

**HERITAGE RECORDING  
SERVICES WALES**



**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**"No:1 Robeston Hall,  
Robeston West, Milford Haven".**



**By  
Richard Scott Jones (BA Hons, MA)**



# ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

## "No:1 Robeston Hall, Robeston West, Milford Haven"

By  
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**Prepared for:**  
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Robeston West,  
Milford Haven,  
SA73

**HRSW Report No: 107**

**On behalf of:**  
Mr & Mrs GP. Harris  
No 1 Robeston Hall,  
Robeston West,  
Milford Haven,  
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**HERITAGE  
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## ii) IFA Standards and Guidance

### THE INSTITUTE OF FIELD ARCHAEOLOGISTS (IFA)

#### *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*

##### **The Standard**

An archaeological watching brief will record the archaeological resource during development within a specified area using appropriate methods and practices. These will satisfy the stated aims of the project, and comply with the *Code of conduct*, *Code of approved practice for the regulation of contractual arrangements in field archaeology*, and other relevant by-laws of the IFA.

##### **Definition of an archaeological watching brief**

The definition of an archaeological watching brief is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive.

This definition and *Standard* do not cover chance observations, which should lead to an appropriate archaeological project being designed and implemented, nor do they apply to monitoring for preservation of remains *in situ*.

##### **Purpose of a watching brief**

The purpose of a watching brief is:

- ◆ to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works.
- ◆ to provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.

A watching brief is not intended to reduce the requirement for excavation or preservation of known or inferred deposits, and it is intended to guide, not replace, any requirement for contingent excavation or preservation of possible deposits.

The objective of a watching brief is to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site.

*The Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief was formally adopted as IFA approved practice at the Annual General Meeting of the Institute held on 14th October 1994.*

## Non Technical Summary

*The following report is the result of archaeological work undertaken by Heritage Recording Services Wales on behalf of Mr and Mrs Harris, owners of No:1 Robeston Hall, Robeston West, Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire. This work was part of a condition for an archaeological watching brief during the ground work for the construction of an extension to the above property.*

*The watching brief was designed to record any archaeological deposits that may become exposed during the groundwork pertaining to the former 18<sup>th</sup> century Robeston Hall. The original Robeston Hall burnt down on 24<sup>th</sup> August 1921. The hall supposedly has possible 16<sup>th</sup> century origins and is also located within an area of a former monastic grange.*

*The groundwork for the foundation trenches for the extension to the existing house exposed the remains of what is thought to be part of the former Robeston Hall 'scullery' and part of its former cobbled courtyard.*

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The following text details the archaeological work undertaken by Heritage Recording Services Wales (HRSW) on the ground work for the proposed development of an extension to the property known as 'No:1, Robeston Hall, Robeston West, Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire'.
- 1.2 HRSW submitted a project specification to Cambria Archaeology, the regional Archaeological Trust in Llandeilo detailing the schedule of works in July 2006.
- 1.3 All works were undertaken in accordance with both the IFA's *Standards and guidance: for an archaeological watching brief*, and current Health and Safety legislation.

#### Planning Background

- 1.4 Planning permission has been granted by Pembrokeshire County Council (*Application number NT/05/394*) to Mr GP Harris, owner of No:1, Robeston Hall, Robeston West, Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire, to extend the existing house (*NGR: SM 8851 0965*). The ground work entailed the demolition of a stone building/shed and ground clearance to an acceptable depth prior to the digging of the foundation trenches for the proposed extension in the courtyard area. A condition for an archaeological scheme of works was attached to this permission. This archaeological scheme entailed a watching brief during the ground work for the extension.

#### Site Description (*see Figs 2,3 & 4*)

- 1.5 The location of the proposed extension lies to the west of No:1 Robeston Hall, Robeston West, Milford Haven (*NGR: SM 8851 0965*). The property was formerly part of the former mansion house of Robeston Hall which was destroyed by a fire on 24<sup>th</sup> August 1921. The site lies just north of the Robeston Cross oil refinery.

The area undergoing ground work was located within the tarmac drive courtyard area and in the area of a 19<sup>th</sup> century demolished stone shed.

#### Geology

- 1.6 The local geology is a sedimentary rock of Lower Devonian Old Red Sandstone.

## Archaeological Background

- 1.7 Documentary sources indicate that the former 18<sup>th</sup> century house of 'Robeston Hall' was burnt down on 24<sup>th</sup> August 1921 after an accidental fire. At its peak the manor house was owned by William Henry Scourfield of Pembrokeshire. Apparently the manor had beautiful ornamental gardens and was renowned for its glasshouses and beautiful wine/grapes. Today there is little left of the manor house but a few standing walls, arches and garden walls. The house is thought to possibly have 16<sup>th</sup> century origins and is also located within a former monastic grange.

## 2 Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 In accordance with IFA's *Standards and guidance*, the aims of an archaeological watching brief are:
- to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works.
  - to provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.
- 2.2 A watching brief is not intended to reduce the requirement for excavation or preservation of known or inferred deposits, and it is intended to guide, not replace, any requirement for contingent excavation or preservation of possible deposits.
- 2.3 The objective of a watching brief is to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site. The primary objective of this assessment was to ensure that any previously unrecorded archaeological features and deposits exposed during the ground disturbance works and subsequent development of the site were adequately recorded and interpreted.
- 2.4 In accordance with IFA's *Standards and guidance*, the aim of an archaeological desk based assessment is to gain information about the known or potential archaeological resource within a given area or site (including presence or absence, character and extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and relative quality of the potential archaeological resource), in order to make an assessment of its merit in context, leading to one or more of the following:
- the formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource.
  - the formulation of a strategy for further investigation, whether or not intrusive, where the character and value of the resource is not sufficiently defined to permit a mitigation strategy or other response to be devised.
  - the formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research.:

### 3 Methodology

#### 3.1 The Watching Brief

With regards the watching brief, ground work was undertaken by the contractors using a mini-digger with a 1m wide ditching bucket and hand shovels. Throughout this operation a watching brief vigil was undertaken by an experienced archaeologist.

