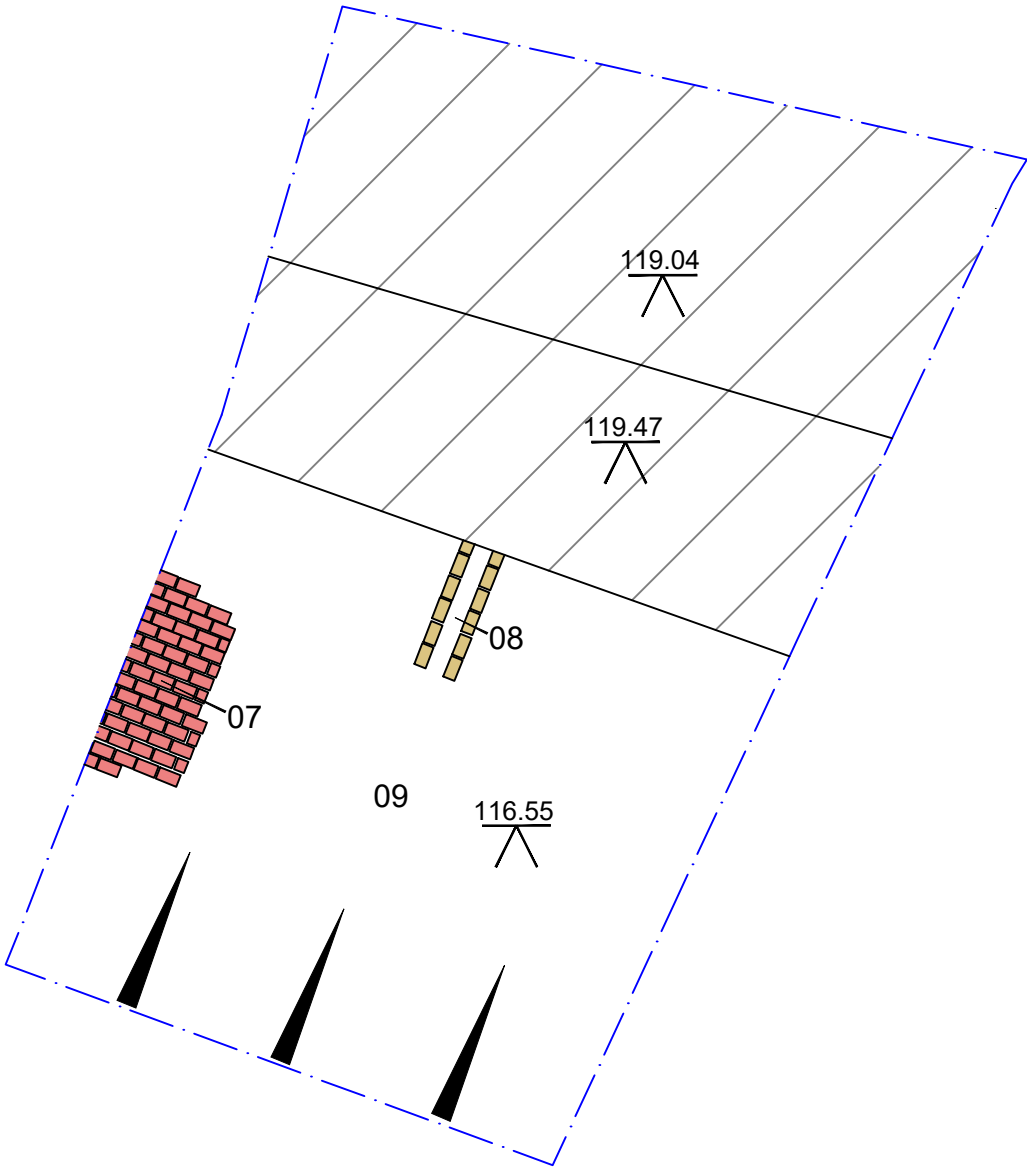


Hopwood Hall College
Project Code: 61082
Figure 1: site location

