

St. Cross College
West Quad
Oxford



**Watching Brief and
Building Recording**



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St. Cross College West Quad, Oxford

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The West Quad, St Cross College, Oxford

Summary

Following on from the submission of a Desk Based Assessment (OA, Dec 2012), and a subsequent archaeological evaluation report (OA, April 2013), Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Prime Construction Ltd to carry out an archaeological recording and watching brief of the historic boundary wall enclosing the north west area of the Western Quad at St. Cross College, Oxford.

The site was composed of areas of car parking, garages, and gardens at the rear of the St Cross College buildings on St Giles, Oxford. The development will see the construction of a new L-shaped building in the north west corner of the college lands on St Giles, which will complete the structural development of the northern and western sides of the West Quad.

It was found that the walls above ground on site were largely rebuilt, most likely in the 19th century, with the inner east west running wall (OA 94a) appearing to be the oldest. Broken moulded stones as well as broken brick and tile were found in both the east west running walls (OA 94a and OA 103) suggesting that debris from nearby buildings works were used in their construction. The area containing the garages in modern times appears to have been enclosed with the red brick elements sometime in the 19th century.

Subsequent excavation and investigation revealed that below ground level, the masonry and mortar of OA 14 is different, suggesting that it is likely to be much later in date and possibly original. OA 103 and OA 94a both had relatively shallow foundations with masonry consistent with that above ground. It is thought that the excavated foundations of another wall parallel with and slightly south of OA 94a may in fact be the original parish boundary walls and that OA 94a is a later addition to the site.





1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Following on from the submission of a Desk Based Assessment (OA, Dec 2012), and a subsequent archaeological evaluation report (OA, April 2013), Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Prime Construction Ltd to carry out an archaeological recording and watching brief of the historic boundary wall enclosing the north west area of the Western Quad at St. Cross College, Oxford.

1.1.2 The site was composed of areas of car parking, garages, and gardens at the rear of the St Cross College buildings on St Giles, Oxford. The development will see the construction of a new L-shaped building in the north west corner of the college lands on St Giles, which will complete the structural development of the northern and western sides of the West Quad.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

1.2.1 The overall aims of the building recording and watching brief were to:

- To help meet the requirements of the planning condition;
- to investigate and record for posterity the walls which will be lost by the forthcoming development;
- to enhance the overall understanding of this area of Oxford
- to analyse and study the recorded data;
- to make the record publicly accessible through a report (a public document) and a project archive deposited with a public institution.

1.2.2 Methodology

1.2.3 The building recording work focused on those boundary walls which were demolished in the current project.

1.2.4 The recording of these walls was broadly equivalent to a level 3 survey as defined by English Heritage in *Understanding Historic Buildings: a Guide to Good Recording Practice* (2006).

1.2.5 *On site recording*

1.2.6 The works include a photographic record, the enhancement of existing drawn records and a written, descriptive record.

1.2.7 The main ***drawn recording*** utilises a set of stone-by-stone elevation drawings of the two walls to be demolished which were provided to OA at the start of the project, and enhanced on site with archaeological annotation and phasing.

1.2.8 The ***photographic record*** includes both general external views of the walls (OA94 & OA103) as well as detail shots of items/features of archaeological detail. It also includes some photographs to show the wider context of the site.

1.2.9 A photographic scale will be used in images of features or artefacts.

1.2.10 A ***textual descriptive survey*** was undertaken to explain, describe and interpret the walls and the features revealed.

1.2.11 In addition to the pre-demolition works the building recording included a phase of intermittent watching brief recording during the dismantling of the wall to record



previously hidden evidence of the wall's construction or other features of interest such as reused stones.

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Three boundary walls are present on the Site, a wall that runs east to west along Pusey Street (**OA 103**), the Listed wall enclosing the west end of the site along Pusey Lane (**OA 14**) and a shorter wall within the site that runs east to west, inside of and parallel to, Pusey Street (**OA 94a**).

2.2 History

2.2.1 (**OA 94a**) appears as a boundary on Agas' Map of Oxford, 1578 (Figure 3), and as a wall on Loggan's Map of 1675 (Figure 4), and Hoggar's Map, 1850 (Figure 6), running into the buildings that faced onto St. Giles at the time. It is shown to follow the line of the parish boundary from Hoggar's 1850 map onwards.

2.2.2 (**OA 103**) first appeared as boundary along what is now Pusey Street on Hoggar's Map of Oxford, 1850 (Figure 6) and in the OS maps of 1876, 1921, 1939 and 1958 (Figures 7 - 10).

2.2.3 The Grade II Listed wall that runs north to south along Pusey Lane (**OA 14**) is on the same alignment as the late medieval boundary wall of the Beaumont Estate and some fabric may date to this period. This boundary on Agas' Map of Oxford, 1578 (Figure 3), and as a discernible boundary on all subsequent maps of the area.

3 DESCRIPTION OF WALLS

3.1.1 **OA 94a** (*Figure 11*) The boundary wall that runs east to west inside the Site (**OA 94a**), parallel with the wall along Pusey Street (**OA 103**), may represent the oldest wall, as exists above ground, on the site (Plate 1). It abuts the wall running north to south along Pusey Lane at its east end. It has large irregular stones with irregular coursing and has 12 courses of 19th century red bricks with curved coping built on top of it. This appears to be a Victorian stock brick, built with a course yellowish lime mortar with pebble and lime inclusions. Modern 20th century garages have been built between this and the wall running along Pusey Street (**OA 103**) and there is a modern doorway at the extreme east end of the south face. The mortar in the wall is a loose friable, earthy brown lime mortar. The coursing of brickwork, built in a simple stretcher bond, features a more compact, yellowish white lime mortar. On the east end, the wall returns to meet **OA 103**. This section of wall is built entirely with red brick, which is sewn into the red brick at the east end of **OA 94a** on the east side of the modern doorway. The north south running section of wall appears clearly for the first time on the OS map of 1921.

