



**7 – 9 Lower
Hillgate,
Stockport,
Greater Manchester**

**Archaeological
Investigation**



Oxford Archaeology North

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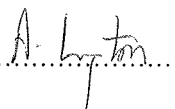
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SUMMARY

Guinness Northern Counties has obtained full planning permission (no DC045885) and Conservation Area Consent for the redevelopment of a site on the eastern side of Lower Hillgate in Stockport (centred on NGR SJ 89733 90436). Development proposals allow for the demolition of an existing property at 7-9 Lower Hillgate, and the construction of 13 new flats with a roof terrace and office accommodation at ground and basement levels. The site lies on the south-eastern fringe of the medieval core of Stockport, a short distance to the south-west of St Mary's Church and, until the early nineteenth century, on the principal route into Stockport from the south.

In order to secure archaeological interests, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council attached a condition to planning permission that required an appropriate programme of archaeological works to be carried out in advance of development. In the first instance, this comprised a desk-based study and assessment of the extant building, which was undertaken by OA North during May 2011. The assessment concluded that the site has some potential to contain remains of archaeological interest, including two undercrofts. The presence of buried archaeological remains was confirmed during the monitoring of the demolition programme in September 2011, when removal of modern concrete surfacing exposed a small area containing a buried soil horizon associated with fragments of post-medieval pottery and brick-built structural remains.

Following consultation with the Assistant County Archaeologist for Greater Manchester, it was recommended that the deposits identified should be subject to full archaeological excavation and recording in advance of development. In addition, pending the availability of access, it was recommended that a measured survey of the two undercrofts should be compiled.

The recommended archaeological excavation was carried out in September 2011, and recorded a vaulted brick-built culvert that channels a watercourse known locally as the Tin Brook. Re-deposited soil horizons, containing an important assemblage of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century pottery, and deposits of natural clay and sandstone that had been disturbed during the construction of the culvert, were also exposed during the excavation. A substantial sandstone wall of probable post-medieval date was also revealed.

Evidence for brick-built undercroft structures behind those fronting Lower Hillgate was also observed. The earliest of these was of probable late eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century date, and was heavily truncated by the insertion of at least three barrel-vaulted cellars, which appeared to have been constructed during the mid-nineteenth century. These were remodelled substantially prior to the turn of the twentieth century, and were seemingly used, at least in part, for storage up until the late twentieth century.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) would like to thank David Roper and Denis Morris of CSC Construction Ltd for commissioning and supporting the project on behalf of Guinness Northern Counties. Thanks are also expressed to Andrew Myers of the Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit for his advice and guidance.

The excavation was carried out by Alastair Vannan and Jon Onraet, and the investigation of the undercrofts was undertaken by Chris Wild and Graham Mottershead. The report was compiled by Alastair Vannan and Chris Wild, and the illustrations were produced by Mark Tidmarsh. The project was managed by Ian Miller, who also carried out the documentary research and edited the report.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 Guinness Northern Counties obtained full planning permission (no DC045885) for the redevelopment of a site on the eastern side of Lower Hillgate in Stockport, Greater Manchester (centred on NGR SJ 89733 90436). Development proposals allowed for the demolition of an existing property at 7-9 Lower Hillgate, and the construction of 13 new flats with a roof terrace and office accommodation at ground and basement levels.
- 1.1.2 In order to secure archaeological interests, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council attached a condition to planning permission that required an appropriate programme of archaeological works to be carried out in advance of development. In May 2011, Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) was commissioned by CSC Construction Ltd, acting on behalf of Guinness Northern Counties, to produce the required Written Scheme of Investigation (OA North 2011a) and a subsequent desk-based study of the development site, together with an assessment of the standing building (OA North 2011b).
- 1.1.3 The desk-based study concluded that the site lies within a part of Stockport that has some potential to contain remains of archaeological interest, including two post-medieval undercrofts. The potential for sub-surface remains of archaeological interest was confirmed during the monitoring of the demolition programme in September 2011, when a buried soil horizon associated with fragments of post-medieval pottery and brick-built structural remains was observed.
- 1.1.4 Following consultation with the Assistant County Archaeologist for Greater Manchester, who provides planning advice to Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council, it was recommended that the deposits identified should be subject to full archaeological excavation and recording in advance of development. In addition, pending the availability of access, it was recommended that a measured survey of the two undercrofts should be compiled. OA North was commissioned to undertake this work and, following the compilation of a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI; *Appendix 1*) the excavation was carried out in September 2011. The survey of the undercrofts was undertaken in November 2011.

1.2 LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

- 1.2.1 **Location:** the site is located to the south-west of Stockport town centre (Fig 1). Whilst being on the southern fringe of a region defined as the Manchester Conurbation (Countryside Commission 1998, 126), the site lies within the administrative district of Stockport Metropolitan Borough, which forms part of the county of Cheshire East.
- 1.2.2 The site (centred on NGR SJ 89733 90436) is situated on the eastern side of Lower Hillgate (Plate 1), and is bounded to the north and east by Rostron Brow and Harvey Street respectively. The site lies within the Hillgate Conservation Area, which retains much of its medieval street layout and is characterised by a continuous frontage of buildings, restricted width of streets, and higher terraces of land on either side of the principal thoroughfare.
- 1.2.3 The site lies astride a watercourse known variously as Tin Brook, Carr Brook and Hempshaw Brook (Collier 2006). The Hempshaw Brook rises in the Heavily area to the south-east of Stockport town centre, and flows north-westwards to Stockport Cemetery. In the vicinity of Shawcross Street, west of St Thomas' Park, the watercourse is joined by Brook House Fold Brook and, with an increased flow rate, continues north-north-west to the Carr Valley. Known locally at this point as the Carr Brook, the watercourse flows north-westwards beneath Wellington Street, where it becomes the Tin Brook (*ibid*).
- 1.2.4 **Geology:** the solid geology of the area comprises Carboniferous sedimentary material and a series of Permo-Triassic rocks, consisting mainly of New Red Sandstone (Hall *et al* 1995, 8). The overlying drift incorporates Pleistocene boulder clays of glacial origin, and sands, gravels, and clays of fluvial/lacustrine origin (Ordnance Survey Geological Survey 1970).



Plate 1: Aerial view of the study area prior to demolition, marked by the arrow

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 EXCAVATION

- 2.1.1 An area measuring approximately 7.5 x 4m along the south-eastern boundary of the development site was subject to full archaeological excavation and recording. A culvert providing a conduit for the Tin Brook was exposed within this area, forming a division between the eastern and western portions of the excavation (Figs 9 and 10).
- 2.1.2 A detailed stratigraphic record was compiled of all deposits and archaeological features, using a system adapted from that used by the Centre for Archaeology Service of English Heritage, with accompanying graphic documentation (plans, sections, and digital photographs and black and white print photographs, both of individual contexts and overall site shots from standard view points). Photography was undertaken with 35mm cameras on archivable black-and-white print film, all frames including a visible, graduated metric scale. Digital photography was used extensively throughout the course of the fieldwork for presentation purposes. Photographic records were maintained on photographic *pro-forma* sheets.
- 2.1.3 All work was carried out in accordance with the Excavation Written Scheme of Investigation (*Appendix 1*), and was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures provided by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), and generally accepted best practice.
- 2.1.4 **Finds:** finds' recovery and sampling programmes were carried out in accordance with best practice (UKIC 1998) and following current Institute for Archaeologists' guidelines.

2.2 BUILDING SURVEY

- 2.2.1 The building survey aimed to provide an understanding of the historic fabric and key architectural features of the undercrofts, and to provide an archive record of the structures prior to redevelopment. It has provided a drawn, photographic and textual record of the building to English Heritage (2006) Level I/II standard. Records were made of all principal building elements, as well as any features of historical or architectural significance. Particular attention was also paid to the relationship between the earliest and latest parts of the structures, especially those that would show their development and any alterations. These records are essentially descriptive, although interpretation is carried out on site as required. All work was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (*Appendix 1*), and was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures provided by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), and generally accepted best practice.

2.3 ARCHIVE

- 2.3.1 The results of all archaeological work carried out will form the basis for a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with current guidelines (English Heritage 2006; UKIC 1990). The original record archive of the project will be deposited with Stockport Museum. Copies of the report will be sent to Stockport Planning department, the Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit and the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record..
- 2.3.2 The Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS) online database *Online Access to Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) will be completed as part of the archiving phase of the project.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1.1 An understanding of the historical background of a site provides the local context within which the extant structures can be assessed archaeologically. The following section provides a summarised chronological account of the development of the study area, and has been compiled largely from the desk-based assessment of the site that was produced by OA North (2011b). The summary focuses specifically on those periods that are of most relevance to the results of the excavation.

Period	Date Range
Palaeolithic	30,000 – 10,000 BC
Mesolithic	10,000 – 3,500 BC
Neolithic	3,500 – 2,200 BC
Bronze Age	2,200 – 700 BC
Iron Age	700 BC – AD 43
Romano-British	AD 43 – AD 410
Early Medieval	AD 410 – AD 1066
Late Medieval	AD 1066 – AD 1540
Post-medieval	AD 1540 – c1750
Industrial Period	cAD1750 – 1901
Modern	Post-1901

Table 1: Summary of British archaeological periods and date ranges

- 3.1.2 **Medieval period:** evidence for early medieval activity in the region as a whole is drawn largely from place-names (Newman 1996), although there is little firm evidence for activity in the area during this period. Stockport is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086, although its name may have derived from the Old English and could be translated as ‘market place’ (port) and ‘hamlet’ (stoc), hinting at an early medieval origin (Dodgson 1970, 295). It has been suggested that the ‘stoc’ element may indicate that it was a dependent settlement within one of the several local manors during the late Saxon/early Norman period (Arrowsmith 1997).
- 3.1.3 Stockport developed as a centre of local importance during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. There is evidence to indicate that there was a castle in the town by the 1170s, whilst the parish church of St Mary’s was also probably founded by the late twelfth century. The importance of the town may have derived in part as a crossing point of the river Mersey, which was afforded via Lancashire Bridge (Heginbotham 1882).
- 3.1.4 The focus of medieval settlement was on the Market Place, and the adjoining streets of Churchgate, Millgate, Hillgate and the Underbanks. Hillgate and Millgate are both referred to specifically as the site of burgages in the fifteenth century, and it seems likely that they existed as principal thoroughfares prior to the borough becoming established (Arrowsmith 1997, 42). Based on this evidence, it seems likely that the Scheme Area would have been occupied in the medieval period.

- 3.1.5 **Post-medieval development:** by the 1660s, the population of Stockport had reached between 1400 and 1500. The earliest map of the town during this period dates from c 1680 (Plate 2), which essentially depicts the medieval layout of the town, although the settlement had undoubtedly expanded during the post-medieval period.

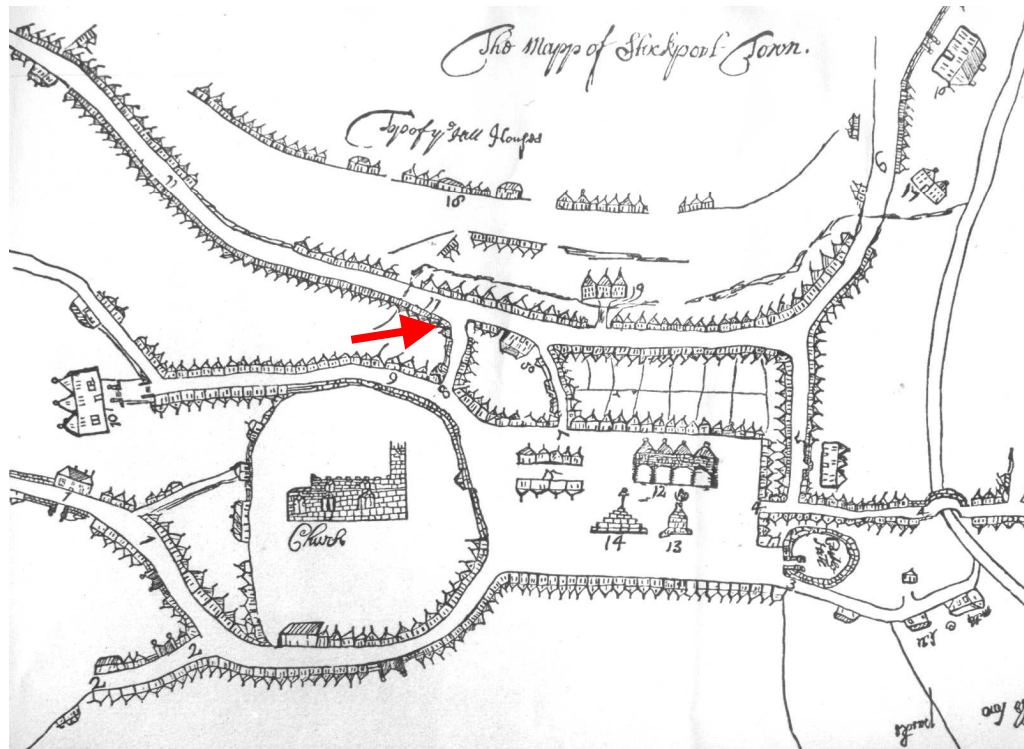


Plate 2: 'Mappe of Stockport Town', dating from c 1680, with arrow marking the approximate location of the Scheme Area

- 3.1.6 **Eighteenth-century expansion:** Stockport emerged as one of the pioneering centres for the region's factory-based textile industry, which was to have a dramatic effect on the economy and landscape of the North West. A plan of the township produced by William Tunncliffe in 1770 (Plate 3) shows the land and properties owned by Sir George Warren, the lord of the manor. Comparison of this survey with the map of c 1680 shows that much of the eighteenth-century expansion of the town had been focused along Chestergate and Hillgate (Plate 3). However, this survey provides little detail of the Scheme Area, other than indicating that it was occupied by buildings, and that these were not owned by Sir George Warren.
- 3.1.7 A boom in the cotton industry in the 1790s resulted in numerous cotton mills becoming established in the town, as Stockport emerged as a leading regional centre for cotton production (Calladine and Fricker 1993). This rapid expansion of the town's industrial base was noted by John Byng in 1790, who 'walked over the stones of Stockport, which increases hourly'. This was also reflected in the rate growth of the local population and the associated demand for new houses; as John Aikin noted in the early 1790s '...houses could not be built fast enough for the demand' (Aikin 1795, 446).

