



ARCHEOSCAN



Victorian Tearooms Robinswood Hill

Archaeological Evaluation on Outbuildings to Victorian tearooms at
Robinswood Hill
Gloucester

NGR SO 83831 15827



Gloucestershire

A J ROBERTS BSc (Hons) MA ACIfA

Title: Excavations on Victorian tearoom outbuildings

Location: Robinswood Hill, Gloucester

National Grid Ref: SO 83831 15827

Project Manager: Tony Roberts

Field Team: Tony Roberts
Volunteer excavators

Report written by: Tony Roberts, Archeoscan

Specialist Advice: Andrew Armstrong, Gloucester City Council

Landowner: Gloucester City Council
Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

Date of Excavation: 21 – 26 July 2016

Identifiers: Gloucester HER No. TBC

Location of Archive: Report submitted to Gloucester HER
Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust
Original archive stored with Archeoscan
Small Finds retained by landowner

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1 ABSTRACT

1.1 Over the past few years a number of archaeological activities have been undertaken on Robinswood Hill as outreach activities to raise awareness of the facilities of the parkland and better understand the local history of the area. These have included geophysical surveys at various sites around the hill and an archaeological excavation.

1.2 In 2016, further archaeological outreach activities were planned for Robinswood Hill in the area of a former army camp known as Reservoir Camp. Following a geophysical survey a proposed excavation had to be terminated due to ground contamination. Consequently, attention was focussed on the site of some Victorian buildings in order to continue with the outreach activities. A geophysical survey and excavation on the outbuildings of a former tearoom were conducted. A total 31 individual volunteers were involved with the project both adults and children amassing about 165 volunteer hours.

1.3 A trench was placed over a brick-built outbuilding from a former farmhouse that was used as a tearooms in the late Victorian period. The excavation revealed that the building had been repaired a number of times over its lifetime with a sequence of posts that supported the roof being replaced at various times. An amount of Victorian and early 19th Century pottery and clay pipes were recovered during the project.

1.4 The project has enabled members of the public to engage in practical archaeology whilst learning more about their local historic environment. It has also met the wider aim of encouraging more people to visit Robinswood Hill and engage on outreach activities to raise awareness of the facilities of the parkland and better understand the local history of the area.

1.5 Only a small fraction of the buildings, within a much wider site, have been archaeologically examined. The level of preservation of the archaeological remains is good with some areas of the buildings surviving better than others implying some extensive removal of dressed stone from the site. Further planned excavations will enable a fuller plan of the buildings on the site to be determined and also identify a more detailed chronology to the occupation of this site.

1.6 Archeoscan wishes to express its gratitude to the landowners for allowing access during the archaeological investigations. Thanks are also due to the John and Ruth Howard Charitable Trust for providing the funding to enable the project to proceed. Particular thanks are due to the band of hardy excavators that made shifting the dirt possible.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Project background

2.1.1 As part of an Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) funded 'All Paths Lead to the Hill' project a number of archaeological activities have recently been undertaken on Robinswood Hill as outreach activities to raise awareness of the facilities of the parkland and better understand the local history of the area. These have included geophysical surveys at various sites around the hill and an archaeological excavation on 'Toboggan slope' in 2015 (Armstrong 2015).

2.1.1 In 2016, funded by the John and Ruth Howard Charitable Trust, further archaeological outreach activities were planned for Robinswood Hill in the area of a former army camp known as Reservoir Camp a former military training camp used by the local Gloucestershire Regiment for decades. Following a geophysical survey (Roberts 2016) a proposed excavation had to be terminated due to ground contamination. Consequently, attention was focussed on the site of some Victorian buildings in order to continue with the outreach activities. A geophysical survey and excavation on the outbuildings of a former tearooms were conducted. A total 31 individual volunteers were involved with the project both adults and children amassing about 165 volunteer hours.

2.2 Objectives and techniques

2.2.1 The project intended to place an archaeological trench over the remains of one of the outbuildings of the Victorian buildings identified by the local mapping, geophysics and aerial photographs. The aim was to achieve a greater understanding of the archaeology of the site whilst enabling the participation of members of the public in structured archaeological activities.