After the ground work had been completed limited cleaning of the trenches was undertaken in order to ascertain the existence or non existence of any archaeological features.

Where features were present limited excavation was undertaken to establish the date, depth, preservation, extent, function and relationship to other features.

Recording of the trenches was in three formats:

- i) *Photographic record* - Photographs were taken in digital format using a 5 mega-pixel camera recording TIFF files.
- ii) *Drawn record* - Site drawings, plans and sections, were produced at scales of 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50 on drafting film. Finished drawings have been related to Ordnance Survey datum and published boundaries where appropriate.
- iii) *Written record* - Written records were produced using a continuous numbering sequence for all contexts.

An environmental sampling and processing strategy was in place should the archaeological deposits warrant it. However, in this instance it was not felt that the deposits encountered required sampling.

All works were undertaken in accordance with both the IFA's *Standards and guidance: for an archaeological watching brief* and current Health and Safety legislation.

### 4 Results of the Watching Brief (see Figs 8, 9 and 10 and Photo plates)

- 4.1 In the following, numbers contained within brackets ( ), refer to context numbers allocated during the watching brief. A detailed list of all contexts is given in Appendix III of this report.

#### *The Ground Clearance and Foundation Trench*

- 4.2 After demolition of the existing stone shed at the far southern end, the uppermost deposit that covered the entire site, both modern concrete (2) and tarmac(1) to a depth of approx. 12cm was removed., thereby exposing the surface below. Directly below these upper deposits was a gravel and rubble core (3). Directly below this was a demolition rubble deposit (3), which consisted of stone-work, plaster and general debris from former demolition and landscape work. This demolition deposit is likely the remains of the former mansion, demolished following the fire in 1921. Initially the plan had been to cut through this rubble deposit in the agreed foundation trench positions, however after careful inspection below this deposit, it was noted that there was both an earlier floor level within the demolished building that consisted of a red brick floor (7) and an extensive cobbled surface outside of the building within the courtyard area (6).
- 4.3 Because of the nature of these floor levels, in that they were very likely 18<sup>th</sup> century in origin, the decision was made to completely clear the entire development area of the rubble deposit (3), thereby exposing both the red brick floor (7) and the cobbled floor surface (6), so that it could be recorded and

planned prior to the foundation trenches being excavated.

- 4.4 Clearance of the rubble deposit across the entire area exposed the foundation walls of the demolished building (9) which enclosed a rectangular room that had been divided by a red brick partition wall (8). The remnant of an iron peg was found at the front end of this wall, indicative of a former door hinge/peg (11). Abutting this partition wall to the west was a large red sandstone slab at floor level. At the far south west corner was found the remains of a small fireplace/hearth (15) delineated by a series of slate stone slabs. A further square stone slab (22) had also been inserted in the main part of the red brick floor. To the west of this stone was an area of concrete that had been laid out in an 'L' formation along the west and north wall (10). This area likely delineated a working area that may have held a table or tables at some time. Further removal of the demolition rubble exposed the fact that the demolished building had been much larger at some time or other. Whereas the demolished building had been almost square in form, the exposed floor surface indicated a rectangular building some 2 meters longer in length E-W. The entrance to the building had been from the courtyard area at the northern end across a stone threshold (21). Unfortunately the full width of this entrance could not be ascertained due to overburden covering.
- 4.5 Outside of the building, the clearance had exposed a cobbled surface (6) in the courtyard area. Investigation of this area showed that the cobbles had been deliberately laid in alternating directions, a line of verticals followed by an in-fill of hap-hazard horizontals. Unfortunately much of the floor surface to the west and the north had been destroyed by earlier service trenches (23 + 24)
- 4.6 Following the recording of these floor surfaces the foundation trenches were dug, cutting through the exposed floor surfaces, the red brick floor and the cobbles. At the far southern corner of this building, cutting for the trench exposed what appeared to be a buttress or corner of an earlier wall incorporated into the building (13). This was located directly below the red brick floor surface. At the base of this corner/wall is what appeared to be an even earlier floor surface still (12). This was implied by the remains of a stone slab tucked up into the corner, possibly indicating that the floor surface at this time was flagged.
- 4.7 Also exposed was the remains of a red sandstone wall (14) which lay directly below the south-west corner of the existing house. This wall very likely represents part of the former Robeston Hall mansion. The fabric of the wall consisted of red sandstone stones, each irregular in shape and form and bonded by a mixed mortar of red sandstone and lime and ash.
- 4.8 Another significant feature exposed during the cutting of the foundation trenches was the remains of an old culvert (20), which lay below the partition wall of the demolished building (8). The culvert consisted of a series of red sandstone capping stones, which covered a series of red sandstone uprights. Unfortunately, from the section of the culvert exposed, only two of the cap stones remained, the others having been removed or destroyed at an earlier date. This said however, the inside of the drain still had the contents of a 'sealed' deposit. For investigative reasons, so as to ascertain some dating material for the drain, a large section of the drain silt in-fill was removed. Within the silt was found predominantly 18<sup>th</sup> century material, consisting mostly of pottery fragments. These fragments included the remains of half an 18<sup>th</sup> century tea cup which had a hand painted decoration of flowers on its face. Also discovered was the remains of a 'souvenir' type plate from Malta, again likely 18<sup>th</sup> century in origin. Other fragments included sherds of plates, dishes, glasses etc, all 18<sup>th</sup> century in date.
- 4.9 Within the foundation trenches in the northern and central areas, no archaeology became exposed apart from the bedding deposits for the cobbled floor. Directly below these was a natural red sandstone bedrock. (25)