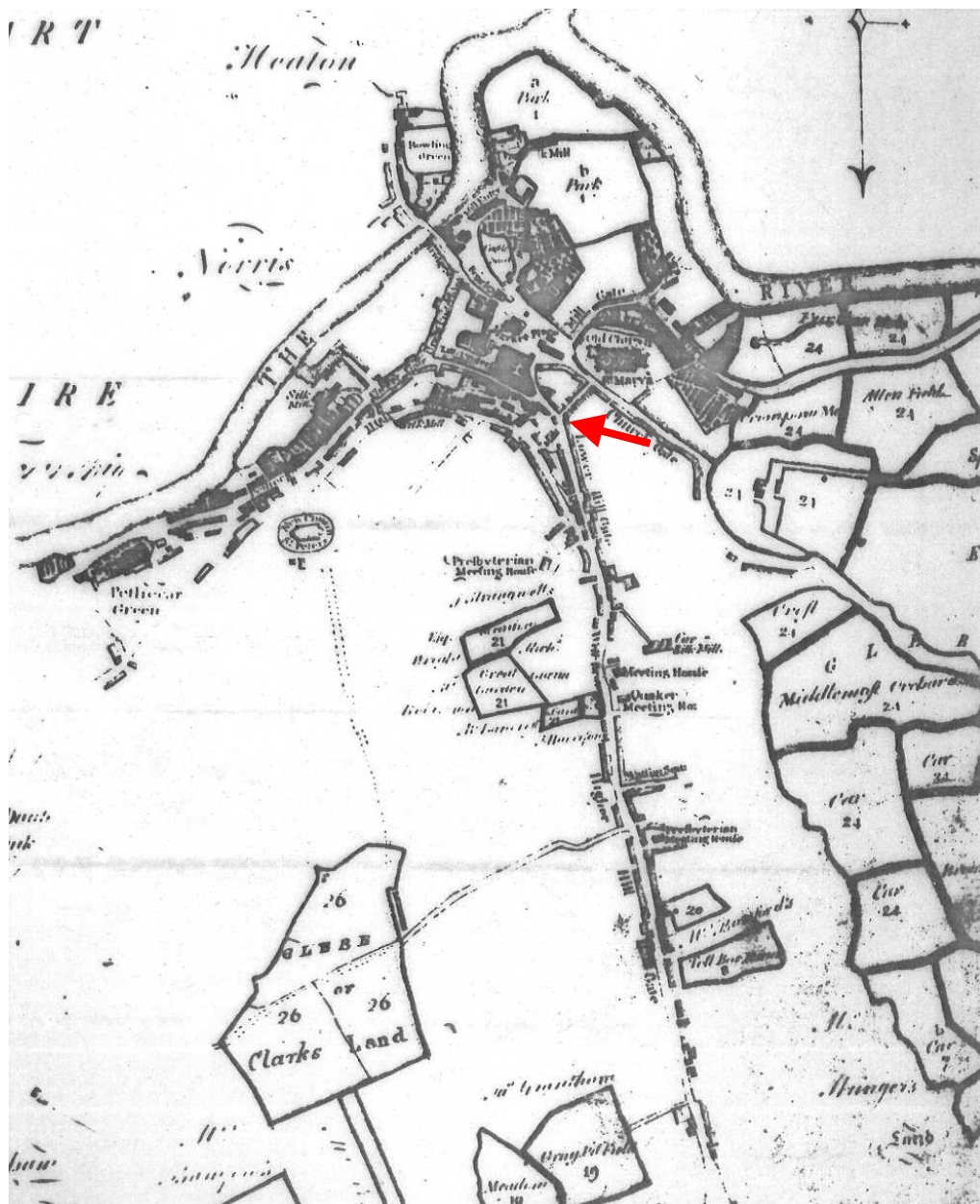


Plate 3: 'Map of Stockport' produced by William Tunncliffe in 1770, with arrow marking the Scheme Area

- 3.1.8 The rapid growth of the town resulted in the creation of numerous new streets away from the historic routeways. Hillgate in particular appears to have been a focus for development during this period, and a succession of new streets was laid out at right angles to the main thoroughfare. The resultant layout of the town in the early part of the nineteenth century is depicted clearly on Thornton's *Map of Stockport*, which was published in 1824 (Plate 4).

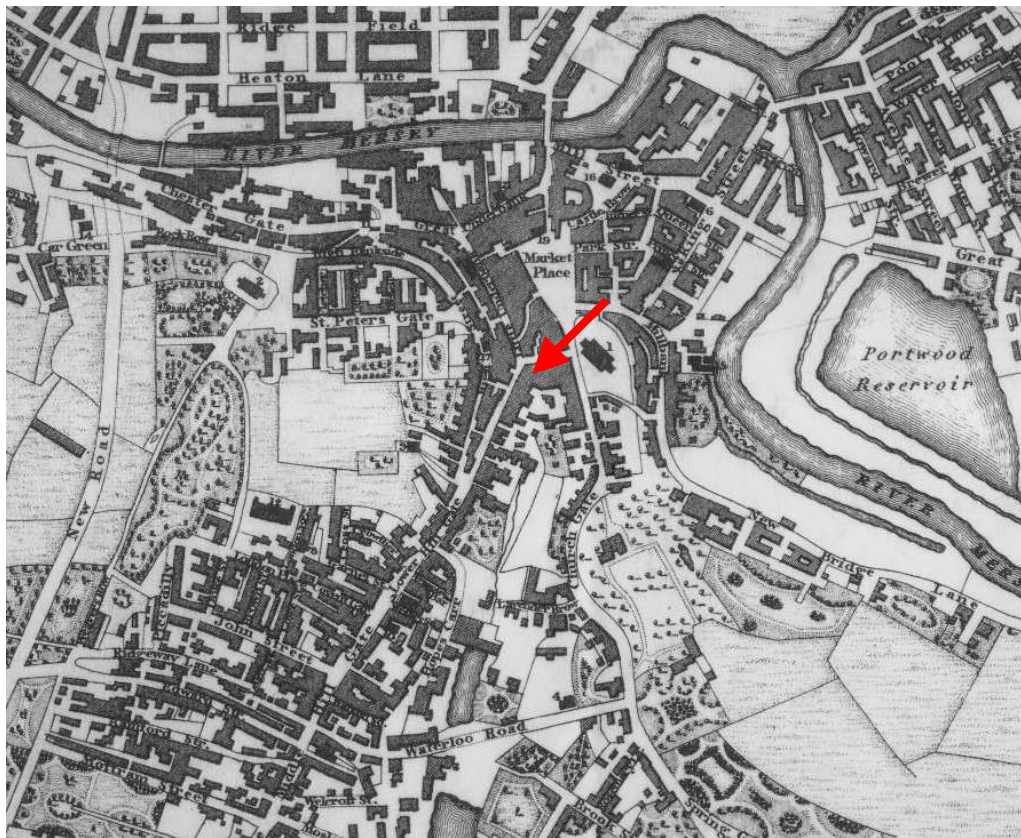


Plate 4: Thornton's 'Map of Stockport' of 1824, with arrow marking the Scheme Area

- 3.1.9 The importance of Hillgate was eclipsed by the construction of Wellington Road in 1824-5, and subsequently by the construction of the railway in 1840-2 (Heginbotham 1882). In consequence of this shift of focus, the pace and intensity of development along Hillgate was somewhat reduced, and is an important factor in the survival of a significant number of its historic buildings.

3.2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCHEME AREA

- 3.2.1 One of the earliest accurate surveys of Lancashire was that produced by William Yates in 1786. Whilst Yates' map was produced at a scale too small to yield any meaningful detail of individual buildings, it does indicate that buildings occupied the site of 7-9 Lower Hillgate by the late eighteenth century (Plate 5).



Plate 5: Extract from Yates' 'Map of the County Palatine of Lancaster' of 1786, with arrow marking the approximate location of the Scheme Area

- 3.2.2 The next available map of Stockport is that produced by Thornton in 1824 (Plate 4). This similarly shows the Scheme Area to have been developed entirely, forming part of a block of buildings along the eastern side of Lower Hillgate, although detail of individual buildings is again lacking. A similar layout of the town is depicted on Hennet's *Map of the County Palatine of Lancaster* of 1830 (Plate 6), although again meaningful detail of individual buildings is lacking due to the scale at which the map was produced.
- 3.2.3 During the first half of the nineteenth century, Dr Henry Heginbotham, the leading historian for Stockport and major of the town in 1867-8, was born at 7 Lower Hillgate. During this period, the ground floor of the building was a shop, with the upper floors occupied for residential purposes. In 1845, for instance, Dorothy Freakley is listed in a trade directory as a boot and shoemaker at 7 Lower Hillgate (Williams 1845, 18).
- 3.2.4 The first detailed survey of the Scheme Area is provided by the Ordnance Survey, which published a 6": 1 mile map of Stockport in 1848 (Plate 7), and a more detailed 5": 1 mile map in 1851 (Fig 2). The map of 1848 shows the area to have been developed intensively, with buildings infilling the plot between Lower Hillgate and Churchgate.



Plate 6: Extract from George Henet's 'Map of the County Palatine of Lancaster' of 1830, with arrow marking the approximate location of the Scheme Area

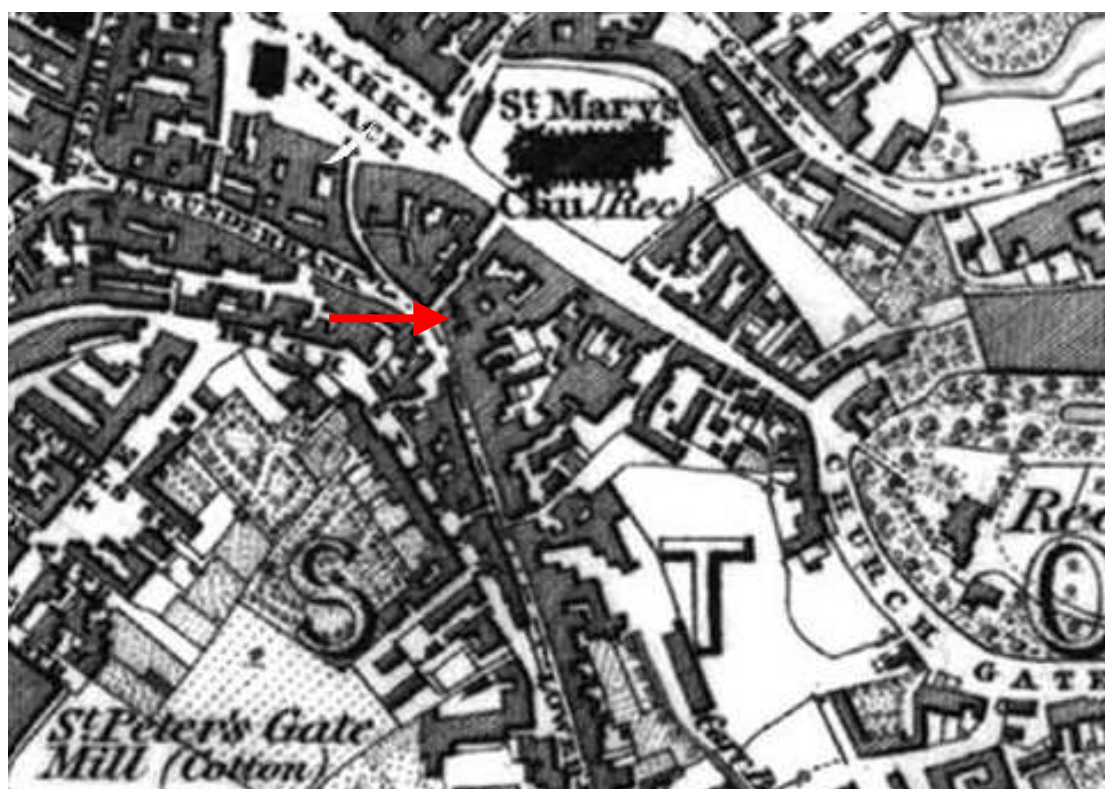


Plate 7: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 6": 1 mile map of 1848, with arrow marking the Scheme Area