3.1.2 Inserted into the north face of the wall, at the level of the red brick, are two sections of concrete breeze blocks creating the inner leaf on this side where the modern garages meet it.

3.1.3 **OA 103** (*Figure 12*) The wall that runs east west along Pusey Street (**OA 103**) abuts St Cross College chapel at its west end and it is likely that this wall was built when Alfred Street was constructed in 1828 (Plate 2). The coursing is irregular and built with large squared stones of irregular sizes. A Tudor style arched doorway with large quoining is



located towards the east of the wall and a large gateway for vehicles has been inserted into the wall towards the west to provide access to the 20th century garages between this and OA 94a. Almost midway between the doorway and the gateway, the coursing changes subtly but there is no clear break in masonry. The west half of the wall has smaller and less regular coursing. It is also more weathered and appears to have had approximately four to five courses added to it. On top of the wall is coping that steps where the wall changes height. This consists of concrete on a bed of slate and cement, which curves back against a leaf of red brick on the south side of the wall.

- 3.1.4 This leaf of red brick appears irregularly across the north face of OA 103. It appears to be a Victorian stock brick, built with a course yellowish lime mortar with pebble and lime inclusions. The coursing is irregular but mainly features stretchers. In the section to the west of the garage gateway, it appears in large patches at the east and west ends of the walls with two courses running along the top under the coping. Below these two courses, where the flat roofs of the modern garages met the wall, are three to four courses of modern bricks with cement mortar. In the section between the garage gateway and the red brick return of OA 94a, the south face of OA 103 is almost entirely faced with red brick, with the exception of approximately five courses of stone above the ground in the eastern half of this stretch. In both the red brick areas and the stone areas of the enclosed south stretch of OA 14 are lengths of timber built into the coursing (Plates 3 & 4).
- 3.1.5 **OA 14** (*Figure 12*) Towards the south end of OA 14 is a 19th century Tudor style arched doorway and on top of the wall is 20th century cement and red brick coping, like that of OA 103 (Plate 5). Like OA 103, it appears to have two phases, but these are much more discernible. The southern end of the wall appears older and more weathered with smaller less regular coursing (Plate 6). The doorway is likely to be a later insertion. The northern end of the wall appears more modern and the masonry is larger and more regular, and almost ashlar like. The northernmost section of the wall has been removed for the insertion of the garages into this western façade and the southernmost part replaced with a wooden gate as part of the St Cross College 20th century development. Here we see a short section of 20th wall returning west to east, creating an entrance way. This has larger cobbled masonry on its north face and more regular squared masonry on its south face. It is built with a cementitious mortar.

4 WATCHING BRIEF

- 4.1.1 Work started on the eastern most section of the wall running along Pusey street (OA 103), where dismantling was necessary for access to the site from this side. The length of wall that was taken down was that outside the area enclosed by OA 94a on the south side and featured higher coping and a four centre arched doorway with stone jambs and lintel.
- 4.1.2 The modern concrete coping was removed and the stones were removed course by course with hammer and chisel. Occasional moulded stones were removed from the walls (Plate 7 & 8) and invariably, their moulded faces were facing inwards, so as to create a flat external wall face. These pieces of masonry included mullions, jambs and possibly pieces if lintels. All appeared to be crisp and similar to moulded stones in Victorian rebuilds throughout Oxford, suggesting they may be broken debris from nearby buildings sites dating to the 19th century.
- 4.1.3 On the south side were stone buttresses at either side of the doorway that appeared later than the wall and were not sewn in, suggesting that the doorway is a later insertion (Plate 9). The mortar throughout the wall is a pinky brown earthy mix that lenses to a more



sandy yellowish brown mix in places. There is no discernible break between these mortars.

- 4.1.4 The dismantling of this section of wall exposed the red brick leaf in the enclosed length of wall in section, revealing that it appears to be one build rather than a refacing of the wall (Plate 10).
- 4.1.5 A watching brief was partially maintained during the dismantling of OA 14 along Pusey Lane also. As masonry was removed, it was revealed that what we believed to be the older length of wall was later than expected as cementitious mortar was used throughout. This was similar to the cementitious mortar used in the later northern section of wall and may indicate that it was taken down and rebuilt at the time of the later build. Here, like OA 103, the doorway is a later insertion and not sewn into the masonry of the wall. Like the wall, it has a cementitious mortar and may have been added in the late 19th or early 20th centuries. The northern length of the wall is probably of a similar date.
- 4.1.6 The short length of wall making up the entrance appears to be 20th century and features a rough grey cementitious mortar throughout. Both this and the northern length of wall have very shallow foundations, sitting no more than 100m under the level of the road surface (Plate 12).
- 4.1.7 Like OA 14, on inspection during the watching brief, OA 94a was discovered to be later than expected, although is likely to be the oldest wall on the site above ground. The red brick upper section was removed west to east and stones underneath removed in quick succession, presenting the wall in section along its length (Plate 13). The mortar in the lower masonry construction was a pinkish brown earthy mortar that was organic rich and very friable. Within this was found pieces of broken red brick and some broken tiles with sandy yellow striations, which were common in Oxford in the late 16th and 17th centuries. Some pieces of moulded stone were also removed from the wall (Plate 14). The foundations of this wall were very shallow, reaching no more than 200m below the ground level of the garages.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1.1 Garden walls such as these have the potential to be subject to rebuilding and repair over time due to development and maintenance, and that seems to be the case for all three walls surveyed. OA 94a appears to be the oldest wall on the site and it is possible that it is likely that it dates to the early to mid 19th century, before cementitious mortars were introduced. It is likely, due to the presence of broken bricks and moulded stones, that it was built using reused debris from local building work. Its red brick upper section is probably later 19th century in date and contemporary with the enclosing of the area that contained the garages in modern times. The red brick north to south running section of OA 94a and the red brick inner leaf of OA 103 are likely to all be a part of the same build. It is possible that the extent of OA 103 is a 19th century build dating to the establishment of Albert Street, now Pusey Street, using stone and timber. The insertion of the doorway and gateway appear to be later, most likely late 19th century in date and may be contemporary with the Victorian fabric of the adjacent chapel. The concrete coping is a 20th century element.
- 5.1.2 The Listed western wall, OA 14, runs along the same alignment as a wall indicating the Beaumont Estate seen on the 1578 map and, although clearly rebuilt, it is likely that some of its fabric may date to this period. It is possible that the stones used to build the earlier southern section of wall were reused from the primary walls that appear in Agas' Map of