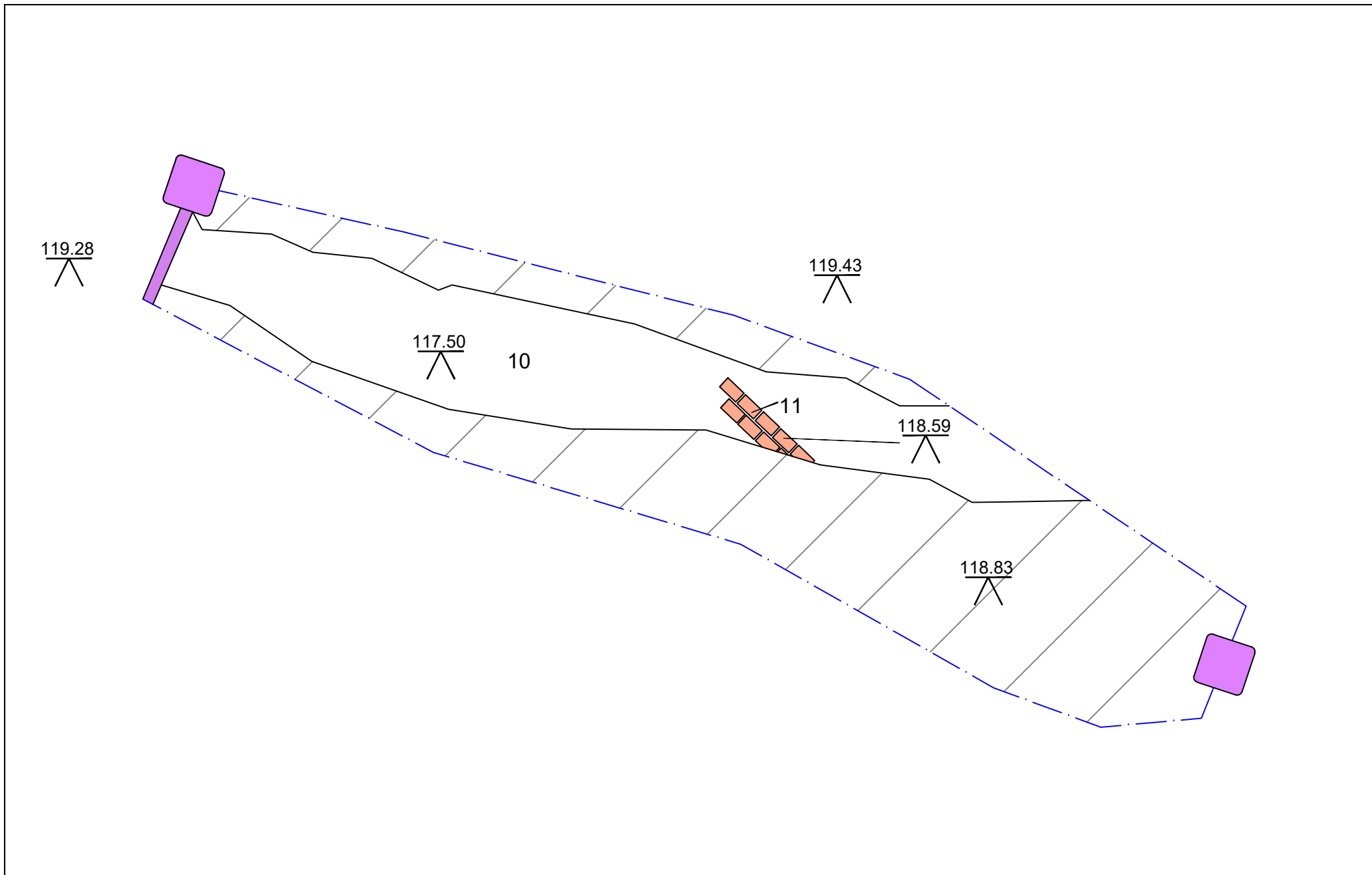
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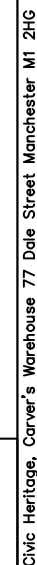