- 3.2.5 The Ordnance Survey 5': 1 mile map of 1851 (Fig 2) shows the Lower Hillgate frontage to have been occupied by three contiguous buildings, with access to the rear afforded via a covered passage. Buildings are also shown to have occupied the Rostron Brow frontage, with a narrow covered alley leading to an enclosed yard that is annotated as Crooked Passage.
- 3.2.6 The configuration of buildings within the Scheme Area is shown as largely unchanged on the next edition of detailed Ordnance Survey mapping, surveyed in 1873 and published in 1882 (Fig 3). The subsequent edition of Ordnance Survey mapping, however, surveyed in 1893 and published in 1895 (Fig 4), shows that the Scheme Area had been subject to considerable remodelling. Whilst the footprint of 7-9 Lower Hillgate remains largely unchanged except for the infilling of the covered passage from the street frontage, the adjacent building in the south-eastern corner of the Scheme Area is shown to have been demolished. Similarly, the buildings to the rear of the Lower Hillgate frontage have also been cleared, together with the covered alley leading to Crooked Passage. This was presumably in preparation for the creation of Harvey Street, which is named on the Ordnance Survey map of 1910 (Fig 5). The detail provided by this map shows some slight changes to the buildings within the Scheme Area, focused on the southern boundary of the site.
- 3.2.7 The buildings occupying the Lower Hillgate frontage at this date are depicted in an historic photograph, dating to 1901-2 (Plate 8). This shows 7-9 Lower Hillgate to have comprised a four-storey building occupied by JC Arnfield, a manufacturing pharmaceutical chemist. The ground floor of the building incorporates a shop window frontage, indicative of its use as retail premises.
- 3.2.8 Entries in the available sequence of trade directories indicate that Arnfield established his business on Lower Hillgate during the 1880s, taking over the Kay Brothers concern; the Kays occupied 7-9 Lower Hillgate from at least the early 1870s, and are listed in a trade directory for 1872 as chemists and druggists (Worrall 1872, 91). According to a contemporary advertisement, which incorporates an engraving of the buildings (Plate 9), Arnfield specialised in the manufacture and sale of 'genuine drugs and chemicals, new remedies, etc'. He was also a supplier of surgical appliances, chemical apparatus and photographic apparatus (Slater 1893, 162; New Cheshire County News 1905, 139; New Cheshire County News 1910, 117). Arnfield sold the premises in 1913, and the site was occupied subsequently by the National Provincial Bank, as their first branch in Stockport. The bank is annotated on the Ordnance Survey 25": 1 mile map of 1922 (Plate 10), which shows the bank to have occupied the same building footprint as that shown of the Ordnance Survey map of 1910. The bank's occupancy was short-lived, however, and during the 1920s the building was taken over by Montague Burton Ltd, the clothiers.



Plate 8: Photograph showing 7-9 Lower Hillgate in 1901-2

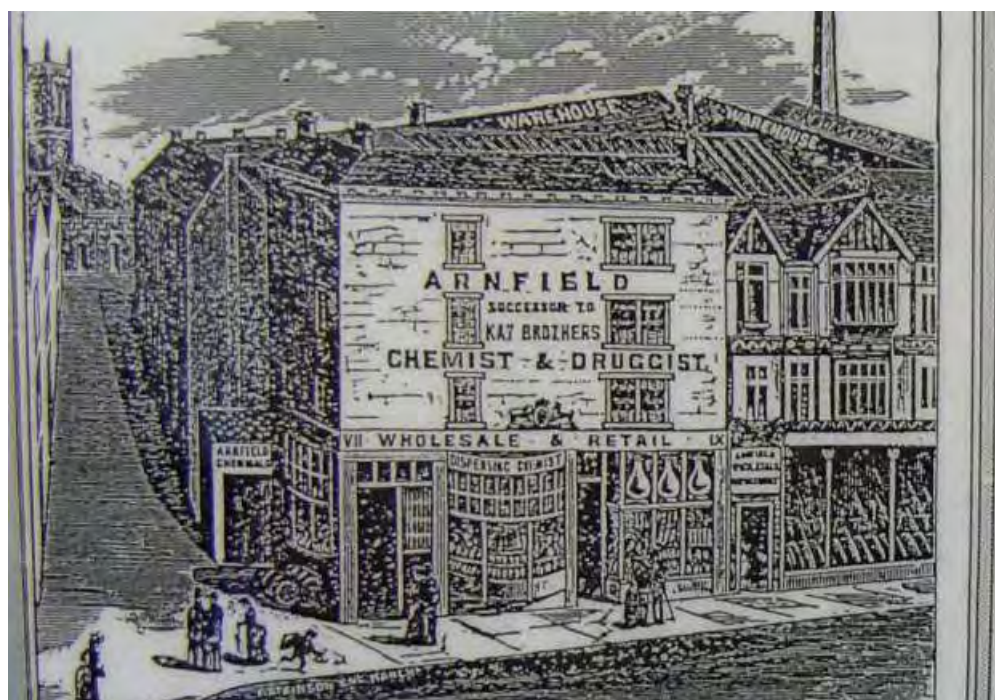


Plate 9: Late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century engraving of 7-9 Lower Hillgate



Plate 10: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 25": 1 mile map of 1922

- 3.2.9 Burton's remained as the occupants of 7-9 Lower Hillgate until the later 1960s, and was responsible for considerable remodelling of the building during their period of ownership. The detail provided by the Ordnance Survey map of 1936 (Fig 6) suggests that the southern part of the bank to the rear of the Lower Hillgate Street frontage was demolished, retaining only a boundary wall along the eastern side of the property. Access was seemingly afforded via a narrow passage from Lower Hillgate.
- 3.2.10 The next available edition of Ordnance Survey mapping, published in 1959 (Fig 7), shows a similar layout of buildings, although the structure between 9 and 11 Lower Hillgate, incorporating the narrow passage from the street frontage to the rear of the property, appears to have been rebuilt. A photograph of the building taken in 1963, however, shows the upper floor of 7-9 Lower Hillgate to have been demolished, leaving a single-storey shop (Plate 11). Whilst the fabric of the surviving ground floor is likely to have been the vestiges of the eighteenth-century building, a new shop-front window is shown to have been installed, further reducing the historic integrity of the building.
- 3.2.11 The subsequent edition of Ordnance Survey mapping, published in 1972, shows further remodelling of 7-9 Lower Hillgate (Fig 8), involving the construction of a new building. This redevelopment extended to the rear of the street frontage, along Rostron Brow, creating the structure that occupied the Scheme Area until 2011, when it was demolished. This building was occupied in the 1970s by the Newhall Discount Stores and, more recently became a restaurant and offices for a recruitment agency (Plate 12).



Plate 11: 7-9 Lower Hillgate in 1963, showing the upper floors of the building removed



Plate 12: Recent view of 7-9 Lower Hillgate prior to demolition in 2011

4. SUMMARY OF RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

- 4.1.1 The archaeological investigation of 7-9 Lower Hillgate comprised the excavation of a single area, measuring approximately 7.5 x 4m, along the south-eastern boundary of the site (Plate 13-14; Figs 9 and 10). The following section summarises the results obtained from the work. A culvert (**106**) bisected the area and formed a division between the eastern and western portions (Plate 13-14; Figs 9 and 10). The eastern portion was excavated fully and reduced to the level of the underlying natural deposits. However, the southern half of this eastern portion had clearly been disturbed prior to the excavation, resulting in the loss of any archaeological remains. Buried remains across the remainder of the site had similarly been destroyed during development works in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which included the construction of deep cellars.
- 4.1.2 The area to the west of the culvert was occupied partially by a stone wall (**107**), which reduced the space within which a mechanical excavator could operate and precluded the reduction of the exposed demolition infill to the level of the underlying natural deposits. This area was too deep to allow further reduction by hand, and the proximity of standing structures presented a risk of undermining.



*Plate 13: Pre-excavation overview of the excavation area, facing south-west. The culvert (**106**) runs across the centre of the site.*



Plate 14: Post-excavation overview of the excavation area, facing west.

4.2 RESULTS

4.2.1 **Natural deposits:** natural geological deposits were encountered in the eastern part of the excavated area (**108**; Fig 10), and comprised greyish-pink sandstone and sand (Plate 15). These deposits consisted of loose and mixed sand and stone, which might have resulted from disturbance or weathering, that overly directly solid and earthfast bedrock. Portions of solid sandstone bedrock were also exposed at the south-western corner of the excavation area (Fig 10; Plate 16).

4.2.2 **Stone Wall 107:** a sandstone wall (**107**) was encountered at the western side of the site (Plates 17 and 18; Fig 10). This wall comprised large, roughly squared, sandstone blocks that each measured up to 1m long by 0.56m wide and 0.4m high. Portions of two sides of the wall were exposed that measured, in total, 5.5m long, a maximum of 0.56m wide, and 1.77m high. The two sections were orientated north-north-west/south-south-east and east-north-east/west-south-west, and had been incorporated into the lower walls of the structures standing to the south and west (Plates 17 and 18). Parts of seven courses of the wall were exposed.



Plate 15: Mixed sand and sandstone underlying the eastern part of the site



Plate 16: Sandstone bedrock outcropping at the south-western corner of the excavation area



Plate 17: Wall 107 looking south-west



Plate 18: Wall 107 looking west

- 4.2.3 The wall foundations were not exposed entirely for health and safety considerations, although a sandstone block encountered at the base of the excavated section almost certainly represented a stepped foundation (Plate 19). The block appeared to have been reused from an earlier structure, as it featured a square recess, measuring approximately 0.4m square and 30mm deep, that had apparently been made redundant by the shaping of the block to form an approximate rounded right-angle. The shape of the recess was consistent with the profile of a large structural timber, and could perhaps have been intended to support the base of a timber upright. This may have formed part of a timber-framed superstructure, or an internal feature such as a gate or doorway, although corroborating evidence was lacking.



Plate 19: A worked stone stepping out at the base of wall 107

- 4.2.4 The wall was overlain by a mixed layer of soil and demolition rubble (**109**) that is likely to have been used as a levelling deposit, and which could have been subject to some disturbance as a result of successive phases of development of the site. However, the finds recovered from layer **109** were of a mid-eighteenth-century date (*Section 4.3 below*), suggesting that little disturbance had occurred after this date.
- 4.2.5 **Culvert 106:** a south-south-east/north-north-west-aligned culvert that contained flowing water was exposed across the centre of the excavated area (Plates 14, 20, and 21; Fig 10). This comprised vertical walls supporting a barrel-vaulted capping, and was constructed largely of hand-made bricks, with some limited use of sandstone, and was bonded with lime-based mortar, consistent with an eighteenth-century construction date. The culvert 3.96m wide and was exposed for a distance of 8m. The external faces of the walls had been obscured entirely by brick-built retaining walls. A rectangular aperture set into the crown of the culvert, exposed at the southern edge of the excavation area (Plate 21), is likely to have been an inspection chamber. The aperture had been blocked with a stone slab, over which lay a discrete deposit of clinker that had been used to infill the top of the chamber.



Plate 20: View of the interior of Culvert 106



Plate 21: The brick-built capping of culvert 106 and the associated retaining walls, looking south

- 4.2.6 The mechanical removal of demolition debris from beyond the area targeted for archaeological excavation exposed an adjoining section of the culvert. This ran at a slight angle from the northern end of the excavated section, and was aligned north-west/south-east (Plates 22-3).



Plate 22: An additional section of culvert 106 extending northwards from the excavation area, looking north-west



Plate 23: View through an aperture within the culvert revealing flowing water within

- 4.2.7 **Soil deposits 104 and 105:** the lower levels of brickwork that formed the buttresses of the culvert (106) were overlain by deposits of silty clay and sandy silt that formed a mixed mineral soil (Plate 24; Fig 9).