## 5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The archaeological watching brief for the ground-works at No:1 Robeston Hall, managed to record the existence of three earlier floor levels, the first of these, a red brick floor, found within the foundations of the already demolished stone building, and the second being a cobbled floor in the courtyard. Both of these surfaces are likely contemporary in date, likely late 18<sup>th</sup> – early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Below the red brick floor level however was found an earlier floor surface that appeared to have been stone flagged originally. This was evident only from the remains of one fragment of stone slab however. Below the line of this early floor was discovered an old culvert whose silted up in-fill contained fragments of 18<sup>th</sup> century pottery and glass, indicating that the drain and the covering floor surface had fallen into disuse or had at least had silted up by the mid 1700's. No dateable material was found earlier than this within the culvert.
- 5.2 The digging of the foundation trench also exposed the remains of an early red sandstone wall at the far south-west corner of the existing modern Robeston Hall. This wall represents the early Robeston Hall, but may also be a remnant of the earliest part of the house, which is thought to be 16<sup>th</sup> century in origin. However this interpretation is based solely on photographic evidence from a photograph of the house taken in the 1890's, in which this area of the house appears to have a square form (*possible* indication of a 16<sup>th</sup> century origin) when compared to the other parts of the house, which all appear to have 18<sup>th</sup> century architecture.
- 5.3 The watching brief managed to gain information about the known or potential archaeological resource within the immediate area of No:1 Robeston Hall, and managed to make an assessment of its merit in context with the development work.

## **6 Acknowledgements**

Thanks to; Mr and Mrs GP Harris , the owners of No:1 Robeston Hall for their patience during the ground work and archaeological recording work.

## **7 Bibliography**

LLOYD. T. 1986. 'Lost Houses in Wales'.



## **APPENDIX I:**

### **Figs & Illustrations**

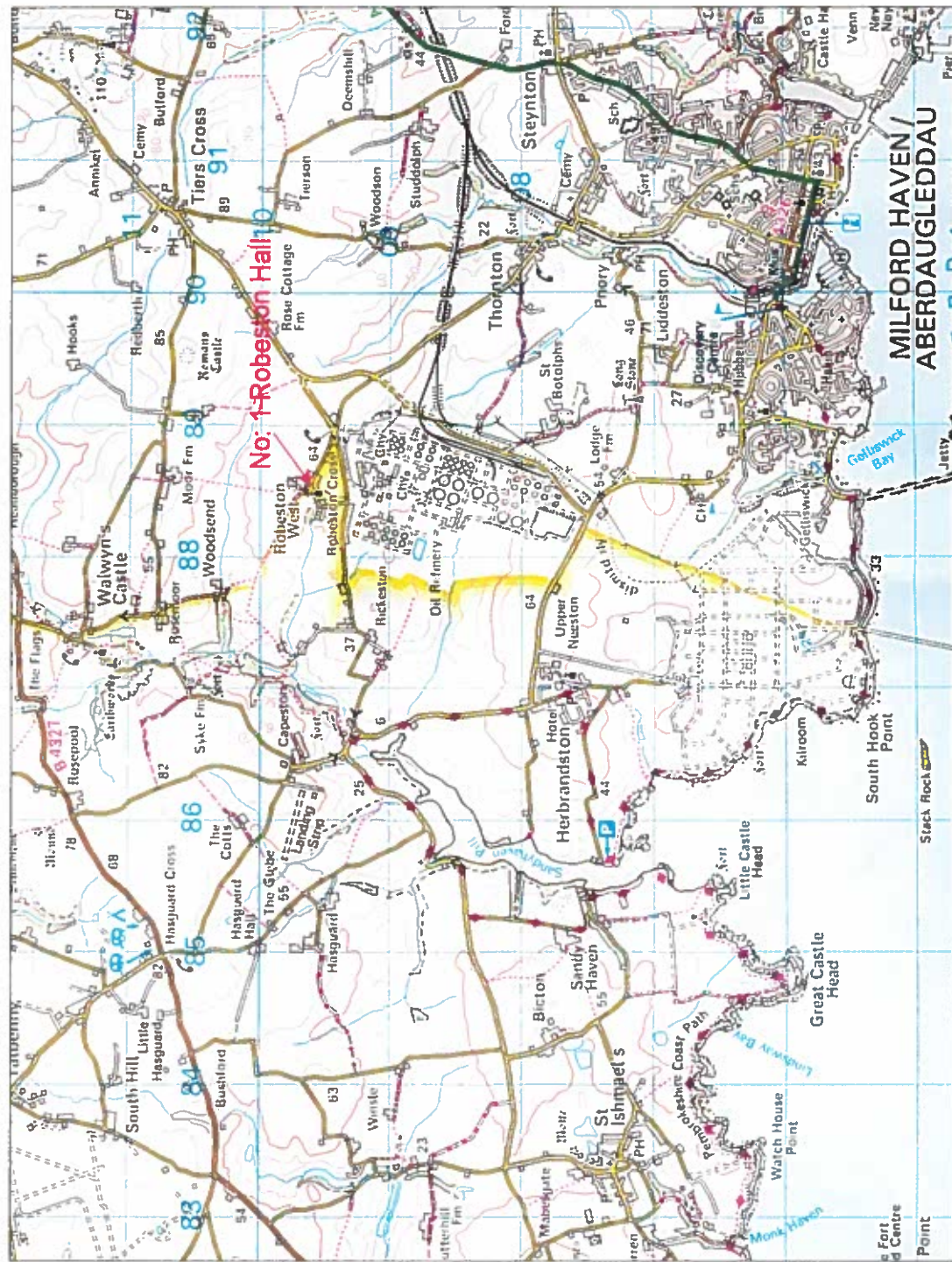


Figure 1. Location of No: 1 Robeston Hall, Robeston West, Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire.

