

Notes on Watching Brief undertaken at

**Red Lion Street, Alvechurch,  
Hereford and Worcester**

Tuesday 13th June 1995

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### Summary

During groundwork at the Beazer Homes development site at Red Lion Street, Alvechurch, Hereford and Worcester, the remains of a late post-medieval tanning pit were exposed. A full record of the features was made prior to destruction necessitated by the current building programme.

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Beazer Homes development site at Red Lion Street, Alvechurch has been the subject of a recent archaeological evaluation (OAU, 1994) and an ongoing series of archaeological watching briefs undertaken as groundwork at the site progresses.
- 1.2 During the excavation of foundation trenches in the eastern (Red Lion Street frontage) section of the development area (figure 1) the remains of a timber "paddle" and a timber structure were identified. Following a brief site visit on 9th June 1995 (see WB notes A Parkinson) it was decided that said timber structure warranted further recording. Accordingly, a further site visit was made on 13th June 1995.

### **2 Observations**

- 2.1 Upon cleaning, part of the base and two sides (NE and SE) of a timber lined pit were exposed. A photographic and drawn record of the exposed remains was made prior to further excavation by the contractors. The narrow width of the excavated foundation trench unfortunately precluded the recording of a measured section. Machine excavation proceeded under archaeological supervision and served to expose the full extent of the feature. A measured plan (figure 2) and a full photographic record of the exposed timbers was made. The timber structure is described in detail below.
- 2.2 *Description of timber structure*
  - 2.2.1 A well preserved timber structure was dug into the natural boulder clay - a red/orange gritty silty clay (61). The primary fill of the feature (65) was a mid grey sandy silt with brown sandy lenses and extensive green staining particularly at the base resulting in discolouration of some of the planking boards (two samples, nos.[1] and [2], were taken for ?chemical analysis).
  - 2.2.2 The base of the structure comprised four horizontal planks ([50], [51], [68] and [69]) on a NE-SW orientation and up to 3.25m in length which were laid upon a maximum of five sleeper joists 0.1m x 0.1m x 1.2m) oriented NW-SE. The timber of the planks was fairly well

preserved though cracking and breaks were evident in the areas of the underlying sleeper joists. The sides of the structure were constructed of substantial timber uprights (four approximately evenly spaced posts per side) supporting timber planking which survived to a maximum height of 0.25m after full excavation.

- 2.2.3 The overall dimensions of the exposed structure were 1.3m x 3.5m and the top of the planking base was at a level of 114.36m OD (relative to contractors TBM of 116.00m OD). The narrow width of the foundation trench did not allow for full and accurate interpretation of the section and so a level for the cutting of the pit was not determined. During machining the planking sides of the pit first became visible at a depth of 114.60m OD.

### **3 Finds**

- 3.1 A small assemblage of finds were retrieved from the fill of the pit during machine excavation. This assemblage comprised a total of 10 sherds of mid 19th century pottery, three large Fe nails, two small Fe nails, two fragments of glass, one strip of leather and two fragments of decorated unidentified metal strip.

### **4 Samples**

- 4.1 A total of three soil samples were recovered for chemical analysis. Samples [1] and [2] were from layers [65] and [59] respectively (both of which represent the primary fill of the pit). Sample [3] was retrieved during machine stripping of the pit.
- 4.2 A total of two timber samples ([4] and [5]) were taken for species analysis/dendrochronological dating.

### **5 Discussion and Conclusions**

- 5.1 The exposed structure with its accompanying paddle would appear to represent the remains of a tanning or handling pit. The adjacent building to the NW is a former butchers shop and slaughterhouse at least as far back as the turn of the C20th which would seem to lend weight to this interpretation, as would the evidence of the road name "Tanyard Lane" to the NW of the site. The finds from the lower fills of the pit indicate a late date for the disuse of the pit.
- 5.2 The possibility exists that the excavated remains may prove useful in ascertaining the approximate 'lifespan' of such a feature. The establishment of such a date range would be dependant upon the pottery assemblage being closely datable and upon the timber samples providing accurate dendro dates.