Plate 24: Soil deposit 104 overlying the eastern side of culvert 106, looking south-south-east

- 4.2.8 Although this soil was mixed, the date-range of the finds retrieved from the deposits (*Section 4.3 below*), and the decremental concentration of these finds within successively lower levels of the deposits, suggests that it represented a former soil horizon that was briefly disturbed and quickly re-deposited. This disturbance was almost certainly associated with ground preparation in advance of the construction of the culvert (106), which it sealed. The lower levels of the deposit became richer in clay, sand, and sandstone, and clearly included a higher proportion of re-deposited natural (108) than the higher levels, although this change in composition was graduated and no clear stratigraphic boundary existed between the soil-rich and clay/stone/sand-rich portions.
- 4.2.9 It is likely that this soil represents the ground surface that was present immediately prior to the construction of the culvert, and which was displaced during the cutting of the uniform channel that the culvert was built within. Following the construction of the brickwork, the upcast spoil from the channel cutting would then have been re-deposited to level the ground around the culvert. Therefore, although the soil is stratigraphically later than the culvert, it represented an earlier, undisturbed, soil horizon that pre-dated the construction of the culvert.
- 4.2.10 The portion of this deposit that occupied the extreme south-east corner of the excavation area had been disturbed during modern demolition work or construction ground works (Plate 24) and was not subject to excavation.

- 4.2.11 **Flagstone surface 101 and 102:** the demolition infill (109), mixed soil (106), and the western side of the culvert were all overlain by a layer of sand (103), which provided a bedding layer for two portions of flagstone flooring (Plates 13 and 25; Fig 9). The two surfaces were at a similar level and lay contiguous with each other, suggesting that they were contemporary, or that the difference in materials might have reflected modifications during the use of the surface. The larger flags (101) were very substantial slabs and measured up to 1.5m long and 0.92m wide, by 140mm thick. Conversely, the smaller flags (102) measured up to 0.48m long by 0.36m wide and 50mm thick. The overall area occupied by the surface, as exposed during the excavation, was approximately 10.85m².



Plate 25: Stone flags 101, in the foreground and 102 to the rear of the image. Looking west

4.3 THE FINDS

- 4.3.1 **Post-medieval Pottery:** some 156 sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered, most deriving from three well-stratified contexts (Table 1), although nearly a third was unstratified. In general, the fragments were in good condition, in an unabraded state, with several large, diagnostic sherds. The material comprised a quite tightly dated assemblage, with all but one vessel, a nineteenth-century white salt-glazed stoneware bottle, dating to a period between the late seventeenth and the middle of the eighteenth century, with nothing dating much beyond c 1760. The dominant fabric was Blackware, which comprised over a third of the assemblage (Table 2). Just under a third of the assemblage comprised three, probably related fabrics: mottled ware; slip-coated ware; and dark-glazed buff ware, all of which share a similar buff-coloured fabric. The remaining third included a range of other fabrics, including Staffordshire-type slipwares, white salt-glazed stoneware, tin-glazed earthenware, and early yellow wares. In the main, the pottery was a mixture of utilitarian vessels used for storage and tablewares such as tankards and plates.

Fabric type	104	105	109	Unstratified
Mottled ware	14	1		3
Metropolitan type	3	1		
White salt-glazed stoneware	5			4
Nottinghamshire/Derby stoneware	1			3
Staffordshire-type slipware	9	3		1
Buff bodied/Slip coated	23	2		6
Blackware	31	5		21
Tin-glazed earthenware	2			8
Whieldon			1	
Agate ware	1			
Yellow ware	2	4		
Creamware				2
Totals	91	16	1	48

Table 2: Pottery types and quantities from the excavation

4.3.2 The pottery was recovered from material disturbed during the construction of the culvert (**104** and **105**), and from a levelling layer **109**. That from contexts **104** and **105** had an overall date range of between c 1680 and c 1760 and the single sherd of Whieldon ware from layer **109** was dated between c 1740 and the 1760s.

4.3.3 Blackware was represented by a number of utilitarian storage vessels such a large jars, some of which had lug handles, and a single instance of a bung-holed cistern (Plate 26), often used for the brewing of beer. The lack of obvious pancheon fragments seems odd, as these large bowls, used for a variety of domestic purposes, are usually common in post-medieval assemblages, and from production sites (see for instance McNeil 1989; OA North 2011c). Their absence from what is otherwise a typical domestic assemblage is not easy to explain. There was some evidence from the Blackwares to suggest a production site nearby; a single unstratified sherd had glaze runs over the breaks, suggesting that it might be a waster, and other fragments, from **104** and **105** and unstratified, had heavily crazed glazes and other evidence suggesting over-firing (Plate 27). Although all the vessels might have been produced locally, a source elsewhere is not out of the question, the closest known production centres being either Prescott or Rainford on Merseyside (McNeil 1989), or Buckley in North Wales (Amery and Davey 1979).

- 4.3.4 A similar range of vessel types was found amongst the related group of mottled wares, slip-coated, and dark-glazed buff wares. These were mainly mugs, bowls, and jars, with a single instance of the latter externally sooted, suggesting that it had been used as a cooking pot. Again, it is likely that these would have had a fairly local origin. Prescott was a known production centre for mottled ware in the eighteenth century (McNeil 1989), or they could have come from further afield, possibly from Staffordshire (Barker 2008).
- 4.3.5 The slipware from the site was illustrative of most of the main types from the later seventeenth century onwards and comprised hollow and press-moulded wares and encompassed Metropolitan type, reversed decoration types with yellow slip trailing on dark brown coloured glaze (Plate 28), press-moulded wares with relief decoration picked out in several different colours. Finally, there were the more typical slip-trailed and combed decorated vessels (Plate 29; Barker and Crompton 2007). A similar, albeit larger assemblage was recovered from South Castle street in Liverpool (Davey 1985).
- 4.3.6 The presence of both tin-glazed earthenware and white salt-glazed stoneware demonstrate the use of fashionable or prestige items. Amongst the tin-glazed earthenware, at least two vessels were represented, one of which was the base of a drug jar, whilst there were six fragment from an oval press-moulded plate (Plate 30), both of which were unstratified. The tin-glazed earthenware is likely to have been a product of the delftware industry in Liverpool, which was established during the early eighteenth century (Archer 1997; Hyland 2005). The blue and white floral design found upon the plate does not reflect the well-known Fazackerley palette (Black 2001), although it bears some resemblance to the patterns found upon vessels from South Castle Street in Liverpool, which was dated to between c 1700-30s (Morgan 1985). However, there is more than a striking resemblance to, although no direct parallel, to plates produced in Lancaster in the 1760s. This is not a coincidence since the Lancaster pot house used experienced Liverpool workers (Blenkinship 2009).
- 4.3.7 Two large fragments of a salt-glazed press-moulded plate, also unstratified, might date to around the 1740s, and are typical of Staffordshire production (Plate 31). In general terms, white salt-glazed stoneware was one of the Staffordshire kilns most successful wares, competing and supplanting tin-glazed earthenware (Barker 2008), and it is quite likely that the vessels from this site are Staffordshire products. Several other fabrics were also recovered, comprising Yellow ware, Agate ware, Creamware and Whieldon ware, with the last two dating the to the 1760s to 1780s (Barker 2008; Draper 1984).
- 4.3.8 Thus, the pottery from 7-9 Lower Hillgate represents a fairly closely dated assemblage, containing representative samples of several of the main types of pottery produced in the north-west of England before the dominance of transfer-printed refined white earthenwares. The earliest was Metropolitan-type slipware produced from the middle of the seventeenth century, through to tin-glazed earthenware, Whieldon ware and Creamware that dated to c 1760-70. The range of forms comprised a mixture of both utilitarian kitchenwares and storage vessels, such as jars and a cistern, and tablewares including tankards and a range of plates ranging from Staffordshire slipwares to tin-glazed earthenwares and salt-glazed stoneware.



Plate 26: Fragment of a bung-hole cistern from deposit 104



Plate 27: Fragment of a Blackware vessel with heavily crazed glaze from deposit 104



Plate 28: Fragments of a slipware vessel from deposit 105



Plate 29: Fragments of a plate with slip-trailed and combed decoration from deposit 105



Plate 30: Fragments of a tin-glazed earthenware oval press-moulded plate



Plate 31: Fragments of a salt-glazed press-moulded plate

- 4.3.9 **The Glass:** in total, 27 fragments of glass were recovered, 16 of them from context **104**, the remainder unstratified. Although probably dating to the eighteenth century, the stratified glass was undiagnostic, being body fragments from dark green wine bottles. Consequently, the date could not be refined, although the presence of two fragments of lighter 'sea green' glass might point to a date in the early part of the eighteenth century. The earliest vessel present, a flask in a thin pale greenish metal, which could date as early as c 1640 (Noel Hume 1969, fig 17.7), was found unstratified. A range of dark green wine bottle and case bottle bases amongst the unstratified material are probably later, being mid-eighteenth century at the earliest, and one, in a pale blue/colourless metal, is probably of early nineteenth-century date.
- 4.3.10 **Other Finds:** there were, in addition, 13 fragments of clay tobacco pipe from layer **104**. The only bowl amongst the group can be dated c 1640-80. A single metal object, a base metal spoon bowl from levelling deposit **109**, is unlikely to date earlier than the second quarter of the eighteenth century, and could be more recent (Noel Hume 1969, 183).

5. BUILDING INVESTIGATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

- 5.1.1 During the demolition of the extant buildings on the site, the remains of two vaulted undercrofts were revealed. These were cut into the steeply rising hillslope, and were positioned above ground level within the buildings fronting Lower Hillgate.
- 5.1.2 The southern of the two structures was not affected by the groundworks for the new development, and was thus preserved *in-situ*. It had been infilled previously with rubble, behind a late twentieth-century blocking wall, allowing an only cursory inspection during the building investigation. Access prior to the demolition of the buildings was afforded to the northern cellar. This was blocked approximately mid-way along its length (Fig 11), access only being feasible to the eastern part of the undercroft following the removal of the majority of its ceiling, and the northern wall.

5.2 RESULTS

- 5.2.1 **Northern undercroft:** this structure comprised an approximately 12ft (3.66m) wide barrel-vaulted cellar, constructed using orangey-red, hand-made, mould-thrown bricks, with pebble inclusions. These typically measured $8\frac{7}{8} \times 4\frac{1}{4} \times 2\frac{5}{8}$ in (0.23 x 0.11 x 0.07m), and were bonded in a mid-brown clayey mortar, with distinct, granular lime inclusions. The side walls appeared to have been broadly constructed in English Garden Wall bond, although this varied between three and five courses of stretchers between those of headers, and with several of the courses contained more mixed brickwork (Plate 32).
- 5.2.2 Approximately 18ft (5.49m) from the extant southern end of the undercroft, which coincided with the point where the vaulting survived intact following demolition of the associated structures, the vaulting sloped towards the north-east (Plate 33). What little remained of the crown of the vaulting to the south-west of this point appeared to form part of a single construction to that within the sloping section of the undercroft to the east (Plate 33). The crown formed a slightly irregular segmental arch of single-brick thickness (Plate 33), comprising entirely headers in the sloping eastern section, but seemingly constructed in an approximation of English bond (comprising alternate courses of headers and stretchers) in the level western part of the undercroft. A rough joint, with broken-brick infilling was observed within the south wall at the interface between the level and sloping elements of the undercroft (Plate 34). To the east, the wall sloped on a similar angle (approximately 20°) to the crown above (Plate 34), and the irregular junction between the two elements of the wall probably simply reflected the simplest way to accommodate the change in angle of the wall. All elements of the vaulting were bonded in a mortar type similar to that described above, and several sections of the walls and vaulting retained patches of limewash (Plates 32-34).



Plate 32: Hand-made brick construction of vaulting, with blocking wall and inserted entrance



Plate 33: Sloping vault of undercroft observed during groundworks

- 5.2.3 The sloping element of the undercroft measured only 6ft 6in (1.98m) long, culminating in a substantial brick return at its eastern end (Fig 11). This was of three-bricks thickness (32in (0.81m)), and was of similar construction to the other elements of the structure. It had been cut centrally to form a 6ft (1.83m) wide aperture (Plate 35), which possibly formed a window or cellar light, although no framing for such a feature was observed. The aperture was infilled with a single-skin brick wall, to within 29in (0.74m) of a flat external brick

lintel, bonded in a white lime mortar. The open area below the lintel was filled with demolition rubble, typical of the early to mid-twentieth century.