1578 but it is likely that they now also consist of newer material from various phases. The masonry in the newer northern section is more uniform suggesting that new material was used. The coping and the doorway are likely to be late 19th century in date and contemporary with those in OA 103.

- 5.1.3 Subsequent excavation and investigation revealed that below ground level, the masonry and mortar of OA 14 is different, suggesting that it is likely to be much later in date and possibly original. The masonry and coursing is more cobbled and irregular. The mortar is a rich yellow, sandy lime mortar with the foundation stones laid with brown earth. It's possible that this wall is the original boundary wall of the Beaumont Estate.
- 5.1.4 OA 103 and OA 94a both have relatively shallow foundations with masonry consistent with that above ground, suggesting that both, in their entirety, are much more recent than OA 14. It is thought that the excavated foundations of another wall parallel with and slightly south of OA 94a may in fact be the original parish boundary wall and that OA 94a is a later addition to the site. This wall, whose only remains is the foundations below ground level, is similar to the unearthed OA 14 but appears to slightly cut it where they meet, suggesting that it may be later.

Deirdre Forde

March 2015





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Figure 1: Site location

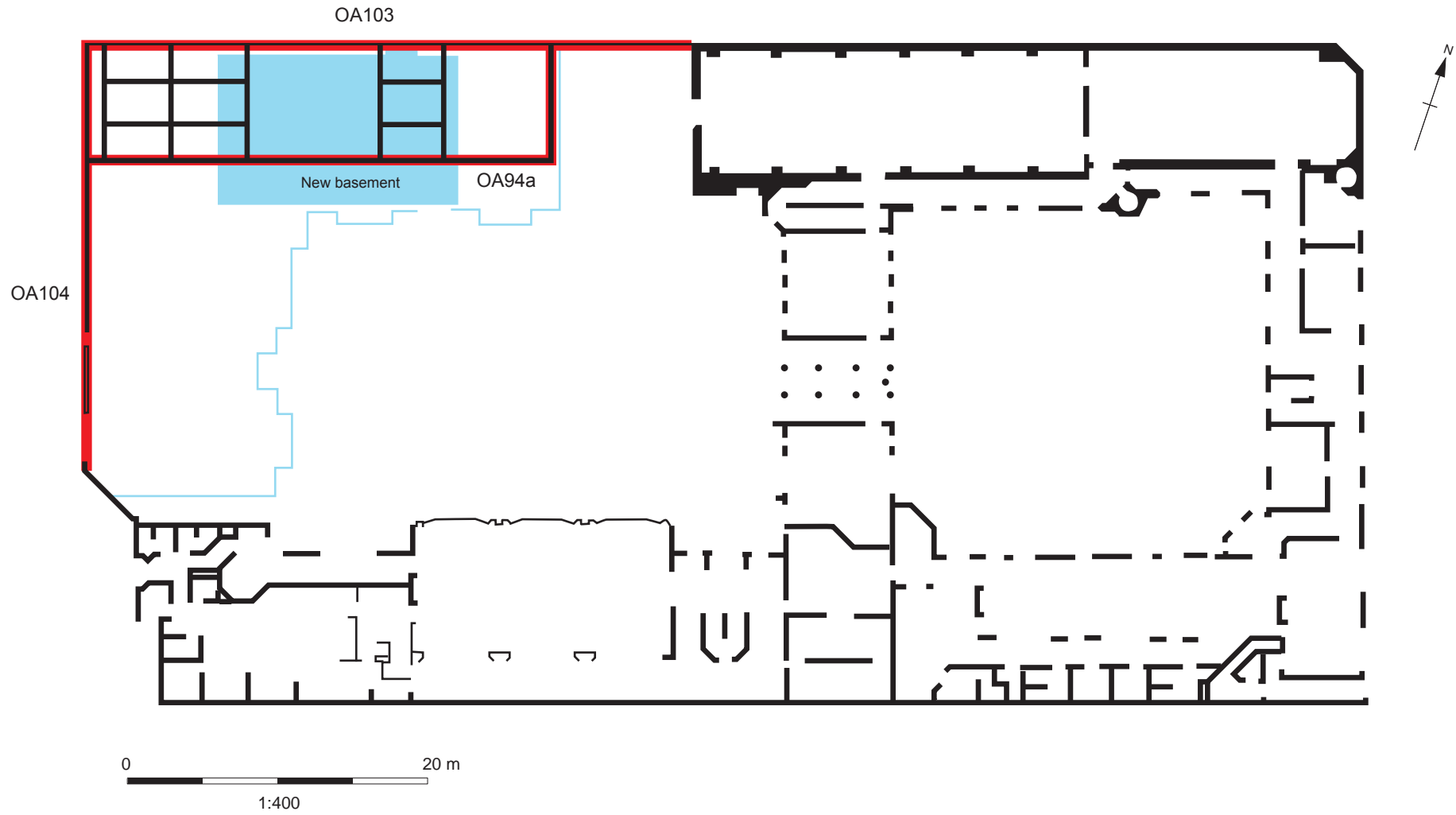


Figure 2: Plan of site showing location of walls



Not to scale

Figure 3: Agas' Map of Oxford 1578



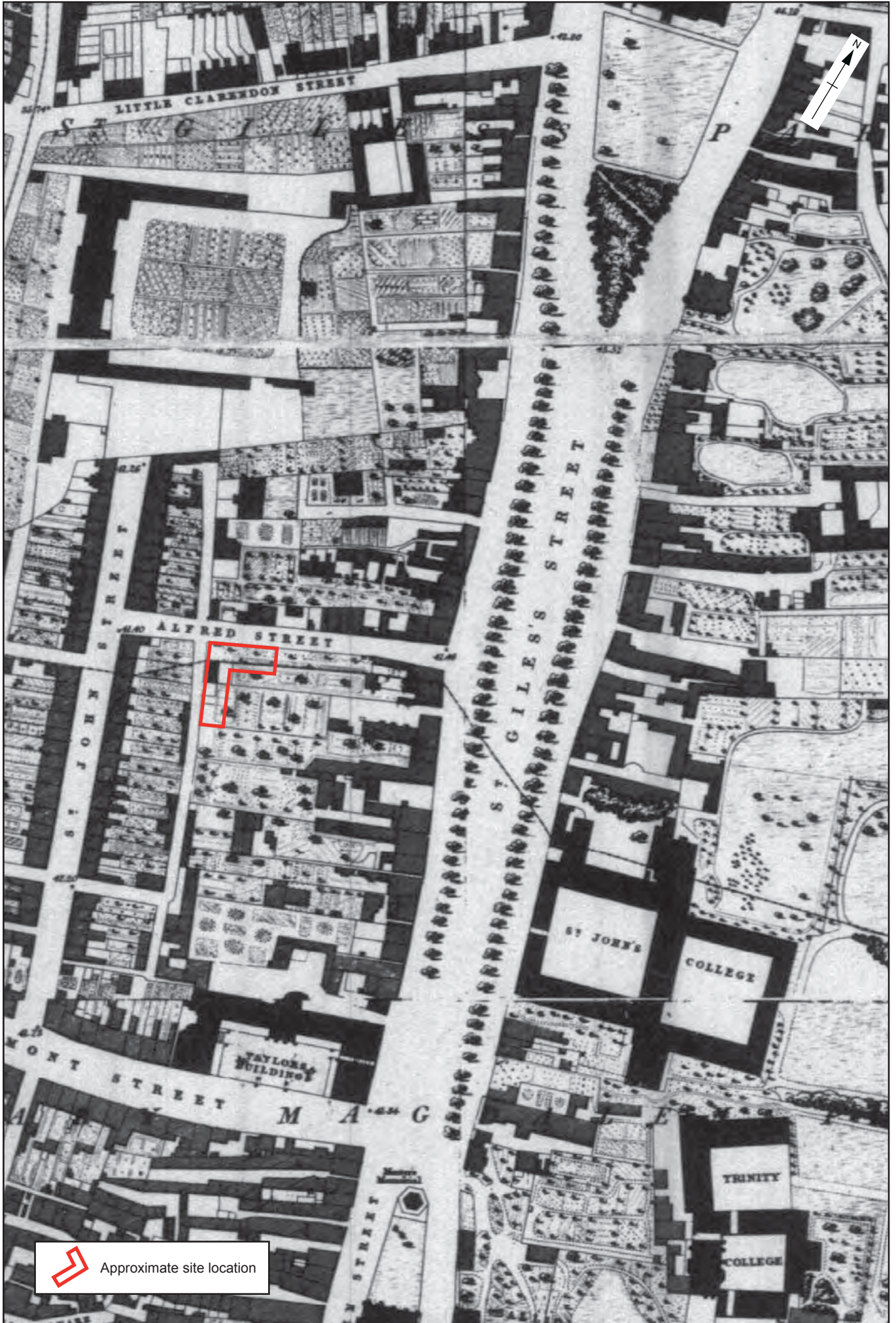
Not to scale

Figure 4: Logan's Map of Oxford 1675



Not to scale

Figure 5: Taylor's Map of Oxford 1750



Not to scale

Figure 6: Hoggar's Map of Oxford 1850

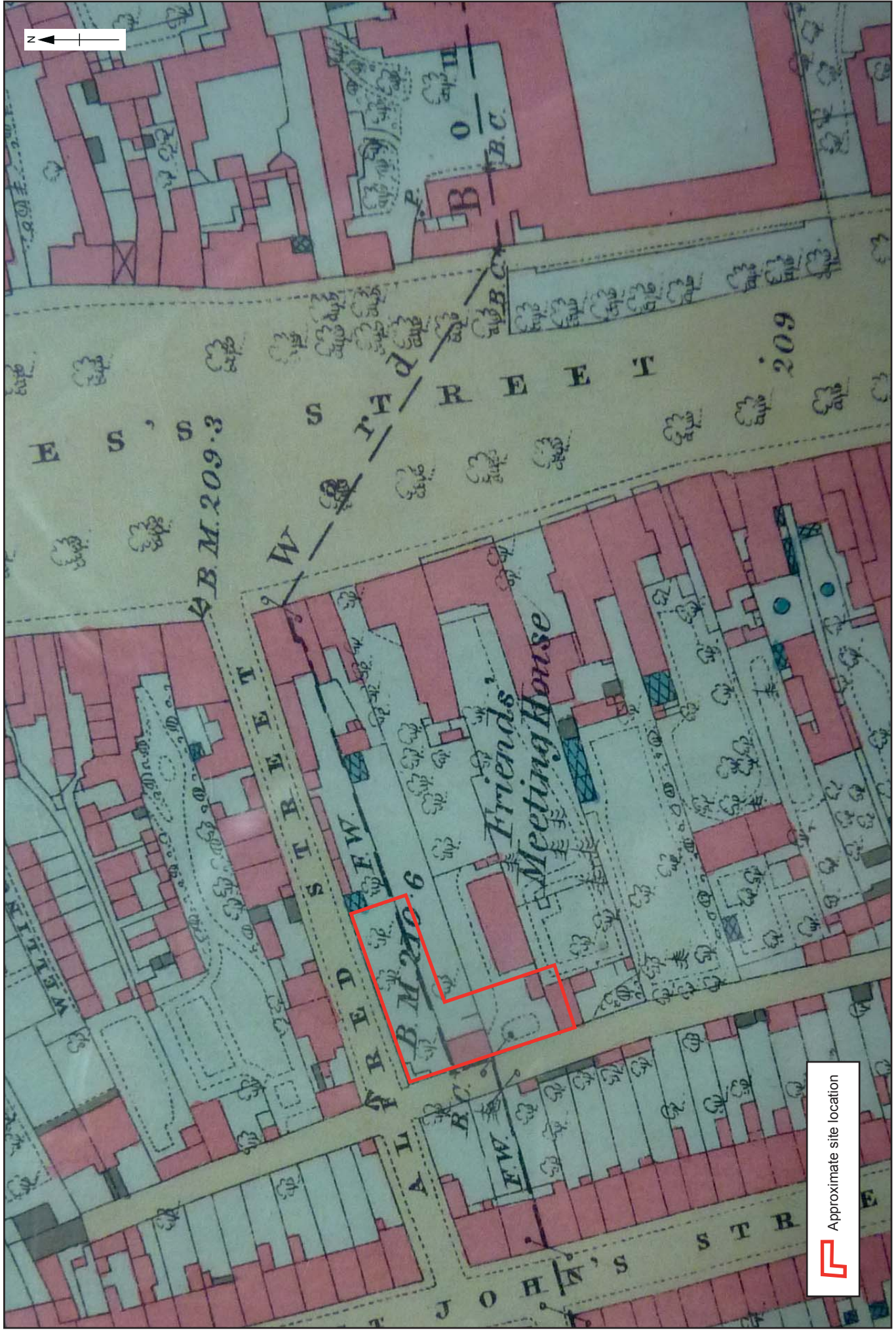


Figure 7: 1st Edition Ordnance Survey 25" Map 1876

Not to scale

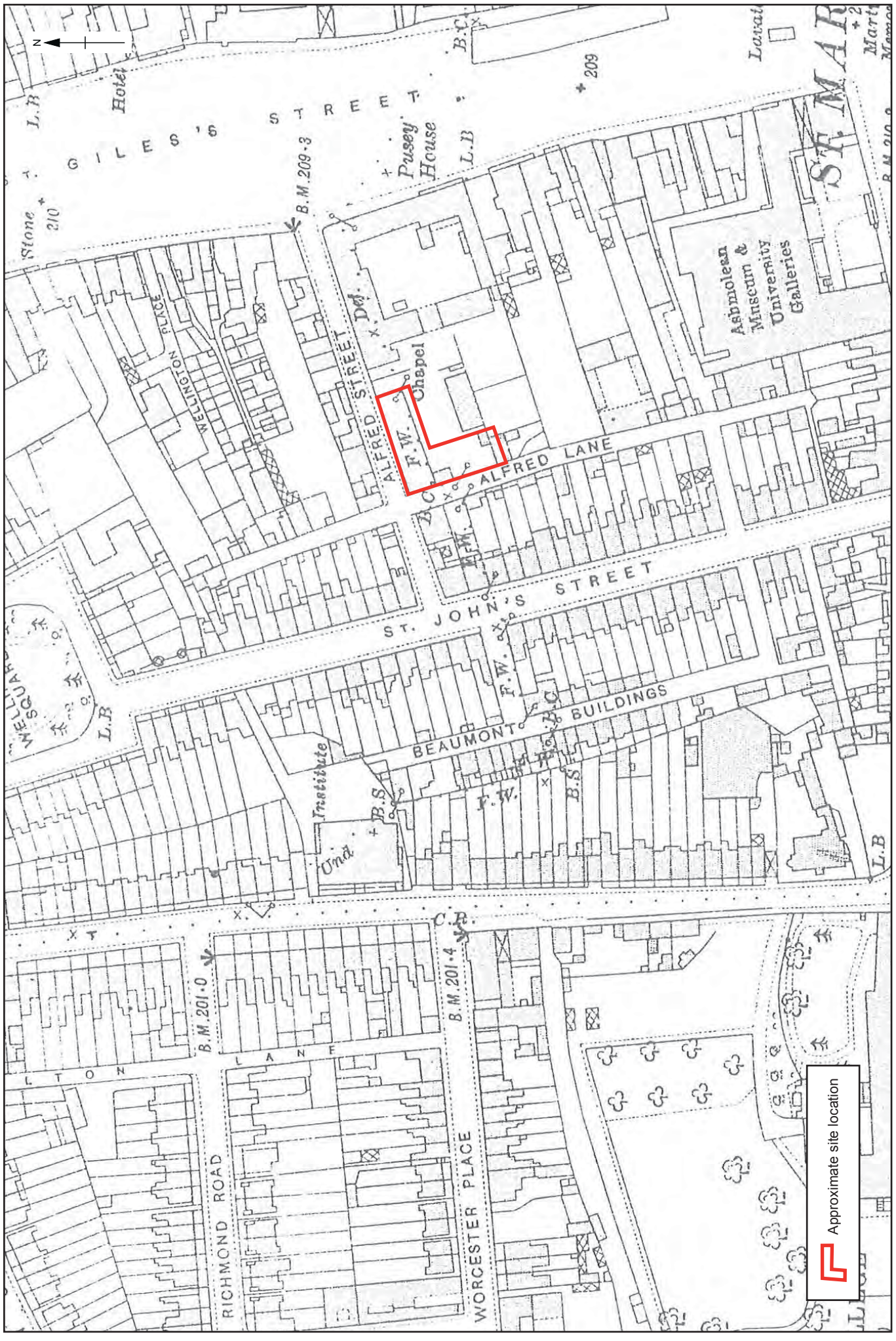