Ric Tyler  
14th June 1995

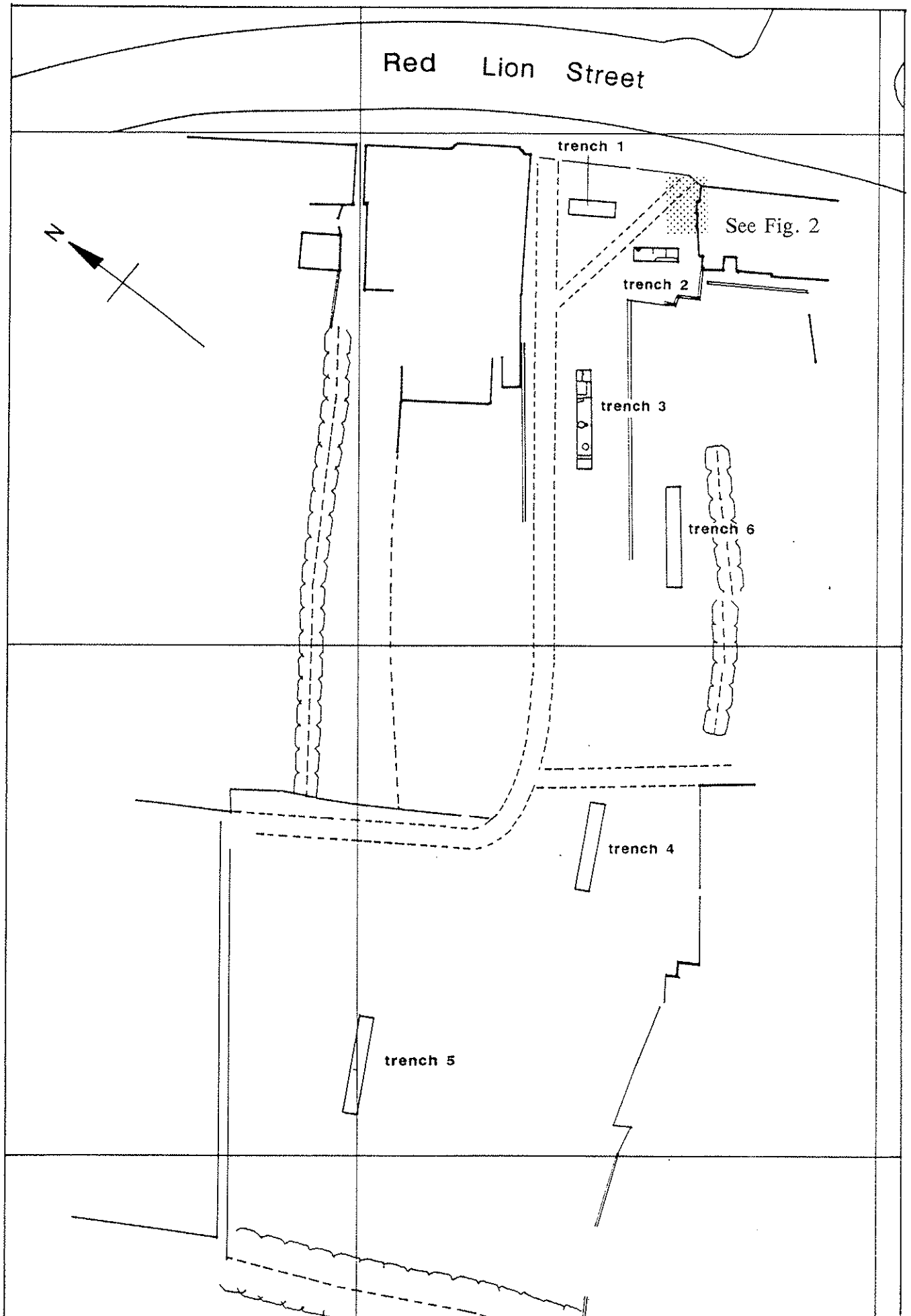


Figure 1: Location Plan, Scale 1:500.