Plate 34: Irregular joint between sloping and level sections of vault side wall



Plate 35: Inserted aperture in eastern end wall of undercroft

- 5.2.4 The removal of the majority of the north wall to provide access to the eastern part of the undercroft provided a section through the wall, which revealed it to be of $1\frac{1}{2}$ brick thickness (14ft (0.36m)). The wall retained the springing of a further arch to the north-west (Plate 36), demonstrating that a further contemporary undercroft originally lay in this direction. Following the

demolition of this undercroft, the dividing wall between the two structures was butted by two walls of full-brick thickness, bonded in pale brown sandy cement mortar, and continuing above the height of the earlier crown (Plate 36).



Plate 36: Broken north wall of vaulting, with stub of adjacent vault identified

- 5.2.5 At its western end, the undercroft had a centrally placed, two-brick square, pillar (Fig 11; Plate 37). This was constructed using similar brick to that used within the vaulting, but was bull-nosed around each corner, and bonded with a wider bed of pale cement-based mortar (Plate 37). The end of the undercroft was blocked either side with brick walls, each of $1\frac{1}{2}$ brick thickness, but apparently of different date. That to the north of the pillar was constructed using a majority of salt-glazed brick, built in three-stretcher English Garden Wall bond, and with oozing beds of dark grey, cement-based mortar (Plate 37), suggesting that it had been erected from the western side. To the south, the blocking wall comprised more orangey, machine-made brick, bonded in a paler, mid-grey cement mortar, in five-stretcher English Garden Wall bond (Plate 37). This wall contained an inserted and subsequently blocked 2ft (0.61m) wide low aperture at its southern end, the blocking being undertaken with re-used hand-made brick in a combination of English and English Garden Wall bond (Plate 37).



Plate 37: Inserted brick pillar, blocking walls and rebuilt vaulting at west end of undercroft

- 5.2.6 The western end of the vault itself was also remodelled, with the western 4ft 9in (1.45m) of the southern wall being recessed by a full-brick thickness. Both the crown of the vault and the ends of each side wall were rebuilt using more crimson-coloured brickwork, bonded in a dark sooty mortar (Plate 37). Within this rebuilt section of wall, $1\frac{1}{2}$ bricks (0.34m) from the western end of the undercroft, an aperture had been roughly cut through the southern side-wall. The aperture was only 2ft (0.61m) wide and had no lintel (Plate 32), suggesting that it represented a very late temporary access into the undercroft.
- 5.2.7 The south wall of the vault was again roughly cut, at a point some 2ft (0.61m) to the north of this aperture and immediately below springing height, to insert two iron bars (Plate 32), which were presumably tie rods. Two smaller apertures in the north wall also each housed single iron bars. Removal of the vault wall in this position revealed a 2' diameter round aperture within an earlier wall behind the vault (Plate 38). This wall had patches of lime wash adhering to its face, demonstrating it to be the earlier structure, and continued up to eight courses above the springing point of the vaulting (Plate 39). This was constructed using similar brick to those within the vaulting, although containing more numerous pebble inclusions, and bonded in a slightly sandier lime mortar, and in English Garden Wall bond, with three courses of stretchers between those of headers. This ran the length of the level section of the vaulting, and returned northwards, above the crown of the vault, at the point where this dipped to the north-east. This stub of wall survived for a length of only 0.6m, where it was cut by the vault, and contained a roughly dressed sandstone pad in its face (Plate 40). A further wall of full-brick thickness was keyed into the upper face of the wall at a point some 4ft (1.22m) to the west of this return (Plates 36, 39, and 40). This too was capped with a dressed

sandstone block, and was truncated during the construction of the vaulting of the undercroft. A single-skin brick floor between these two north-west/south-east-aligned walls dated to the construction of the vaulting, being bonded in similar mortar, and almost certainly representing a structural capping of the joint between the vault wall and the earlier wall behind it.



Plate 38: 'Oeil de boeuf' aperture behind later vault wall, with arched door jamb to right, including sandstone pad near exposed base



Plate 39: Earlier wall extending above undercroft vaulting, with brick infill between



Plate 40: Truncated returns of earlier walls above undercroft vaulting

- 5.2.8 The circular *oeil de boeuf* opening was probably an external window, and the jamb of the arch springing immediately to the south included a reddish dressed sandstone quoin (Plate 38), further suggesting that this represented an external wall face. The reveal of the doorway was lime washed and also retained fragments of sky blue pigment, typical of nineteenth-century paints.
- 5.2.9 **Southern undercroft:** this structure survived almost entirely intact, apart from remodelling and possible truncation at its western end, where the original vault wall was cut by a 2ft (0.61m) thick machine-made brick wall, which formed the internal face of an external wall on its southern side. It had a large doorway with bull-nosed reveals into the vaulted cellar, and with iron sheeting and substantial pintels for a heavy door on its external face, suggesting that the undercroft was used as a fireproof store or strong room at this time. The undercroft was blocked only 3ft (0.91m) from the southern wall by a single-skin cross wall, constructed in yellowish-red machine-made brick of mid- to late twentieth-century date. The vault had been almost completely backfilled behind this wall, but appeared similar in construction to the exposed undercroft to the north (Fig 11).

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

- 6.1.1 The excavation revealed deposits and structural elements that represented several phases in the development of the site. Although there have been successive episodes of construction and demolition within the area, there was a conspicuous lack of intrusive material of nineteenth- or twentieth-century date. This demonstrates that the excavated part of the site has remained free from disturbance from the time that the flagstone floor was in use, which was the latest recorded element of the site.

6.2 BURIED REMAINS

- 6.2.1 The earliest features of man-made origin that were exposed during the excavation were the culvert (**106**) and the sandstone wall (**107**). As there was no physical interaction between these features, it was not possible to ascertain the stratigraphic, and therefore chronological, relationship between the structures. The wall and the culvert were co-aligned, which is suggestive of an awareness and acknowledgement of the prior existence of one of the features at the time that the later of the structures was built. In archaeological terms, one feature is deemed to respect the other. The culvert was constructed in order to channel the Tin Brook that flowed through this area.
- 6.2.2 The Tin Brook, which was also named Carr Brook and Hempshaw Brook in different areas, flowed from the south to the north through the centre of Stockport, but diverted to the west just to the south of the excavation area (Collier 2006). The former course of the Tin Brook is shown on the map of 1680 (Plate 2) and the southern part of the brook, following the culverting of the northern portion, is depicted on a map of 1824 (Plate 4). Although the latter map gives the impression that if the culvert continued to flow in the orientation of the visible portion of the stream that it would have carried the brook into the study area, the natural westward diversion of the stream occurs just to the north of the visible waterway and this is the route that the culvert would have followed. The Hillgate area was, however, the site of numerous springs (*ibid*) that would have formed smaller streams leading into the Tin Brook, or running down to the River Mersey. It is likely that the culvert (**106**) channelled the resultant flow from such springs and other small waterways within the local area in order to constrain the open streams and wet ground and produce land suitable for development.
- 6.2.3 All of the historic maps from 1680 onwards depicted Lower Hillgate as having been fronted by buildings, although it was not until the production of Thornton's map of 1824 (Plate 4) that any detail is shown to indicate that the area occupied by the culvert had been built over. Therefore, the map evidence does not provide a close date for the construction of the culvert. However, the data accumulated during the excavation does provide a refined date for the establishment of the culvert. The pottery collected from the soil deposits that

directly overlay the culvert (**104** and **105**) represented a restricted date range of 1680 to 1760 (Section 4.3 above). The archaeological evidence has demonstrated that the soil is likely to have formed a former ground level, at the edge of the stream, which was displaced when the channel was cut. This soil would have been upcast to the edges of the linear working area and the deeper deposits, which included natural clay, sand, and sandstone would then have been deposited on top of these spoil heaps. Following the construction of the culvert the spoil would have been used to backfill around the culvert and the upper part of the spoil heaps would have been the first to be re-deposited. In this way, although disturbance and some mixing of the deposits occurred, they would have been re-deposited in a similar sequence to their original stratigraphic positions. This explains why more pottery was discovered in the upper levels of the deposits. If this interpretation is correct, then the pottery would have accumulated along the edges of a former stream, which was probably used as an *ad hoc* dumping ground. The lack of any pottery datable to later than 1760 provides a *terminus post quem* of 1760 for the displacement of the soil horizon and it is, therefore, likely that the culvert was built soon after c 1760.

- 6.2.4 The earliest pottery has been dated to c 1680, which is the same date that a map of Stockport was produced that depicted buildings fronting this part of Lower Hillgate (Plate 2). This suggests that the use of this particular segment of the stream as a dumping ground for waste that included utilitarian ceramic storage and table wares began at around this date and this is likely to have derived from domestic waste that came, at least in part, from households that could afford at least some fashionable and prestigious pottery.
- 6.2.5 As the earliest map to show the area in any detail was produced in 1824 (Plate 4), it is not possible to demonstrate from cartographic evidence whether the sandstone wall (**107**) pre- or post-dated the culvert. It demonstrably pre-dated the surrounding standing buildings, the lower walls of which were built around the sandstone (Plates 17 and 18) and some of these structures, similarly to the former 7-9 Hillgate, may have been established in the eighteenth century, or earlier. The wall was overlain by demolition rubble that included pottery dated to between 1740 and 1760 and, therefore, is likely to have pre-dated the mid-eighteenth century. If this pottery was not residual then it provides a *terminus ante quem* of 1760 for the disuse of the wall and it is therefore likely to be considerably earlier than the culvert. According to this schema, the complete cycle of construction, use, and subsequent demolition of the wall (**107**) would have occurred prior to the construction of the culvert. The flagstone surface (**101** and **102**) certainly post-dated both the sandstone wall and the culvert and could thus have been in use at any time from c 1760 until the twentieth century.

6.3 THE UNDERCROFTS

- 6.3.1 **Phase 1:** somewhat surprisingly, the earliest structure revealed during the recording of the undercrofts was not the barrel-vaulted chambers themselves. The alignment of the vaults almost certainly respected earlier structures that they replaced, and incorporated one such wall within the division between the two undercrofts. The position of the window and doorway, preserved at the eastern end of this wall, give an strong indication that within the structure predating the vaults, floor level was similar to that within the later vaults. It was hypothesised initially that the door and window were within the north wall of a property located in the position of the southern undercroft, affording access to a courtyard, annotated as 'Crooked Passage' on Ordnance Survey mapping of 1851 and 1882 (Figs 2 and 3). However, the presence of two wall stubs at a much higher level on the northern side of the wall strongly suggests that the wall relates to structures predating 'Crooked Passage' shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1848 (Plate 7), and in more detail on Thornton's map of Stockport of 1824 (Plate 4). In such an instance, it is more likely that the wall had its external face on the southern side, with both maps suggesting that this later became an internal partition as further structures were added to the south. This is consistent with the rapid expansion following industrialisation of most towns within the region, with the street frontages forming the primary building land, with the areas behind being rapidly infilled as demand for building plots increased (eg Miller and Wild 2007).
- 6.3.2 The function of the two adjacent walls at the eastern extant end of this earliest wall remains somewhat conjectural. However, the cartographic sequence suggests that the eastern of these two was respected by subsequent development, suggesting that it formed an external wall to the property. The wall to the west was clearly relatively substantial, as it appeared to have been of at least two floors height, and its position so close to the external wall to the east would strongly suggest that it represented the eastern cheek of a chimney breast, these being typically constructed of walls of a full-brick thickness from at least the late eighteenth century (*ibid*).
- 6.3.3 The wall is almost impossible to date with any certainty; the brick dimensions were similar to those of the later vaulting, and were typical of a period from the late eighteenth to late nineteenth centuries (Harley 1974, 76). The slightly softer, sandier nature of the mortar, compared to that of the vaulting, would possibly suggest a late eighteenth- or earlier nineteenth-century date. Buildings are depicted along the Lower Hillgate and Rostron Brow frontages from the earliest cartographic sources (*Section 3*, above), but Thornton's map of 1824 (Plate 4) is the first to suggest that buildings extended to any significant depth behind these frontages.
- 6.3.4 **Phase 2:** the construction of at least three barrel-vaulted chambers almost certainly coincided with a significant remodelling of the area between Lower Hillgate, Rostron Brow, and Church Street, prior to 1851. This included the insertion of a passageway through the Rostron Brow street frontage, affording access to buildings entirely located behind the streets, or to rear entrances of properties that used their main frontages as shops. A rectangular courtyard, measuring approximately 30 x 15ft (9.14 x 4.57m), was placed within the

passageway, bearing the name 'Crooked Passage'. This appears to have represented a significant change in ground level within the site, as the yard was apparently placed at the level of its entrance on the steeply rising Rostron Brow, approximately 8ft (2.44m) above previous ground level. The timber-framed buildings adjacent to the former Kay Brothers chemist, depicted in the photograph of 1901 (Plate 8), appear to have provided access to the rear of the street frontage as part of their original construction, presumably affording access to yards or burgage plots. It is highly probable that these, and further similar properties which can be seen along Lower Hillgate in the same photograph, represent remnants of the post-medieval street frontage depicted on the earliest maps of the late seventeenth century (Plate 2).