2.2.2 The project was coordinated by Nicola Simpson of Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and Tony Roberts of Archeoscan with advice from Andrew Armstrong, the Gloucester City Archaeologist. The excavation was managed by Tony Roberts. All volunteer excavators from members of the public were provided with instruction and full experience of all tasks applicable to an archaeological excavation commensurate with their level of experience (figure 1).

2.2.3 The objectives of RH16 were:

- a. To evaluate the extent and nature of the archaeological deposits and obtain positive evidence for the age of the surviving buildings.
- b. To determine the depth of the surviving archaeology and the extent of the preservation of the archaeological features.
- c. Enhance the Gloucester HER entry.

- d. Allow members of the public to participate on an archaeological site under controlled conditions and providing a vehicle for people to engage with their local heritage.
- e. To enable the landowners to make an informed decision about the future of the area as a recreational asset.

2.2.4 All archaeological work undertaken was carried out using appropriate methods and practices, which satisfy the stated aims of the project, and which comply with the code of conduct and other relevant by-laws of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). The methods and practices are detailed in the respective project specifications (Roberts 2016a).



Figure 1: Volunteers working on site.

2.3 Site location and description

2.3.1 The site is located to the East of the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust building on Robinswood Hill at SO 83831 15827 (Annexes A and B).

2.3.2 The site was covered mainly in scrub and undergrowth and the edge of a managed piece of grass that is the former road that passed to the front of the

buildings. The site slopes slightly due to the buildings being terraced into the hill behind. A number of courses of brickwork protrude from the surface betraying the presence of some walls (figure 2).



Figure 2: Site before excavation.

2.4 Site history and archaeological potential

2.4.1 The site is noted on a number of Ordnance Survey maps, the earliest being 1880 (Annex C). The buildings that were excavated are shown as the Western-most range on the maps. A photograph taken in 1900 (Annex D) shows the building complex viewed to the North with the outbuilding excavated to the left (West) of the main house. It is possibly a farmhouse complex located to the South of the main Reservoirs that may have origins earlier than the Victorian period. It was used as tearooms in the Victorian period as the image at Annex E depicts. Local belief is that it served as a public house before this. Some maps depict the outbuildings to the West as being pump rooms possibly to service the reservoir complex.

2.4.2 The building is located next to the Well Cross, a scheduled ancient monument. The monument stood in the garden of the Victorian tearooms. As part of an archaeological survey on Robinswood Hill in 2000 some small trenches were placed on the North side of the outbuilding (GLCRM 2000/28). Some structural elements interpreted as steps and waste pipes, possibly from male urinals, were identified along with finds of a Victorian nature including clay pipes and pottery (Bartlett, 2000).

2.5 Geology and soils

2.5.1 Robinswood Hill is a Jurassic outlier covering 250 acres. The underlying geology is Lower Lias. The overlying soils are known as Martlock soils. These consist of slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged silty over clayey soils (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Sheet 5 South West England). In places the bedrock is close to the surface in many areas of the hillside and numerous quarries and quarry pits are located around the hill. In addition there have been

many areas of landslip around the hill where clay forms a major part of the sequence.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Geophysics

3.1.1 . A resistance survey was conducted over the area of the buildings using an RM15D. Data was collected at 1m intervals with a traverse separation of 1m. The survey areas were separated into 20m by 20m grids giving 400 recorded measurements per grid. These sampling intervals are very effective at locating archaeological features and is the recommended methodology for archaeological prospection (English Heritage, 2008). All readings are saved to an integral data logger for analysis and presentation. Results of the geophysics are shown at Annexes F and G and discussed at 4.1.

3.4.2 The position of the survey grids were fixed using local reference points and by measurement to local features for cross-referencing. Locations of key points were recorded by Total Station and GPS. Gradiometer data downloaded from the Geoscan equipment has been analysed in specialist software designed for the equipment called *Geoplot 3.0*. The software allows greyscale and relief plots to be produced for presentation and display. Survey grids are assembled to form an overall composite of data (composite file) creating a dataset of the complete survey area. Minimal processing is carried out in order to enhance the results of the survey for display. Raw data are always analysed as processing can modify anomalies. The following schedule sets out the data and image processing used in this survey: Clip, Despike, High Pass Filter, Low Pass Filter and Interpolate.