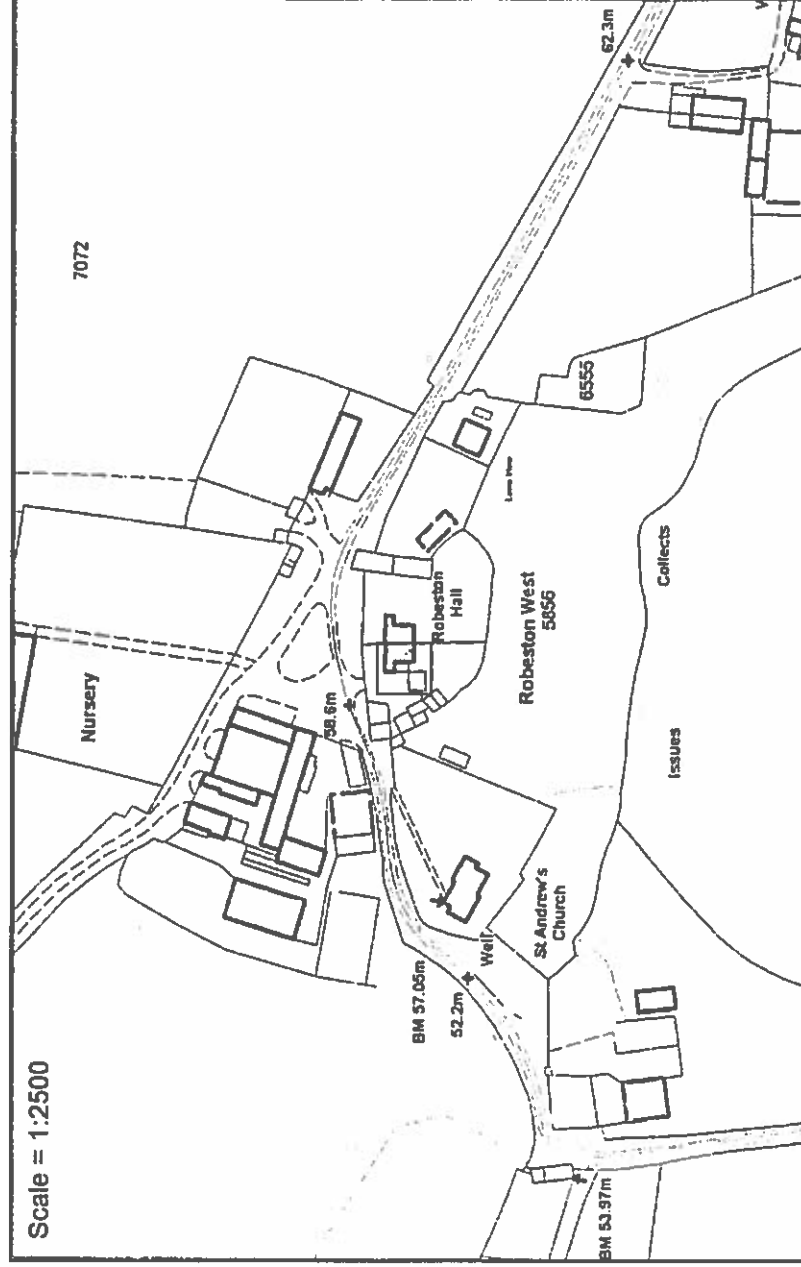


Figure 2. Location of No: 1 Robeston Hall, Robeston West, Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire.

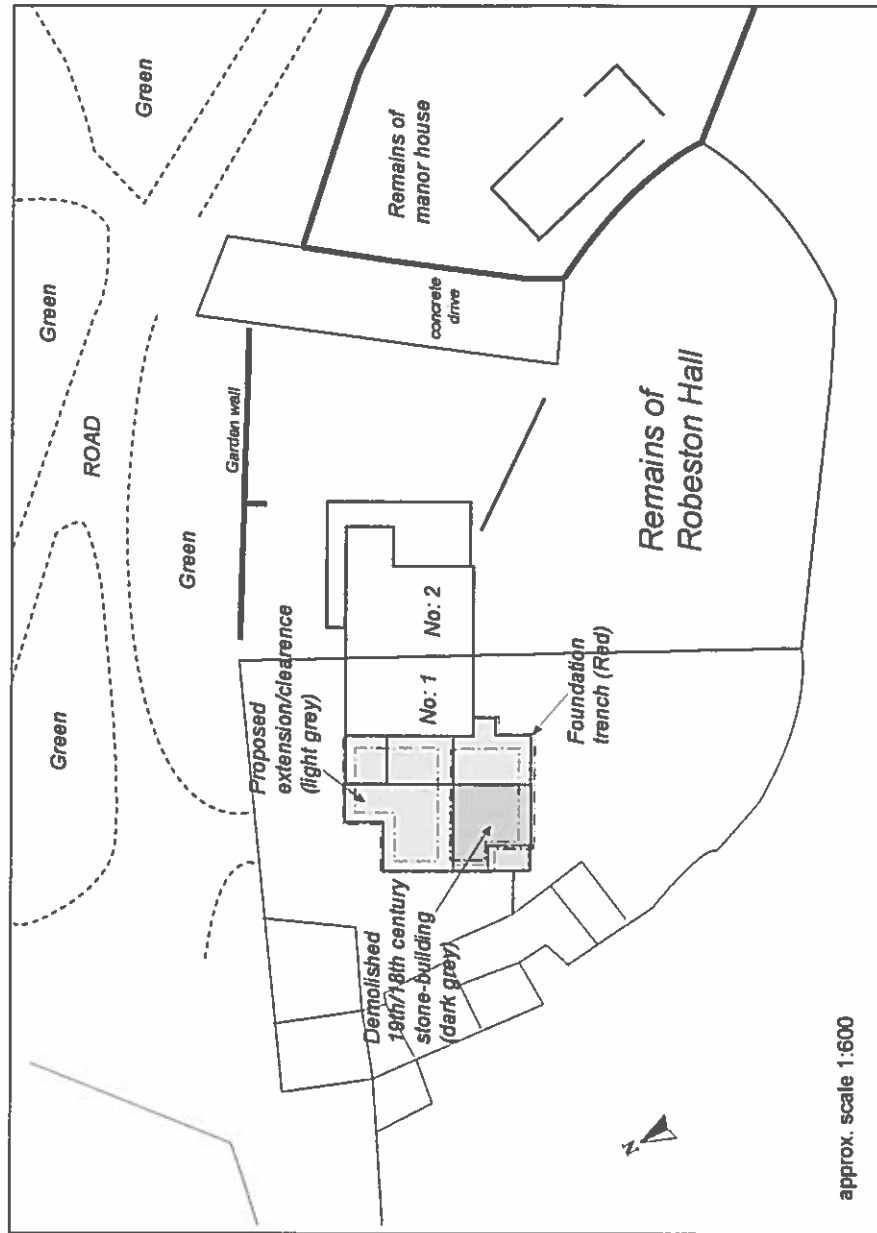


Figure 3. Site plan showing proposed extension and associated foundation trench (outlined in red).