- 6.3.5 The chemists' shop itself quite probably dates to this period of rebuilding of the Rostron Brow frontage, and was certainly constructed in a style typical in the region in the mid-nineteenth century, with vertical sash windows and little or no architectural embellishment above the ground floor (Plate 8).
- 6.3.6 The Ordnance Survey editions of 1851 and 1882 appear to show that the two southern undercrofts observed, formed part of a premises located behind the Lower Hillgate street frontage. Its curving north-western wall presumably housed the entrance from a passage leading to the street, and the wall curved at its northern end to align with the dividing wall between the two northern vaults. It would appear that the two northern vaults were placed beneath the newly-formed 'Crooked Passage', presumably during its construction, as an ideal usage of what would otherwise be redundant space. The third, southern vault underlay a building to the south-east of the courtyard, but the inclusion of a central passageway through the ground floor of this building must have meant that it was newly erected at this time, and that an undercroft belonging to the property to the south-west could have been created prior to its construction, particularly as it partly included a pre-existing structural wall on its north-western side.
- 6.3.7 The eastern boundary of the courtyard of 'Crooked Passage' appears to have formed the eastern extent of the level part of the two northern undercrofts. Nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey mapping depict a property boundary a short distance to the north-west of the northern side of the courtyard, and this appears to correlate with the eastern extent of the exposed undercroft. It would therefore appear that it was possible to continue the vaults beyond the new passage, either under further new buildings, or possibly by tunnelling under existing structures. Whilst this latter option would appear unlikely, the manner in which the return of the earlier Phase 1 wall was cut by the vaulting of the undercroft may suggest that this was the actual method of construction. The cut end of the wall exactly matches the profile of the vaulting (Plate 40), suggesting that the vault was constructed from below, whereas if the vault was created around timber formwork within a trenched construction, more of the earlier wall would have been removed to facilitate the bricklaying.

- 6.3.8 **Phase 3:** between the Ordnance Survey editions of 1882 and 1895, Crooked Passage and all its adjacent structures were demolished (Fig 4). This left the undercrofts as isolated structures, rather than being the rear storage rooms of pre-existing structures. It is almost certain that the western ends of each of the three undercrofts were remodelled at this time, to form distinct entrances with doorways into each vault, which had presumably previously been open-ended into the structures they originally served. The central pillar observed within the northern of the two extant cellars may be the only survival of a feature implemented in each, or alternatively represents the personal choice of an individual owner. It remains unclear whether the undercrofts belonged to one or several occupiers at this time. The apertures containing the wrought-iron rods were also probably inserted at this time, and were likely to have been associated with strengthening rods, presumably inserted to help stabilise the vaults.
- 6.3.9 The buildings to the north-west of the study area, beyond those adjacent to the courtyard, also appear to have been rebuilt at this time. They were erected on a differing alignment, and placed slightly further to the north-east (Fig 4), and this almost certainly afforded the possibility for a cellar light to be inserted into the eastern end of the central undercroft. This would probably have been undertaken in the adjacent vaults, but this was not possible to verify.
- 6.3.10 **Phase 4:** this final phase represents mid- to late twentieth-century modifications to the undercrofts, which include the creation of an interconnecting low doorway between the southern two vaults, and the insertion of a series of blocking walls within a relatively short time frame.
- 6.3.11 It is unclear when the northern of the three vaults was demolished, although the wall inserted against its southern face would appear to have formed part of a structure above. No new development was shown within this area, following the removal of Crooked Passage in the late nineteenth century, until the Ordnance Survey edition of 1972 (Fig 8), suggesting that the northern vault may not have been removed until the replacement of 7-9 Lower Hillgate in the 1960s (*Section 3*, above).

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APPENDIX 1: PROJECT DESIGN

September 2011

Oxford
Archaeology
North

7 – 9 LOWER HILLGATE, STOCKPORT



ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION

Proposals

The following Written Scheme of Investigation is offered in response to a request from Mr J Stead of CSCS Construction Ltd, acting on behalf of Guinness Northern Counties, for an archaeological investigation in advance of development at 7-9 Lower Hillgate, Stockport.

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF PROJECT

- 1.1.1 Guinness Northern Counties has obtained full planning permission (DC045885) for a new development at 7 – 9 Lower Hillgate, situated in the historic core of Stockport. Development proposals allow for the demolition of existing buildings, and the construction of 13 new flats with office accommodation at ground and basement levels. Until the early nineteenth century, Hillgate formed the principal route leading southwards from the medieval core of Stockport. The earliest known map of the town, dating to c 1680, appears to show that the area of 7 – 9 Lower Hillgate was occupied by buildings, forming the south-eastern edge of the post-medieval urban area.
- 1.1.2 Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) attached several conditions to planning permission for the development of the site. Condition 12 was intended to secure archaeological interests, and states:
- ‘No development shall take place until the applicant or their agents or their successors in title have secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological works to be undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.’
- 1.1.3 Following consultation with the Assistant County Archaeologist for Greater Manchester, who provides planning advice to SMBC, it was recommended that in the first instance a desk-based assessment of the development site, coupled with an appraisal of the modern building occupying the site, should be carried out. The assessment was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) in June 2011, and concluded that whilst the modern building was of no archaeological or historical interest, it incorporated two vaulted undercrofts of probable eighteenth-century date that merited a measured survey.
- 1.1.4 In addition, the desk-based assessment concluded that whilst much of the development site has been terraced into the natural slope, there was some potential for buried remains of archaeological interest to survive *in-situ* on parts of the site. This was corroborated during the monitoring of the demolition programme in September 2011, when removal of modern concrete surfacing exposed a small area containing archaeological deposits. These included a buried soil horizon containing fragments of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century pottery, which covered an area measuring approximately 6 x 3m.
- 1.1.5 Following consultation with the Assistant County Archaeologist for Greater Manchester, it was recommended that the archaeological deposits identified during the removal of modern surfacing were subject to full archaeological excavation and recording in advance of development. In addition, pending the availability of access, it was recommended that a measured survey of the two undercrofts was compiled. This document provides a Written Scheme of Investigation for the recommended scheme of archaeological investigation.

1.2 OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY

1.2.1 Oxford Archaeology is an educational charity under the guidance of a board of trustees with over 35 years of experience in archaeology, and can provide a professional and cost-effective service. We are the largest employer of archaeologists in the country (we currently have more than 260 members of staff), and can thus deploy considerable resources with extensive experience to deal with any archaeological obligations you or your clients may have. OA is an Institute for Archaeologists Registered Organisation (No 17). We have offices in Lancaster and Oxford, trading as Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) and Oxford Archaeology South (OA South) respectively, enabling us to provide a truly nationwide service. All work on the project will be undertaken in accordance with relevant professional standards, including:

- IfA's *Code of Conduct* (1999); *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology* (1999); *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations* (1999);
- English Heritage's *Management of Archaeological Projects*, 1991;
- The European Association of Archaeologists *Principles of Conduct for Archaeologists Involved in Contract Archaeological Work* (1998).

2 OBJECTIVES

2.1 OBJECTIVES

2.1.1 The principal objective of the archaeological investigation will be to provide a detailed record of all archaeological deposits and remains that will be damaged or destroyed during the course of the development.

2.1.2 The archaeological resource within the development site has some potential to inform a number of research objectives:

- any evidence for medieval and post-medieval occupation in the development site would contribute to the current knowledge and understanding of the development of Stockport in general, and particularly the emergence of Lower Hillgate as an important element of the settlement's historic urban core;
- to contribute to a better understanding of post-medieval ceramic traditions in Stockport;
- to carry out palaeo-environmental sampling and assessment of buried soil horizons;
- to compile a measured survey of the probable eighteenth-century undercrofts.

3 METHOD STATEMENT

3.1.1 The following work programme is submitted in line with the aims and objectives summarised above.

3.2 EXCAVATION

3.2.1 **General Methodology:** it is proposed that an area measuring approximately 6 x 3m along the south-eastern boundary of the development site is subject to full archaeological excavation and recording (Fig 1). The archaeological potential of this area was identified during the demolition and clearance of modern buildings, when a buried soil horizon and fragments of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century pottery were identified.



Figure 1: View across the development site, marking the location of the excavation area

3.2.2 Whilst a mechanical excavator will be required to remove a series of flagstones along the western part of the excavation area (Figure 2), all excavation will be carried out subsequently using exclusively manual techniques. Excavation will continue to the level of natural geological deposits, enabling a detailed record to be compiled of all overlying deposits and archaeological features.

3.2.3 All information identified in the course of the site works will be recorded stratigraphically, using a system adapted from that used by the Centre for Archaeology Service of English Heritage. Results of the evaluation will be recorded on *pro-forma* context sheets, and will be accompanied with sufficient pictorial record (plans, sections and both black and white and colour photographs) to identify and illustrate individual features. Primary records will be available for inspection at all times.



Figure 2: View across the proposed excavation area

- 3.2.4 **Context Recording:** all contexts will be recorded using *pro-forma* sheets, and details will be incorporated into a Harris matrix. Similar object record and photographic record *pro-formas* will be used. All written recording of survey data, contexts, photographs, artefacts and ecofacts will be cross-referenced from *pro-forma* record sheets using sequential numbering.
- 3.2.5 **Photography:** a full and detailed photographic record of individual contexts will be maintained and similarly general views from standard view points of the overall site at all stages of the evaluation will be generated. Photography will be undertaken using 35mm cameras on archivable black and white print film as well as digital format, and all frames will include a visible, graduated metric scale. Photographs records will be maintained on special photographic *pro-forma* sheets.
- 3.2.6 **Planning:** the precise location of the excavated area, and the position of all archaeological structures encountered, will be surveyed using manual techniques. The hand-drawn plans will be generated at a scale of 1:20 scale. Sections will be manually drafted as appropriate at a scale of 1:10. All information will be tied in to Ordnance Datum.
- 3.2.7 Human remains are not expected to be present, but if they are found they will, if possible, be left *in situ* covered and protected. If removal is necessary, then the relevant Home Office permission will be sought, and the removal of such remains will be carried out with due care and sensitivity as required by the *Burials Act 1857*.
- 3.2.8 Any gold and silver artefacts recovered during the course of the excavation will be removed to a safe place and reported to the local Coroner according to the procedures relating to the *Treasure Act, 1996*.

3.2.9 ***Finds policy:*** finds recovery and sampling programmes will be in accordance with best practice (following current Institute for Archaeologists guidelines) and subject to expert advice in order to minimise deterioration. OA North employs in-house artefact and palaeoecology specialists, with considerable expertise in the investigation, excavation, and finds management of sites of all periods and types, who are readily available for consultation. Finds storage during fieldwork and any site archive preparation will follow professional guidelines (UKIC). Emergency access to conservation facilities is maintained by OA North with the Department of Archaeology, the University of Durham. Samples will also be collected for technological, pedological and chronological analysis as appropriate.

3.3 MEASURED BUILDING SURVEY

3.3.1 The initial appraisal of the extant building concluded that two brick-built undercrofts of probable eighteenth-century date, situated to the rear of the modern building, merited further investigation. A complete measured survey was precluded at that time as the historic fabric of the undercrofts was partially or wholly obscured by rubble infill.

3.3.2 Pending the removal of the rubble during the development programme, and availability of safe access, a measured survey of the undercrofts will be completed. This will comprise measured plan drawings and elevations, together with a photographic and a written descriptive record. The survey will focus on identifying and recording evidence of phasing, blocking, repair, joints, and key architectural features.

3.3.3 A detailed, annotated photographic record (35mm film and digital) will also be compiled as part of the survey. The view point directions of all images will be depicted on a plan, and cross referenced to the image. The photographic record will record:

- the general appearance of the historic fabric;
- any external or internal detail, structural or decorative, which is relevant to the undercrofts' design, development and use and which does not show adequately on general photographs;
- detailed views of features of special architectural interest, fixtures and fittings, blockings or jointing relevant to phasing the undercrofts.

3.4 HEALTH AND SAFETY

3.4.1 Full regard will be given to all constraints during the course of the project. OA North provides a Health and Safety Statement for all projects and maintains a Safety Policy. All site procedures are in accordance with the guidance set out in the Health and Safety Manual compiled by the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers.