Figure 8: Ordnance Survey Map 1921

Not to scale

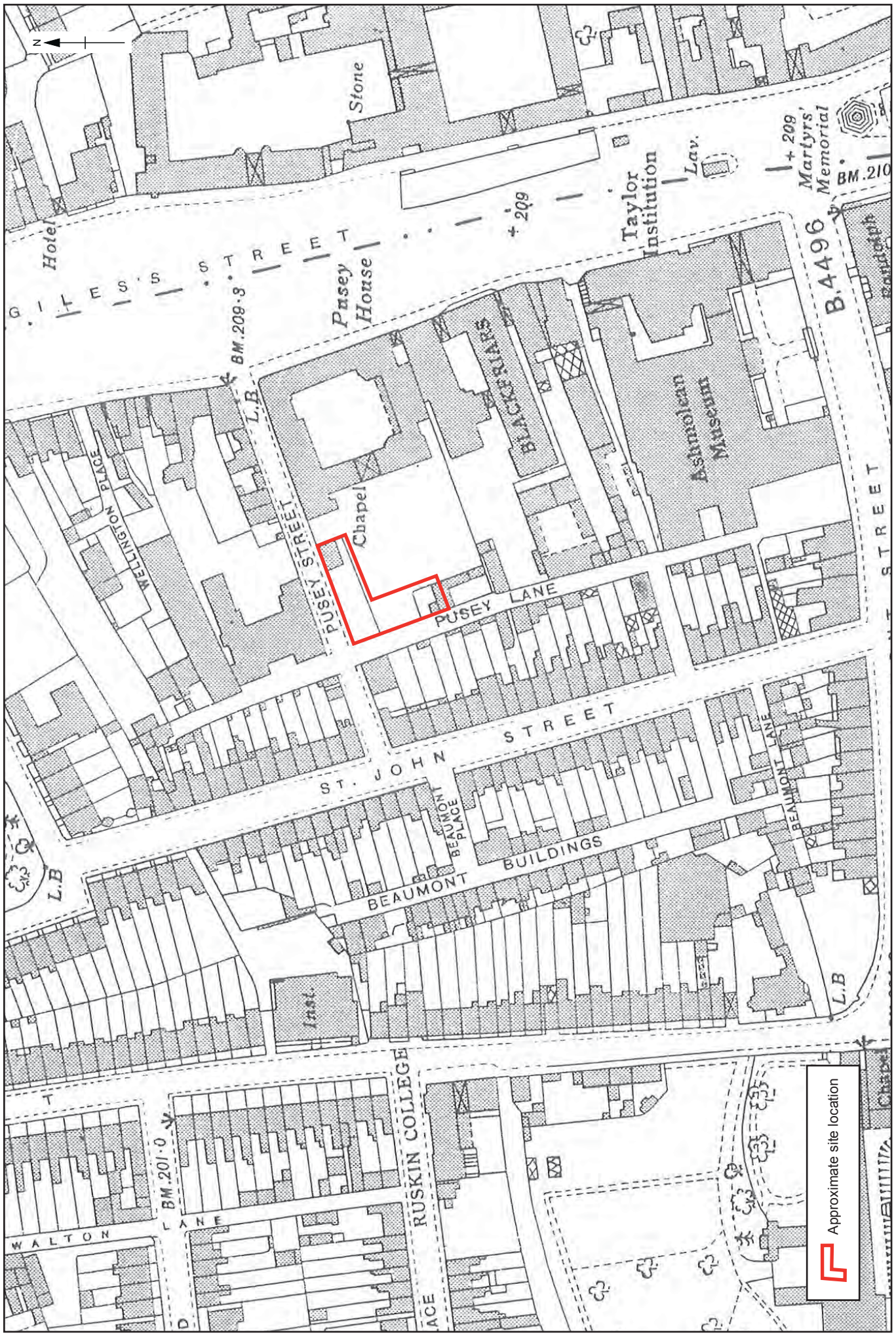


Figure 9: Ordnance Survey Map 1939

Not to scale

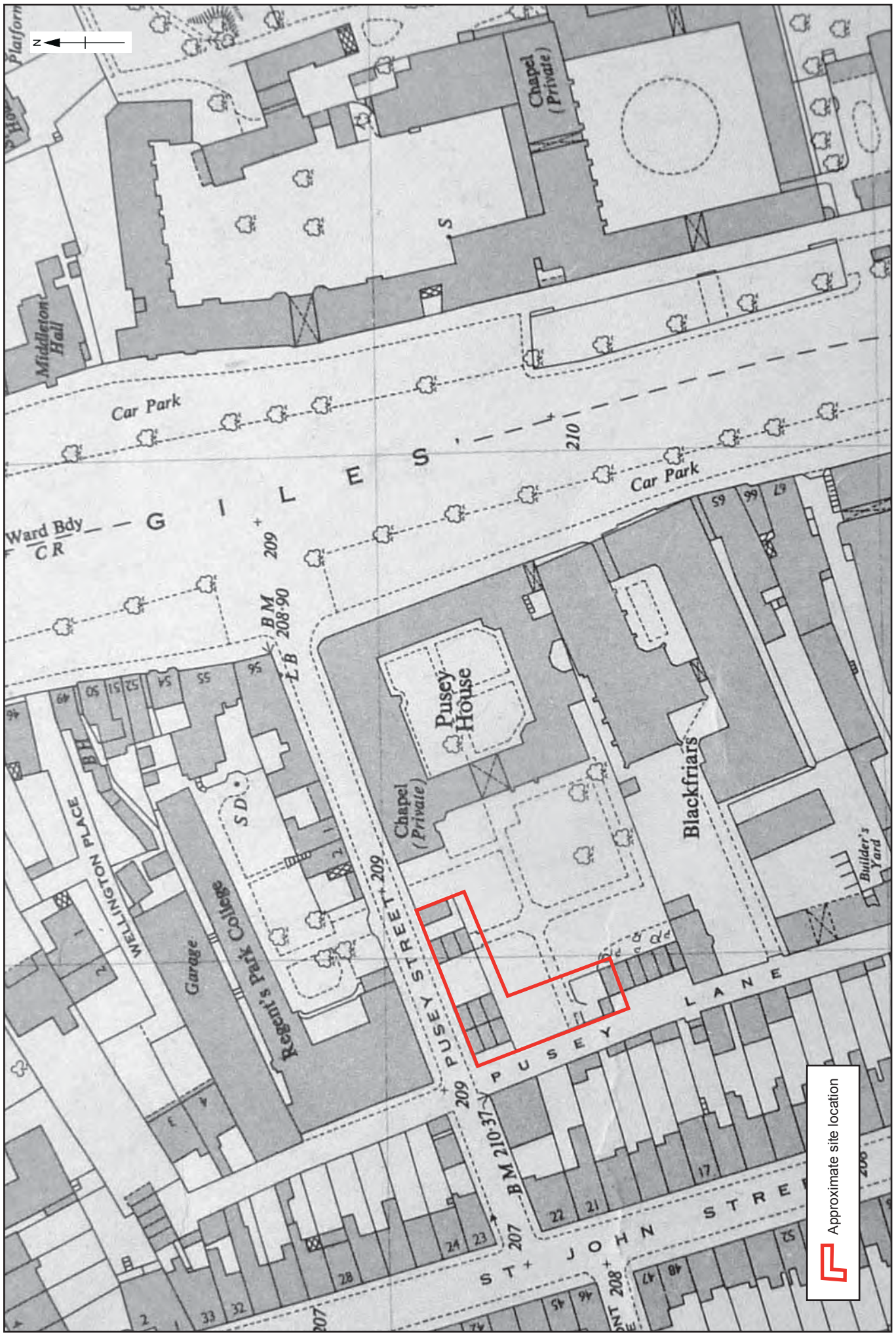
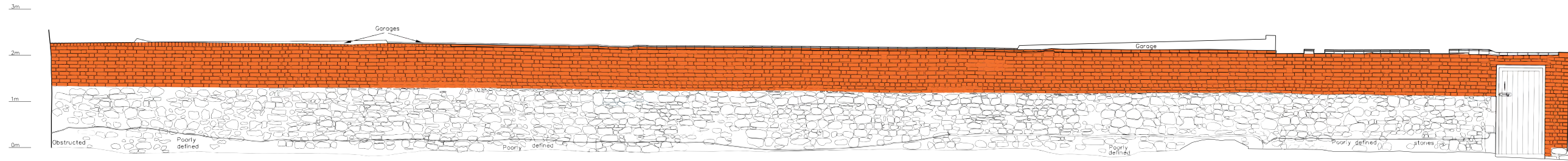


Figure 10: Ordnance Survey Map 1958

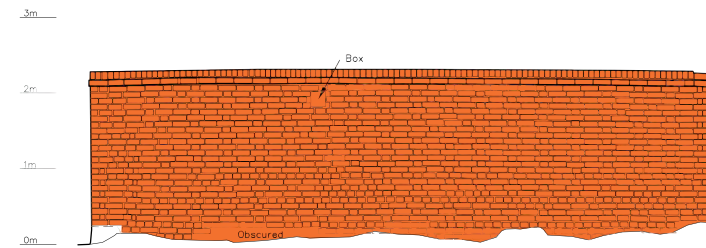
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OA94a

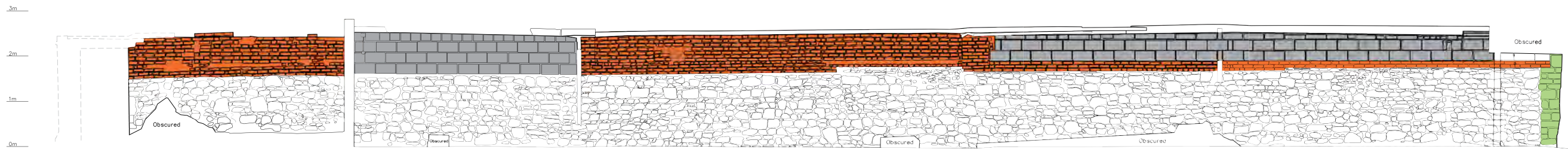
- Key
- 19th Century
 - Red brick
 - 20th Century