Figure 4. Existing elevations of No 1 Robeston Hall, Robeston West, Milford Haven.

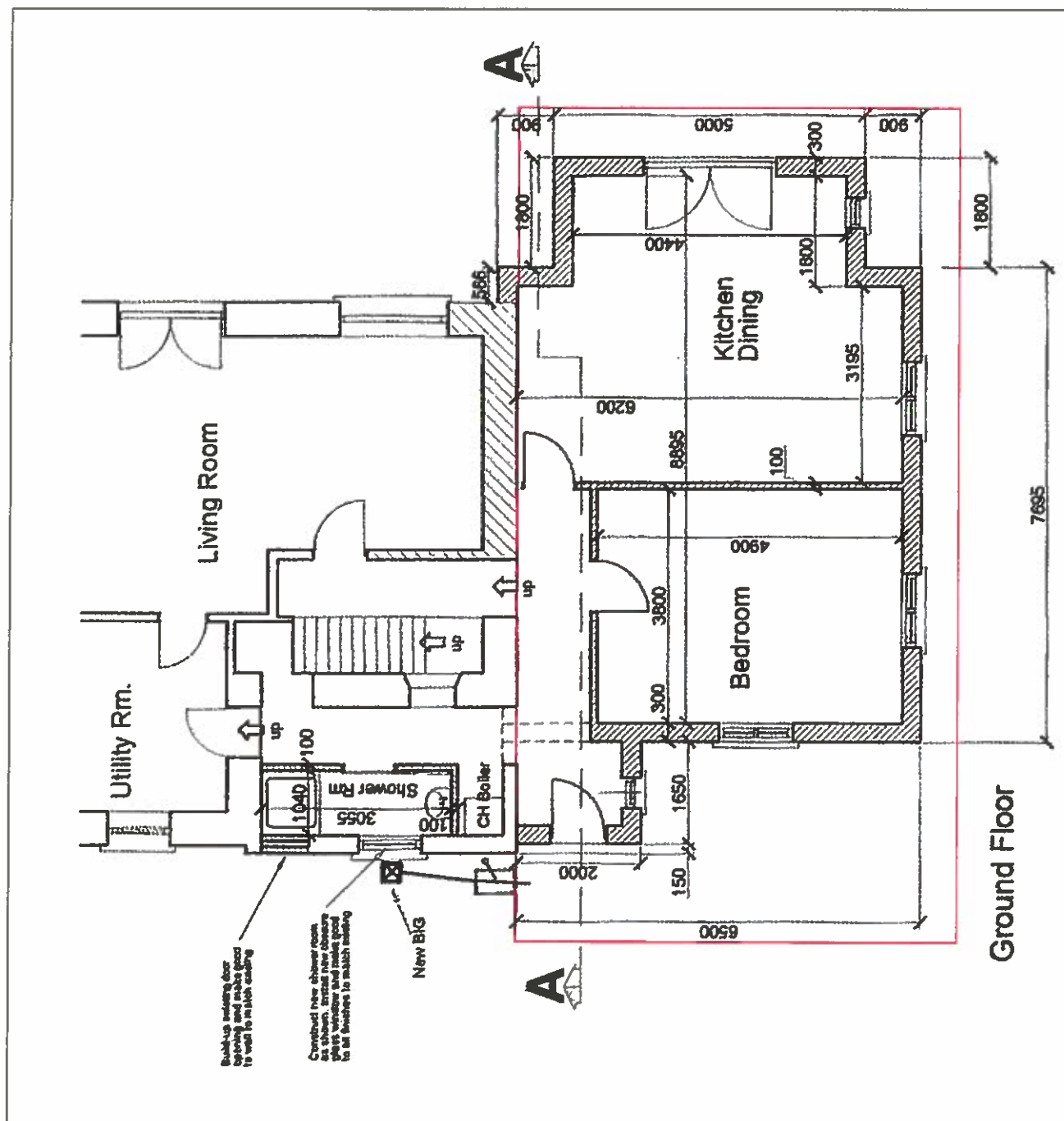


Figure 5. Proposed extension ground plan (area outlined in red).