- 3.4.2 OA North undertakes to safeguard, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its staff and of others who may be affected by our work. This applies in particular to providing and maintaining suitable premises, ensuring the safety of all equipment supplied by the Company, and providing all reasonable safeguards and precautions against accidents. OA North will also take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of all persons not in their employment, such as volunteers, students, visitors, and members of the public (this includes trespassers). OA North will ensure that no one suffers injury because of dangers arising from the state of the premises, or things done, or omitted to be done, on the premises.
- 3.4.3 OA North is fully familiar with and will comply with all current and relevant legislation, including, but not limited to:
- The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974);
 - Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999);
 - Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended in 2002);
 - The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations (2007);
 - The Control of Asbestos Regulations (2006);
 - The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations (1992);
 - Construction (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations (1996);
 - The Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (2002);
 - The Work at Height Regulations (2005);
 - The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (2002);
 - The Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations (1981);
 - The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (2005);
 - The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (1995),
 - The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (1998);
 - Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations (1998).
- 3.4.4 OA North has professional indemnity to a value of £2,000,000, employer's liability cover to a value of £10,000,000 and public liability to a value of £15,000,000. Written details of insurance cover can be provided if required.
- 3.4.5 Normal OA North working hours are between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm, Monday to Friday, though adjustments to hours may be made to maximise daylight working time in winter and to meet travel requirements. It is not normal practice for OA North staff to be asked to work weekends or bank holidays and should the Client require such time to be worked during the course of a project a contract variation to cover additional costs will be necessary.

3.5 OTHER MATTERS

- 3.5.1 Access to the site will be arranged via the Client.
- 3.5.2 It is assumed that the Client will provide make on-site welfare facilities available to OA North staff, and also provide a securely fenced enclosure within which the archaeological works can be carried out.
- 3.5.3 The Client is asked to provide OA North with information relating to the position of live services on the site.

3.6 POST-EXCAVATION AND REPORT PRODUCTION

- 3.6.1 **Archive:** the results of the archaeological evaluation will form the basis of a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (*The Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition, 1991) and the *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage* (UKIC 1990). The deposition of a properly ordered and indexed project archive in an appropriate repository is considered an essential and integral element of all archaeological projects by the IfA in that organisation's code of conduct. OA North conforms to best practice in the preparation of project archives for long-term storage. OA North practice is to deposit the original record archive of projects with the appropriate repository, which in this instance will be Stockport Museum Services. As part of the archiving process, the on-line OASIS (On-line Access to Index of Archaeological Investigations) form will be completed.
- 3.6.2 **Report:** four copies of a bound and collated final report will be submitted to the Client within six weeks of the completion of the fieldwork. Further copies will be sent to the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record, and the Planning Department within SMBC. The final report will include a copy of this Written Scheme of Investigation, and indications of any agreed departure from that design. It will include an historical and archaeological background to the study area, an outline methodology of the investigation, and present, summarise, assess, and interpret the results of the programme of archaeological works detailed above. It will also include an assessment of the finds, which will be accompanied by relevant proposals for detailed finds analysis and conservation with costs. In addition, details of the final deposition of the project archive will also be made.
- 3.6.3 **Confidentiality:** the final report is designed as a document for the specific use of the Client, and should be treated as such; it is not suitable for publication as an academic report, or otherwise, without amendment or revision. Any requirement to revise or reorder the material for submission or presentation to third parties beyond the project brief and project design, or for any other explicit purpose, can be fulfilled, but will require separate discussion and funding.

4 WORK TIMETABLE

- 4.1 A three-day period should be allowed to fully excavate and record the excavation area. The measured survey will be carried out as and when access to the undercrofts has been made available.
- 4.2 A report will be submitted within four weeks of the completion of the fieldwork.

5 STAFFING PROPOSALS

- 5.1 The project will be under the overall charge of **Ian Miller BA FSA** (OA North Senior Project Manager) to whom all correspondence should be addressed. Ian has over 20 years experience of commercial archaeology, and has a particular interest in the archaeology of north-west England.
- 5.2 His role will be to ensure that the Written Scheme of Investigation is implemented within the framework of the Project Objectives. He will be responsible for all aspects of staff and resource logistics, ensuring the smooth running of the project programme. He will liaise with the Client and Planning Archaeologist with regard to progress, and will maintain relationships with other contractors.
- 5.3 The excavation be undertaken by **Alastair Vannan** (OA North Project Officer). Alastair is an highly experienced field archaeologist.
- 5.4 It is not possible to provide details of specific technicians that will be involved with the fieldwork at this stage, but all shall be suitably qualified archaeologists with proven relevant experience. It is anticipated that one technician will be required during the course of the fieldwork.
- 5.5 Assessment of any finds recovered from the evaluation will be undertaken by OA North's in-house finds specialist **Christine Howard-Davis BA** (OA North Finds Manager). Christine has extensive knowledge of all finds of all periods from archaeological sites in northern England, and is a recognised expert in the analysis of post-medieval artefacts.

6 MONITORING

- 6.1 Monitoring meetings will be established with the Client and the archaeological curator at the outset of the project. Monitoring of the project will be undertaken by the Greater Manchester Assistant County Archaeologist, or his representative, who will be afforded access to the site at all times.

ILLUSTRATIONS

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1: Location plan
- Figure 2: Site boundary superimposed on an extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1851, showing location of the excavation area and undercrofts
- Figure 3: Site boundary superimposed on an extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1882, showing location of the excavation area and undercrofts
- Figure 4: Site boundary superimposed on an extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1895, showing location of the excavation area and undercrofts
- Figure 5: Site boundary superimposed on an extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1910, showing location of the excavation area and undercrofts
- Figure 6: Site boundary superimposed on an extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1936, showing location of the excavation area and undercrofts
- Figure 7: Site boundary superimposed on an extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1959, showing location of the excavation area and undercrofts
- Figure 8: Site boundary superimposed on an extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1972, showing location of the excavation area and undercrofts
- Figure 9: Plans of the excavation area following the removal of modern concrete surfacing
- Figure 10: Plan of excavation area below flagstone floor
- Figure 11: Undercroft plan, superimposed on an extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1851



Figure 1: Site location

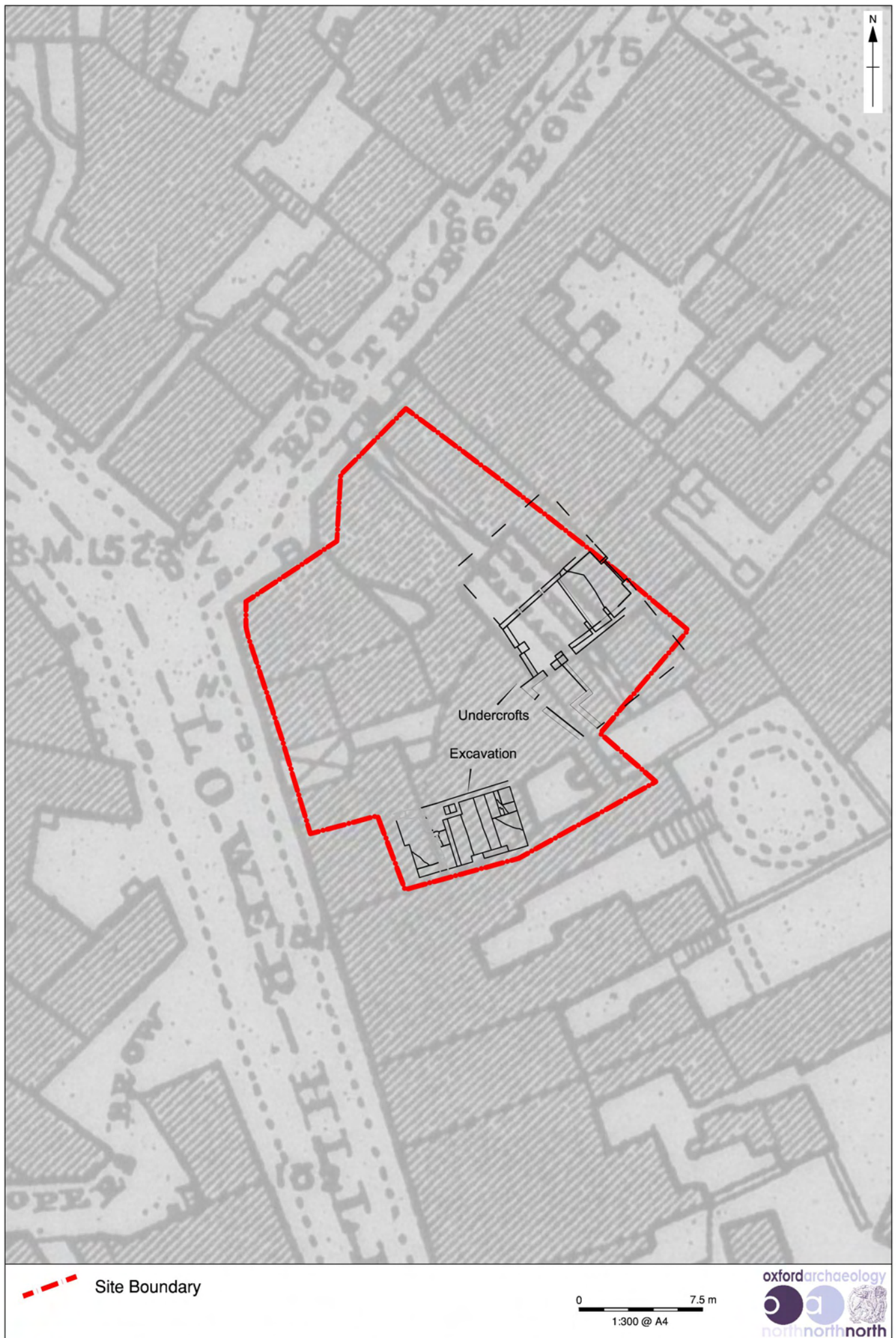


Figure 3: Site boundary superimposed on an extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1882, showing location of the excavation area and undercrofts



Figure 4: Site boundary superimposed on an extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1895, showing location of the excavation area and undercrofts



Figure 5: Site boundary superimposed on an extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1910, showing location of the excavation area and undercrofts



Figure 6: Site boundary superimposed on an extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1936, showing location of the excavation area and undercrofts

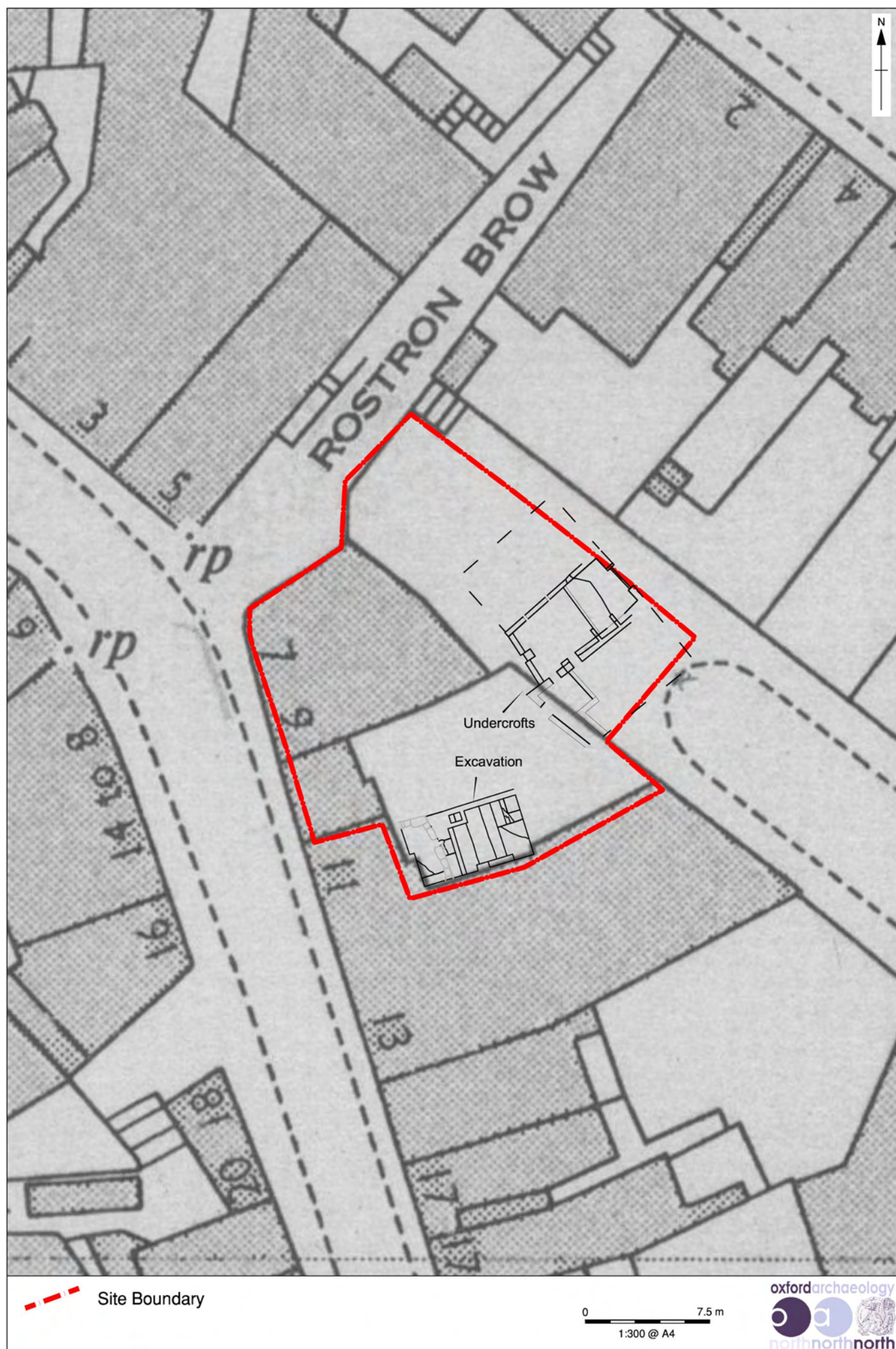


Figure 7: Site boundary superimposed on an extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1959, showing location of the excavation area and undercrofts