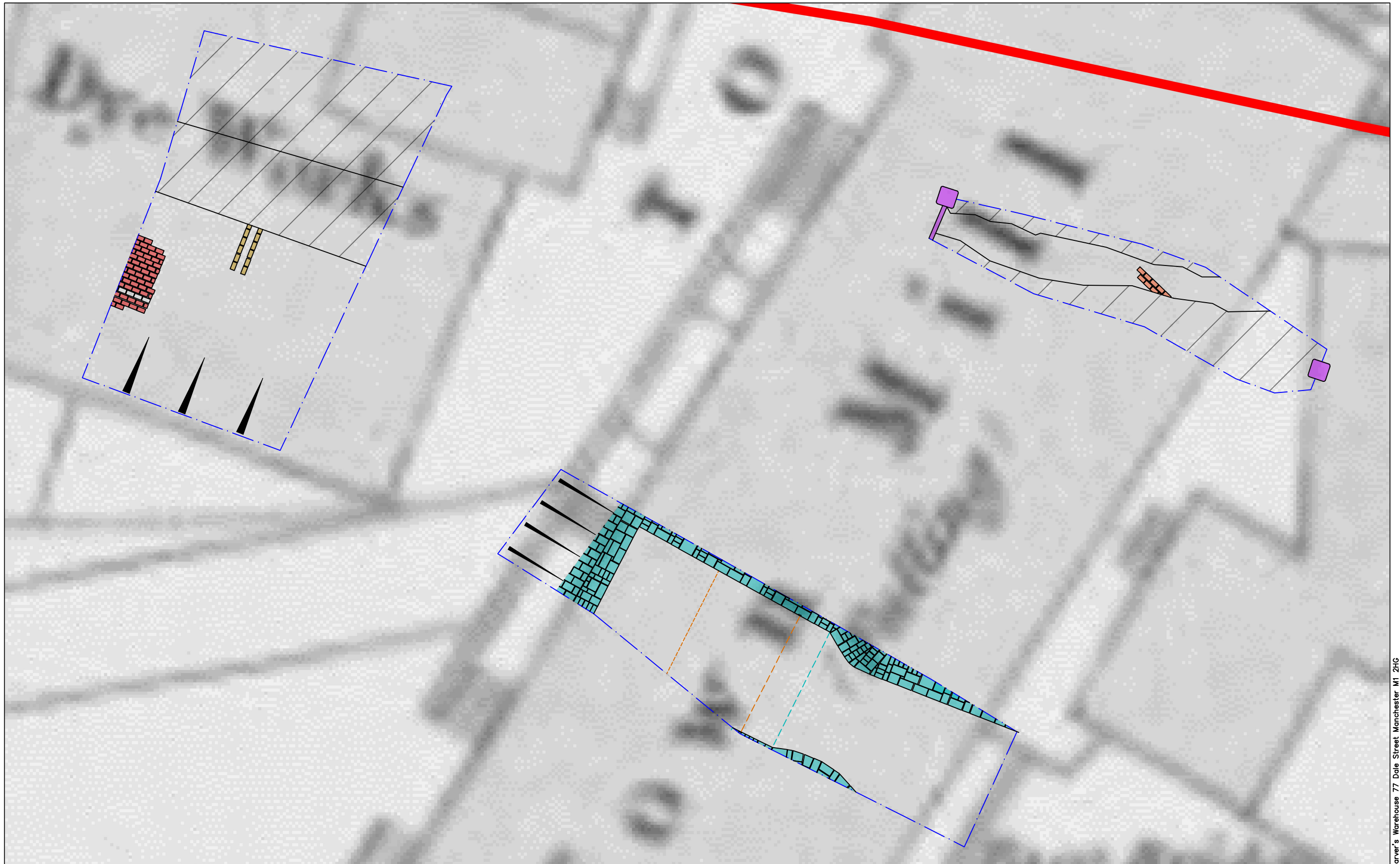




- Key:
- Brick Floor
 - Brick Drain
 - Concrete
 - Limit of Excavation







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