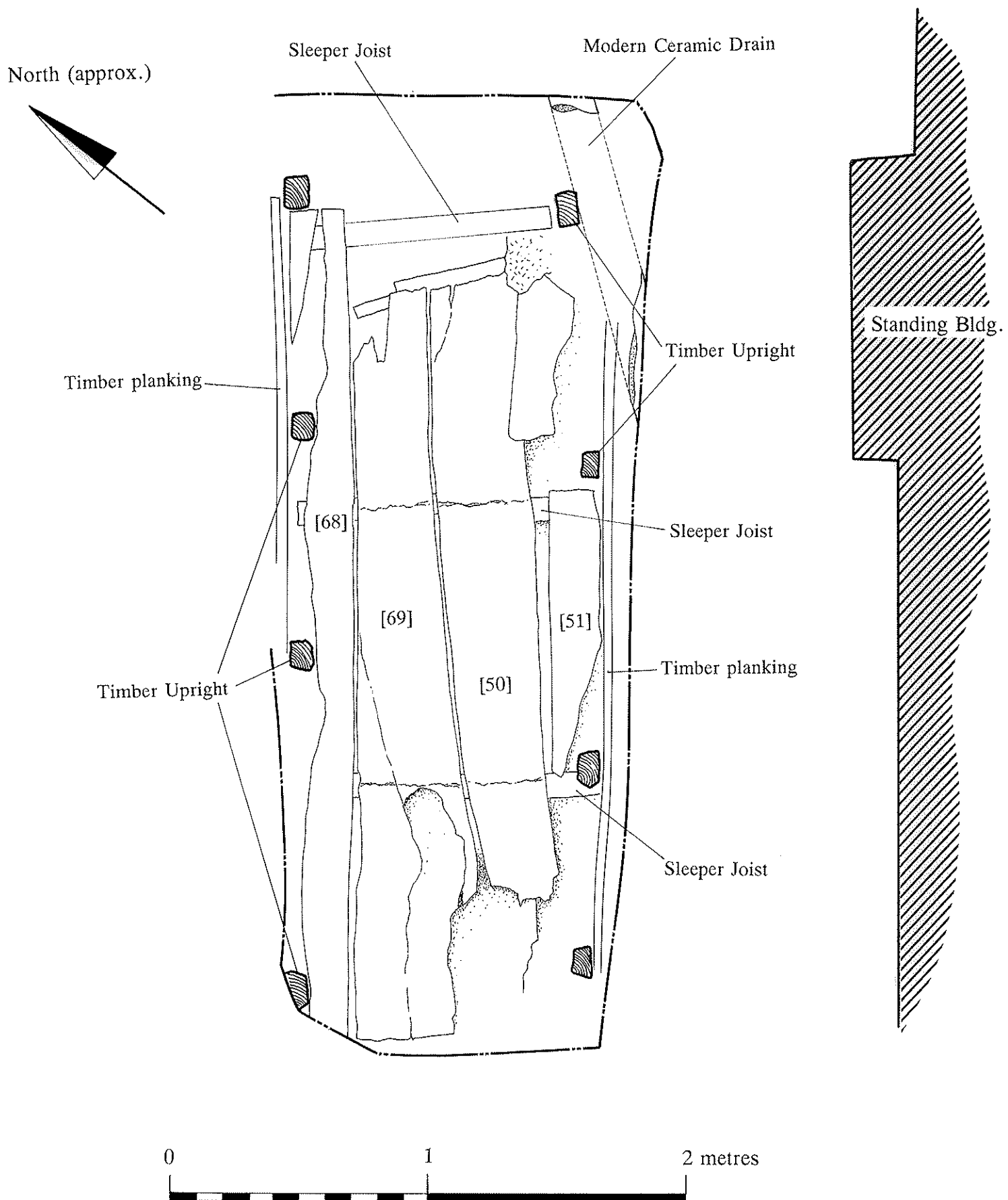


Figure 2: Red Lion Street, Alvechurch: Tanning Pit Plan as fully exposed.