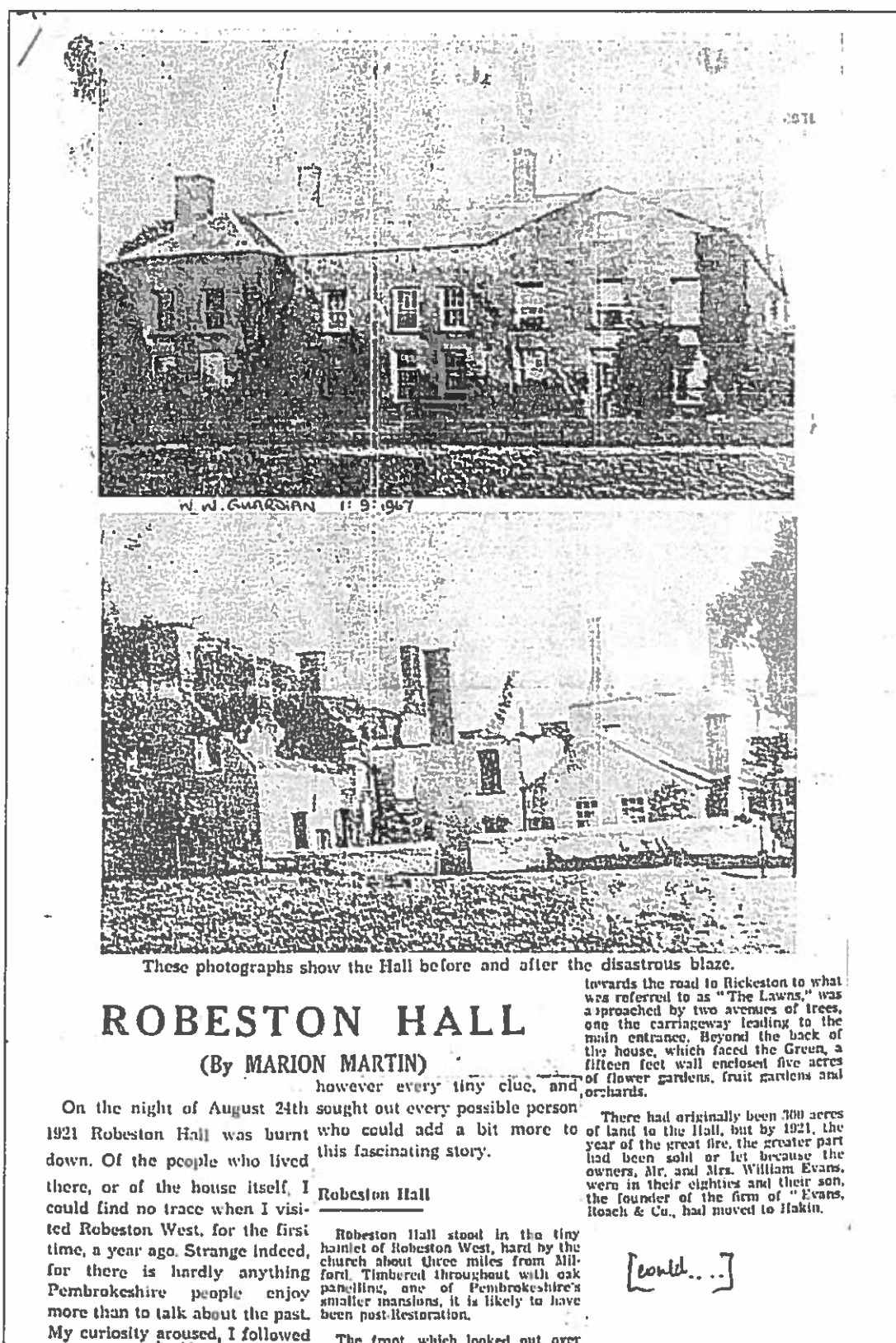


Figure 6. Newspaper article from West Wales Guardian 1967 detailing history of Robeston Hall