INTERNAL WALL (SOUTH) ELEVATION



INTERNAL WALL (EAST) ELEVATION



INTERNAL WALL (NORTH) ELEVATION

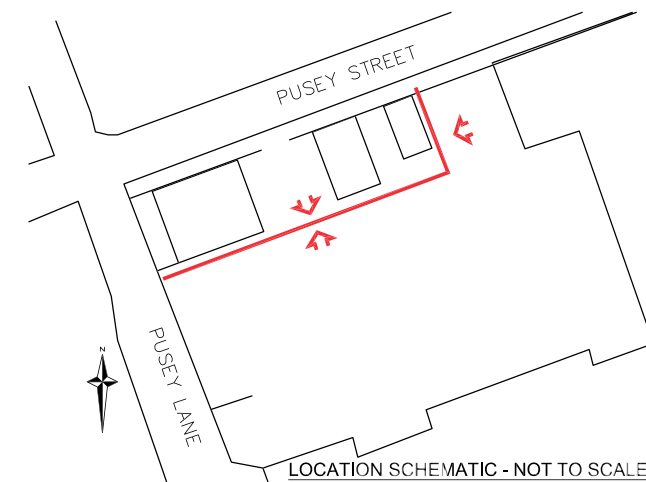


Figure 11: Internal boundary wall (OA94a) elevation

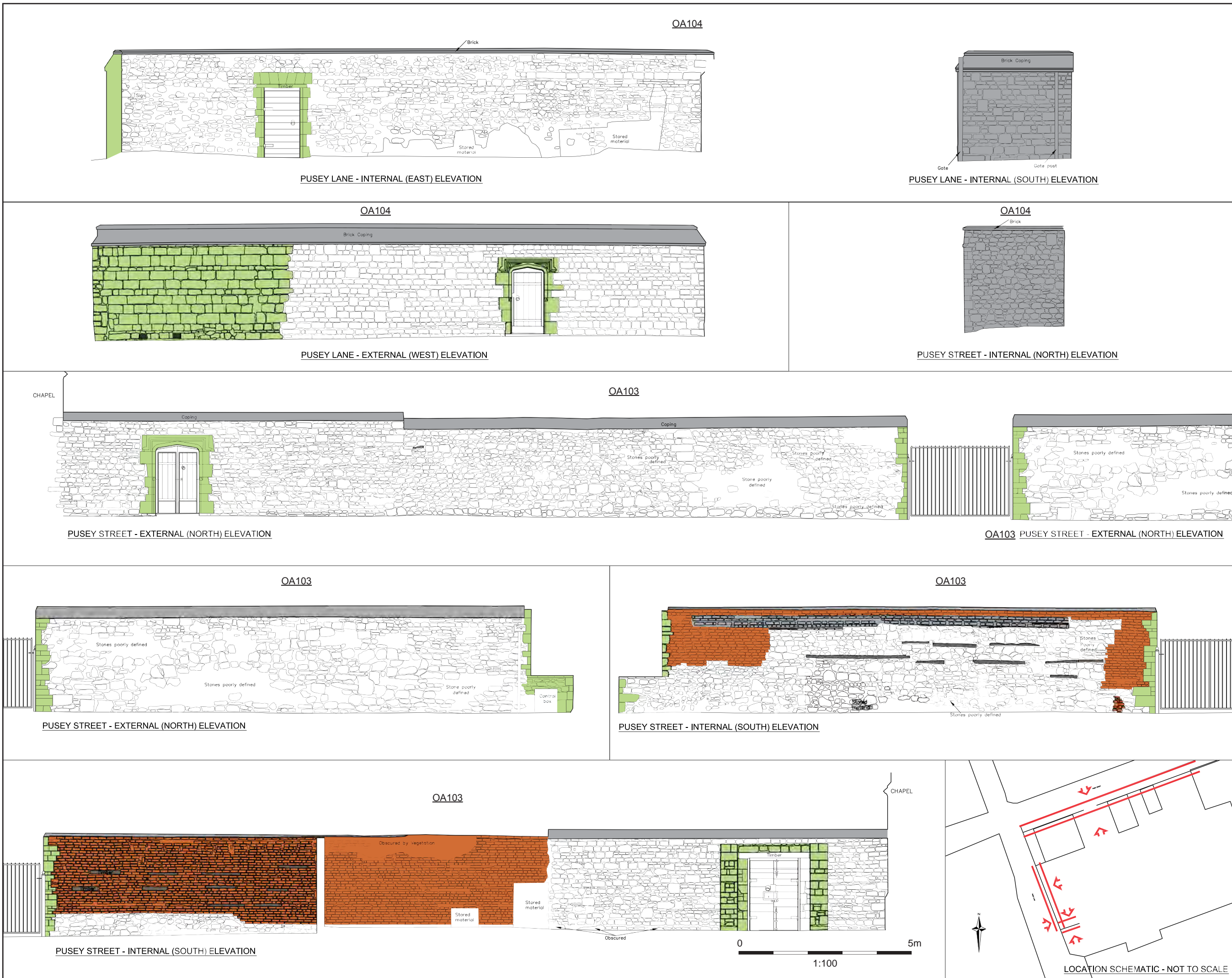


Figure 12: Pusey Street (OA103) and Pusey Lane (OA104) boundary wall elevations



Plate 1: Parish boundary wall running east to west within Western Quad, OA 94a, looking north east



Plate 2: St Cross College boundary wall running along Pusey Street, OA 103, looking south west



Plate 3: St Cross College boundary wall running along Pusey Street, OA 103, looking north



Plate 4: St Cross College boundary wall running along Pusey Street, OA 103, looking north:



Plate 5: St Cross College boundary wall running along Pusey Lane, OA 14, looking north east



Plate 6: St Cross College boundary wall running along Pusey Street, OA 103, looking south east



Plate 7: Moulded stone removed from OA 103



Plate 8: Moulded stone removed from OA 103



Plate 9: Inserted 19th century doorway in OA 103, looking north west



Plate 10: OA 103 in section, looking north west



Plate 11: OA 14 with reduced coursing, revealing cementitious mortar, looking south



Plate 12: Foundations of OA 14, looking north



Plate 13: OA 94a in section, looking east



Plate 14: Moulded stone removed from OA 94a