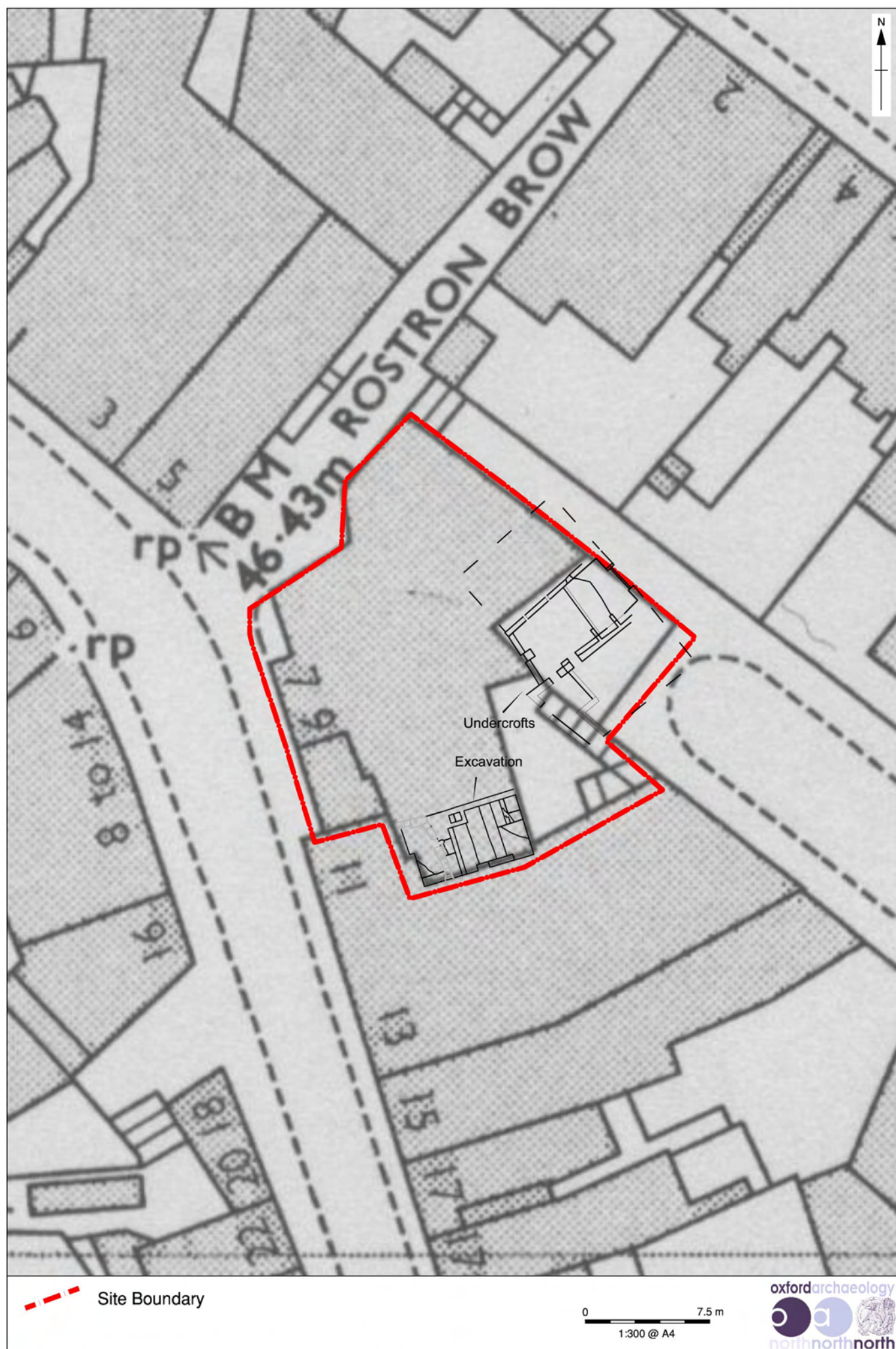




Figure 9: Plan of the excavation area following the removal of modern concrete surfacing

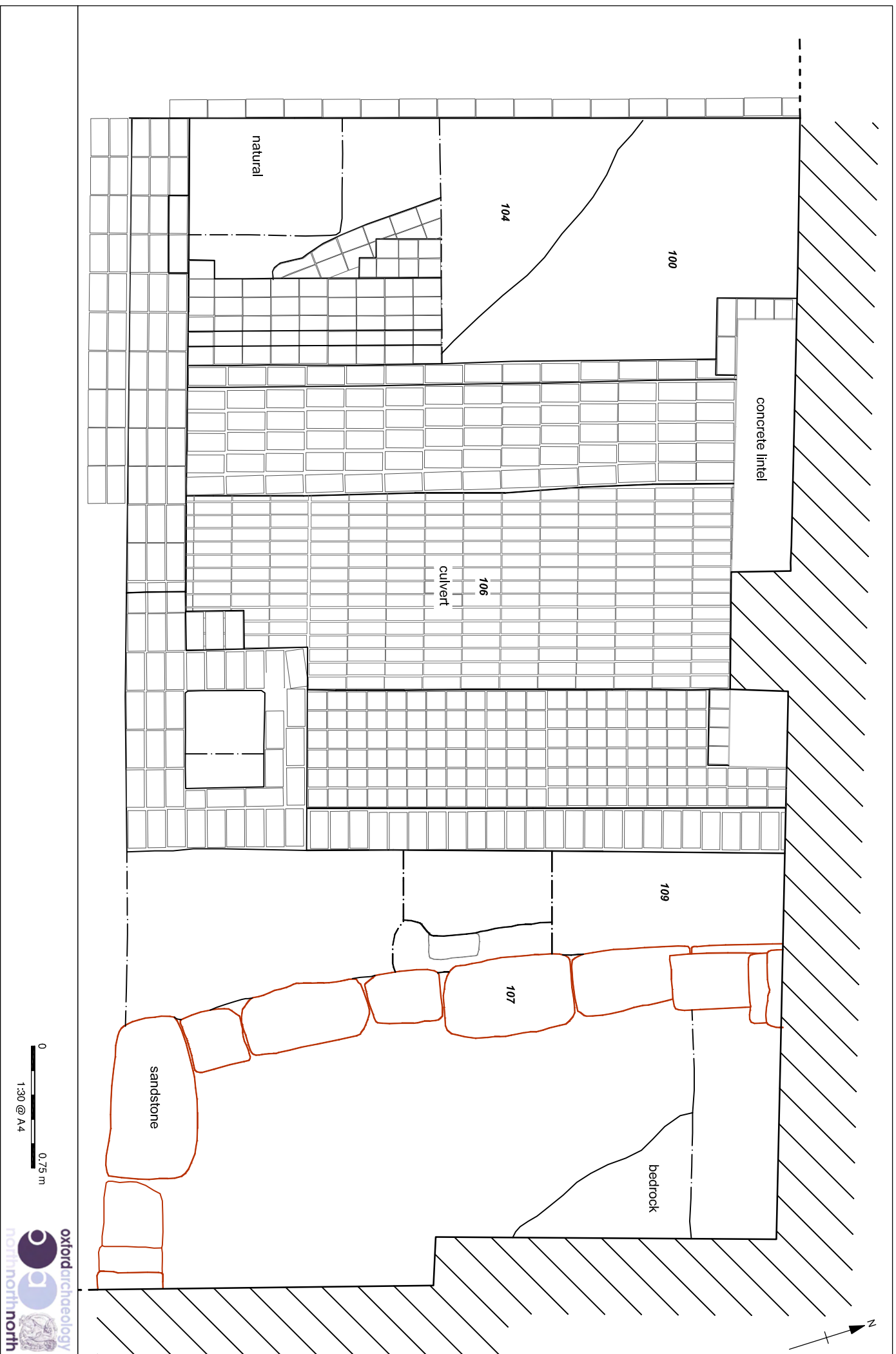


Figure 10: Plan of the excavation area below flagstone floor

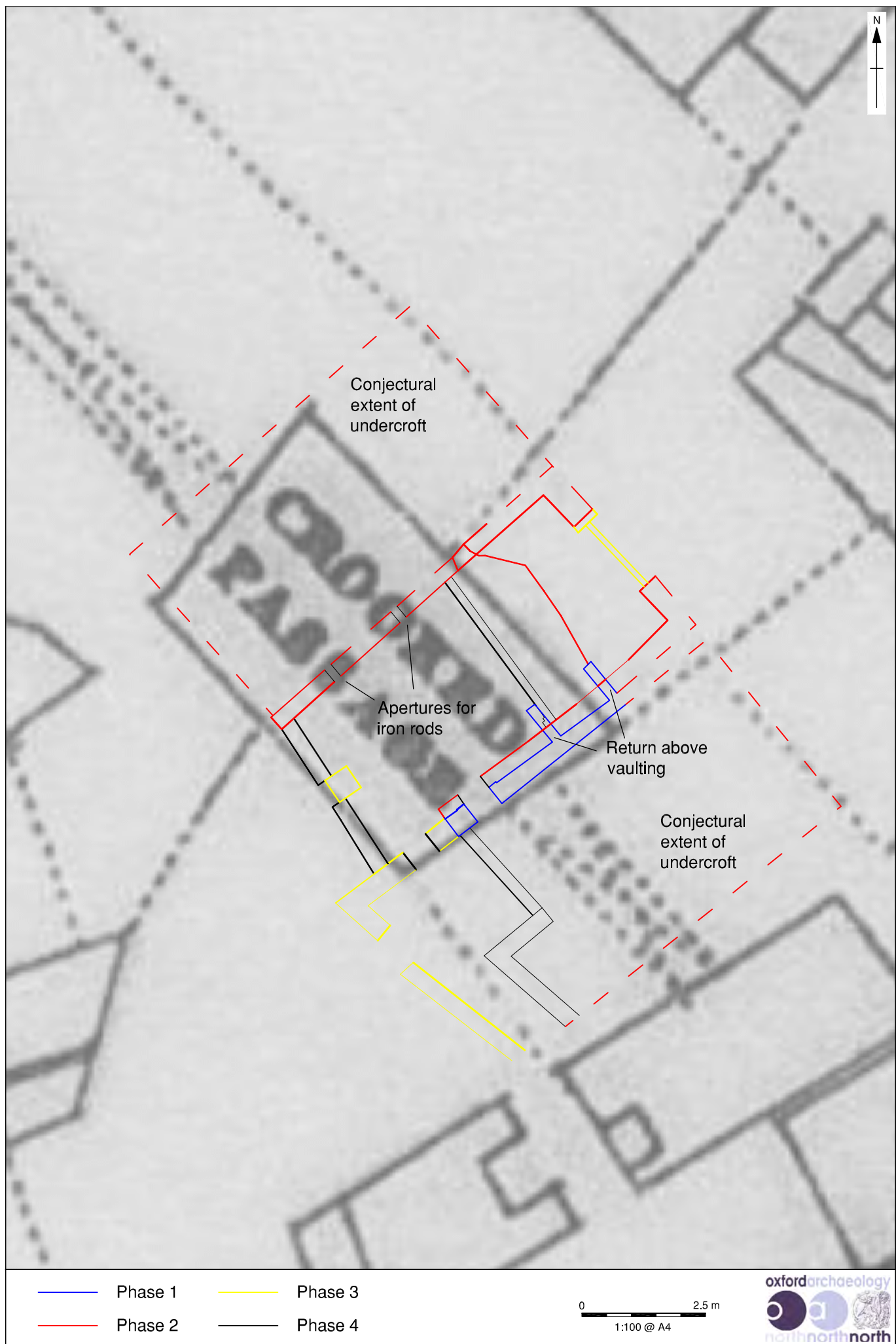


Figure 11: Undercroft plan, superimposed on an extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1851