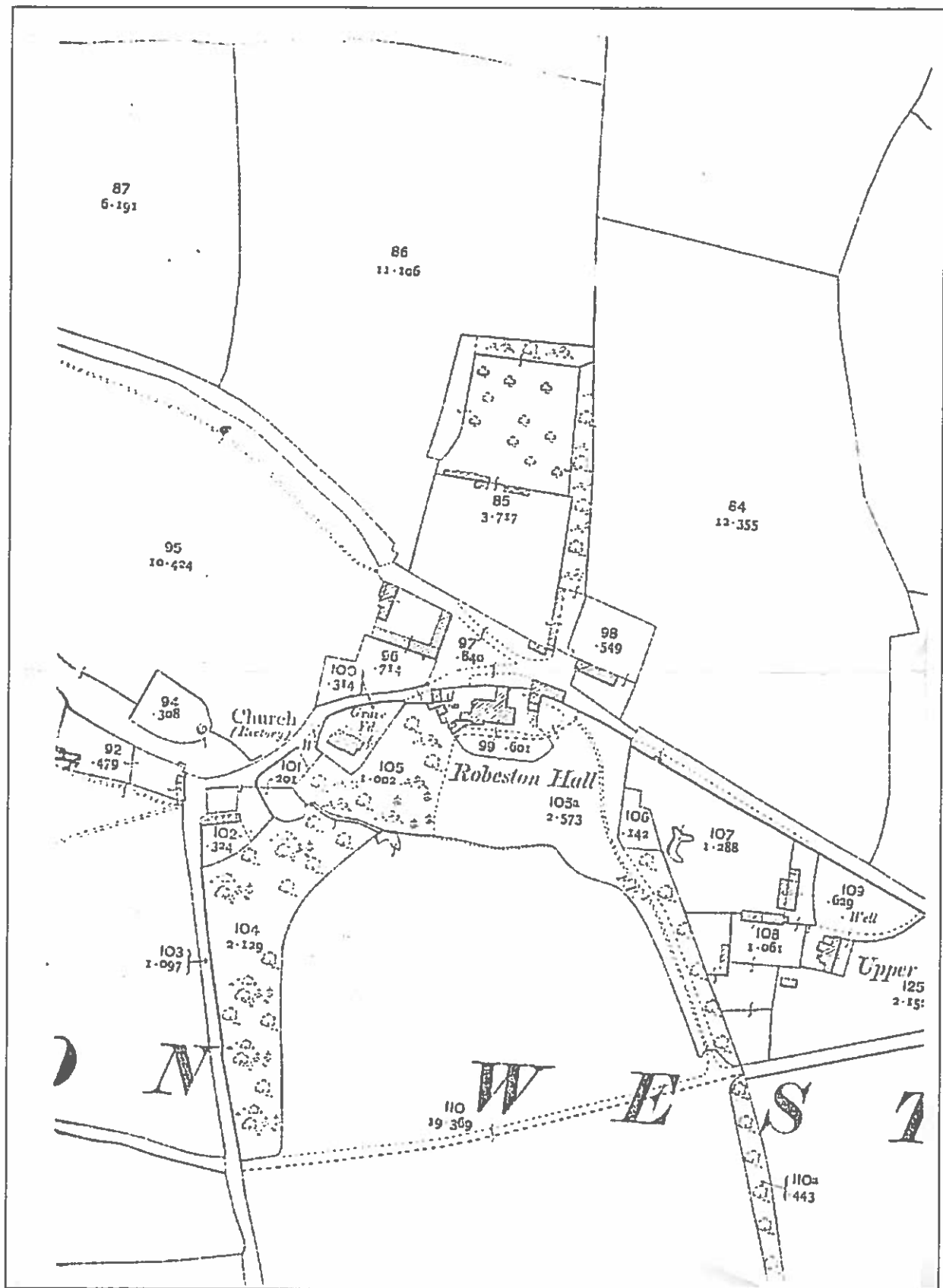
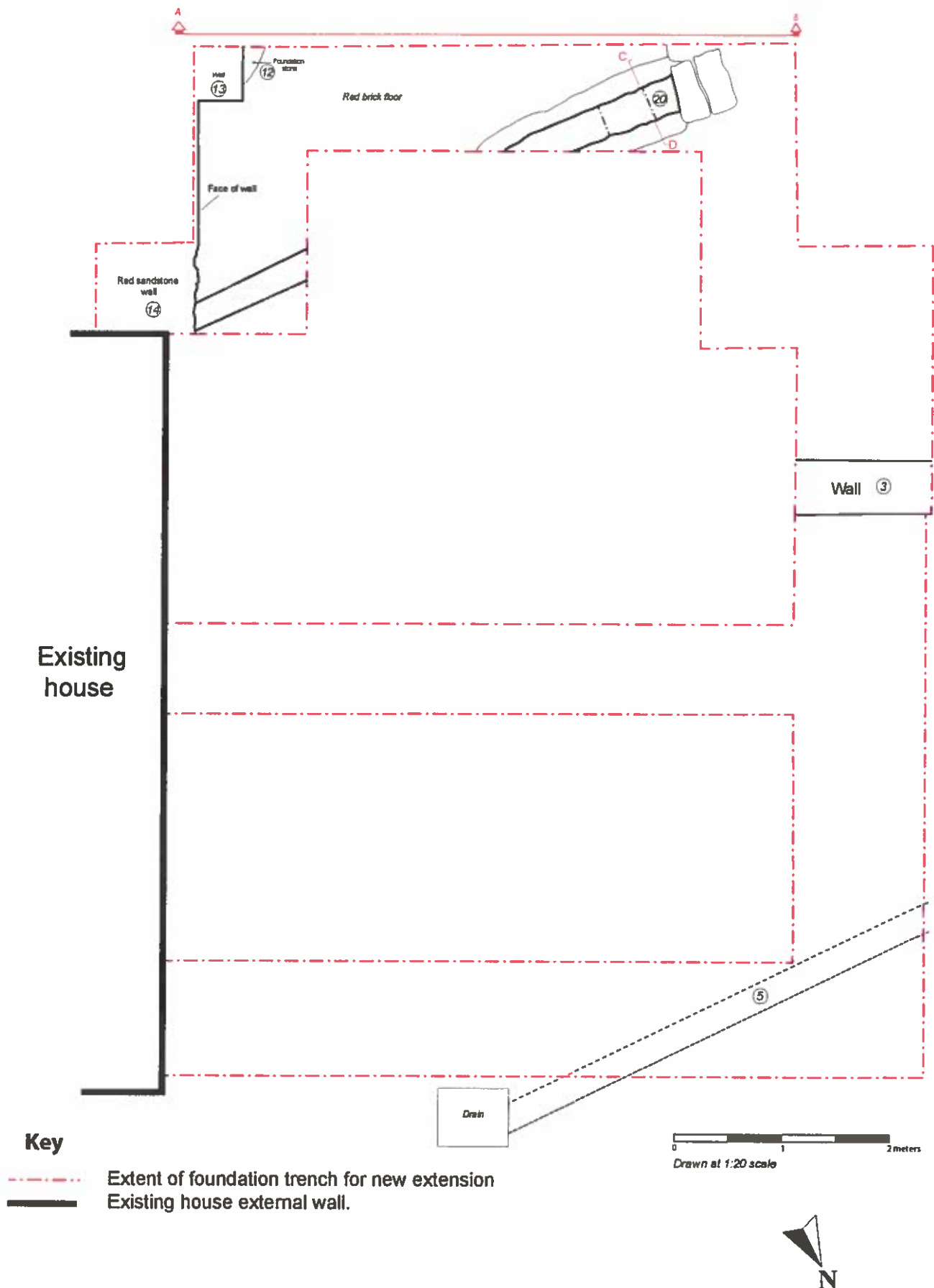
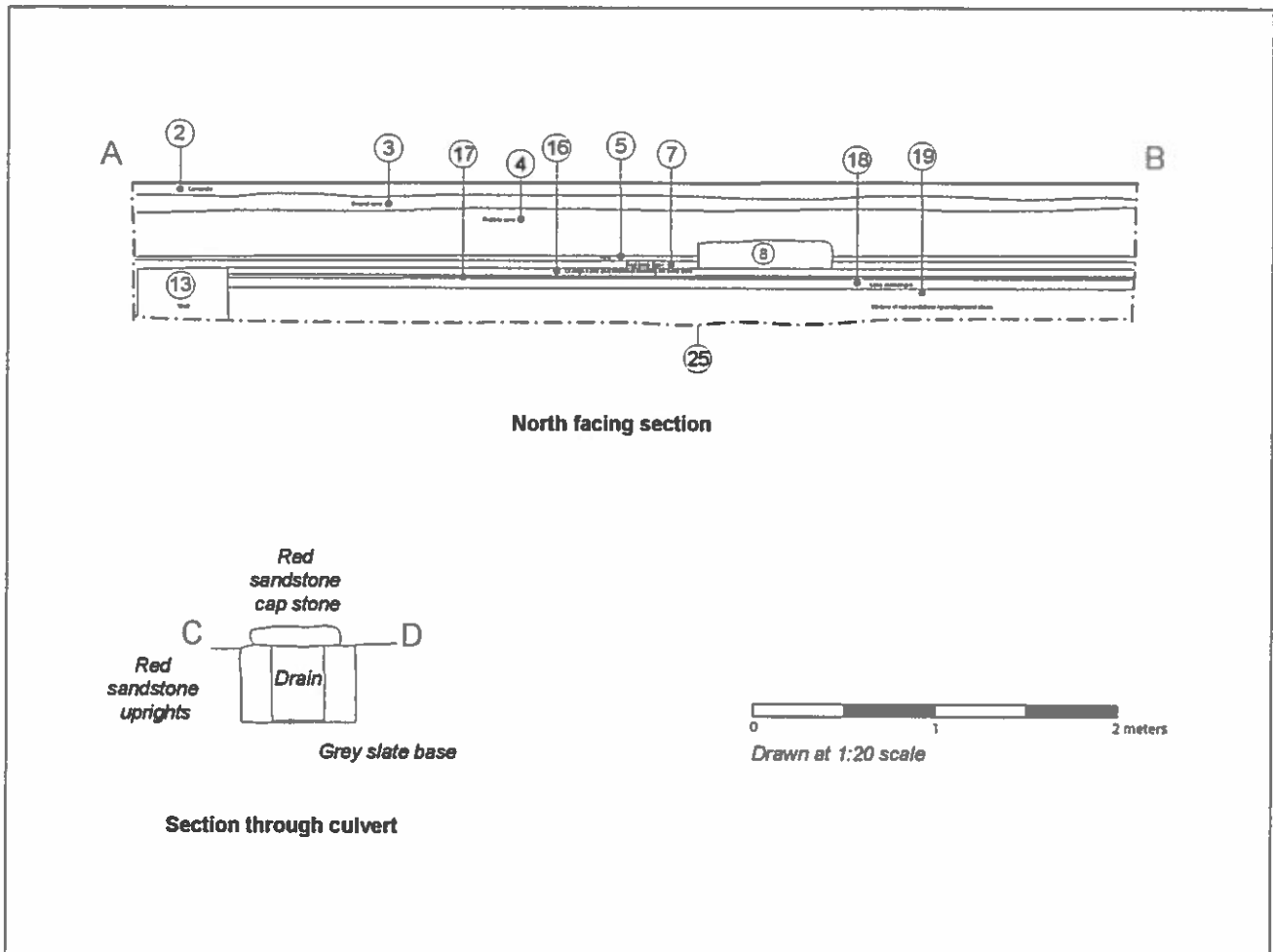


Figure 7. OS First edition map of 1891 showing Robeston Hall, Robeston West.





**Figure 8.** Ground Plan of foundation trench outlined in red. Undertaken following recording of early floor surface.



**Figure 10.** North facing section of foundation trench at southern end and section through stone culvert.



## **APPENDIX II:**

### Photo plates



*Plate 1. Position of former stone building following demolition. Looking west.*



*Plate 2. Position of former stone building following demolition. Looking north.*



**Plate 3.** Early floor level exposed (foreground) following demolition of stone shed and concrete floor. Looking northward.



**Plate 4.** 19th / 18th century floor level cleared and exposed as well as cobbled courtyard. Looking north.



*Plate 5. 19th / 18th century cobbled courtyard exposed in area of development. Looking south.*



*Plate 6. 19th / 18th century cobbled courtyard exposed in area of development. Looking south.*



*Plate 7.* 19th / 18th century cobbled courtyard exposed in area of development. Looking south.



*Plate 8.* 19th / 18th century cobbled courtyard exposed in area of development. Detail of cobbling looking westward.



*Plate 9. Interior floor level of 19th / 18th century demolished stone shed structure. Looking east.*



*Plate 10. Area of proposed extension once demolition rubble and overburden removed to early floor level.*



*Plate 11. Area of proposed extension once demolition rubble and overburden removed to early floor level. Looking northward.*



*Plate 12. Detail of hearth/fireplace in demolished stone structure. Looking south-west.*



*Plate 12.* Red brick built partition wall within demolished building. Looking eastwards.



*Plate 13.* Red brick built partition wall within demolished building. Looking eastwards.



*Plate 15. New foundation trench, with exposed 18th century culvert remains at far west end of trench.*



*Plate 16. Exposed 18th century culvert. Looking east.*

## SUMMARY OF FINDS

### No:1 Robeston Hall, Robeston West

#### CONTEXT 20 (within silt in-fill of culvert)

| TYPE                        | NUMBER OF (e.g<br>SHERDS) | WEIGHT (g) | DATE<br>(CENTURY)                    |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|------------|--------------------------------------|
| Hand-painted<br>pottery     | 9                         | 403        | Mid-late 18 <sup>th</sup><br>century |
| Slipware                    | 1                         | 100g       | 18 <sup>th</sup> century             |
| Printed pottery             | 4                         | 180        | 18 <sup>th</sup> century             |
| Stoneware                   | 2                         | 10g        | Late 18 <sup>th</sup> century        |
| Glass                       | 1                         | 5          | Late 18 <sup>th</sup> century        |
| Green faceted glass<br>bead | 1                         | 1          | Late 18 <sup>th</sup> century        |

#### *Animal bones*

| TYPE               | Quantity |  | DATE<br>(CENTURY)             |
|--------------------|----------|--|-------------------------------|
| Sheep jaw fragment | 1        |  | Late 18 <sup>th</sup> century |
| Chicken wing bone  | 1        |  | Late 18 <sup>th</sup> century |



## **APPENDIX IV:** Context Register

## SUMMARY OF CONTEXTS

### No:2 Robeston Hall, Robeston West

#### CONTEXTS

1. Tarmac.
2. Concrete
3. Gravel core
4. Rubble core.
5. Ash layer
6. Cobbled surface
7. Red brick floor
8. Red brick partition wall
9. Wall
10. Concrete slab
11. Iron peg
12. Foundation stone
13. Wall
14. Red sandstone wall
15. Fire place/hearth
16. Orange sand/charcoal (red brick floor bedding)
17. Charcoal layer
18. Lime mortar
19. Red sandstone/rubble mix
20. Culvert
21. Stone flagstone threshold.
22. Stone flagstone
23. Modern drain
24. Modern drain
25. Natural red sandstone bedrock



## **APPENDIX V:** **Archive Cover Sheet**