3.2 Site Grid

3.2.1 The site grid has been laid out to be coincident with the geophysics collection grid. 20m grid squares are referred to by an Eastings and Northings system (Annex H). All features and small-find spots are referred to by an Easting and Northing coordinate with an origin in the southwest of the grid. All measurements are made using a Total Station.

3.3 Levels Datum

3.3.1 A temporary benchmark has been established at 0/0 on the excavation grid. All levels in the report are relative to this datum.

3.4 Trench Locations

3.4.1 The trench was placed as depicted in Annex H. It was placed over the area of higher resistance that represented the outbuilding of the complex and where a brickwork course was projecting through the surface.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Geophysics

4.1.1 The result of the resistance survey is at Annex F. The areas of high resistance are depicted in white and low resistance in black. In the colour version the high resistance is depicted in red. There is a clear high resistance linear anomaly that is aligned East to West that runs across the survey area. This is clearly the old road that fronted the original buildings and is depicted on the older maps. To the South East of the survey the clear straight lines of high resistance indicate the harder surfaces of the wall lines of the old buildings. It is these areas that were targeted for the excavation.

4.2 Trench 1

4.2.1 Trench 1 was designed to be a section across what, from all of the geophysical and mapping evidence available, was believed to be one of the outbuildings of the Victorian tearooms. Part of the initial evaluation of the site, the trench would reveal both the interior and exterior of the building. The trench was laid out as 2 x 7m in size. The trench diagram is at Annex I. The trench contained an outbuilding constructed of brick measuring 3.5m wide. The rear wall of the building [119] was terraced into the hill (figure 3). The slope had been cut away for the brick wall to be constructed and then a rubble fill (110) placed back. Up to 11 courses of brick still survived. The front wall [119] was also constructed of brick and measured 0.4m wide. To the front of the building brick had been used to construct a forecourt [120] interpreted as an entrance to the building (figure 4).



Figure 3: Rear wall of building.



Figure 4: Front of building.

4.2.2 The internal floor was constructed of clay. Lying over the clay was a fine layer of a more gravelly material (108) that may represent the bedding for floor tiles. Cut into the floor in the centre of the building was a series of postholes (figure 5) which indicate a sequence of repairs over the lifetime of the building. Post hole 3 [117] is centrally located and is probably the original supporting the central post to support the roof. Located slightly North of this is posthole 2 [115]. This square posthole appears to be a replacement for the original and has itself been repaired. The original square timber in this hole was held in place by the placement of a blue clay (113a). At some point, presumably when this post also became unstable, a metal bar was rammed in next to the wooden post to provide stability. At the base of the hole a tile had been placed to act as a post pad. A gravelly deposit (113) had been placed in a shallow depression over the area of the post holes probably to make the area level again following repairs. A teaspoon SF101 was recovered from this layer. A smaller possible posthole (posthole 1) was uncovered close to the rear wall within sondage 1 which also confirmed another layer of masonry on the back wall below the floor level. sondage 2, close to the entrance, indicated that there may have been some tiles located on the floor in this area.



4.2.3 The entire interior of the building was filled with a uniform fill (102) which contained a lot of Victorian, and more recent, pottery, glass and other artefacts (figure 6). This was overlain by the topsoil (101) which reflected the same assemblage. On the uphill side of the building a drain had been laid running parallel with the back wall (figure 7). A trench [104] had been cut the pipe laid in and then rubble placed around the drain to both firm and act as a soakaway. A small shallow gulley [106] drained into the pipe trench. All seemed contemporary with the buildings.



Figure 6: Interior of building.



Figure 7: Drain at rear of building.

4.3 Finds (See also Annex J)

4.3.1 Pottery

4.3.1.1 The archaeological work resulted in the recovery of 301 sherds of pottery weighing 1931g largely consisting of blue willow pattern china with the occasional piece with a predominantly red design (280 sherds weighing 1815g). Also recovered were 14 fragments of stoneware (260g). All of this assemblage dates from the mid/late Victorian period to the early 19th Century (Figure 8). Evenly distributed across the site it was recovered mainly from the backfill of the interior of the building (202) but was also present in the fill of the pipe trench (103) and the backfill behind the rear wall of the building (110). A couple of decorative china mouldings were also present.



Figure 8: Decorated china.



Figure 9: Stoneware

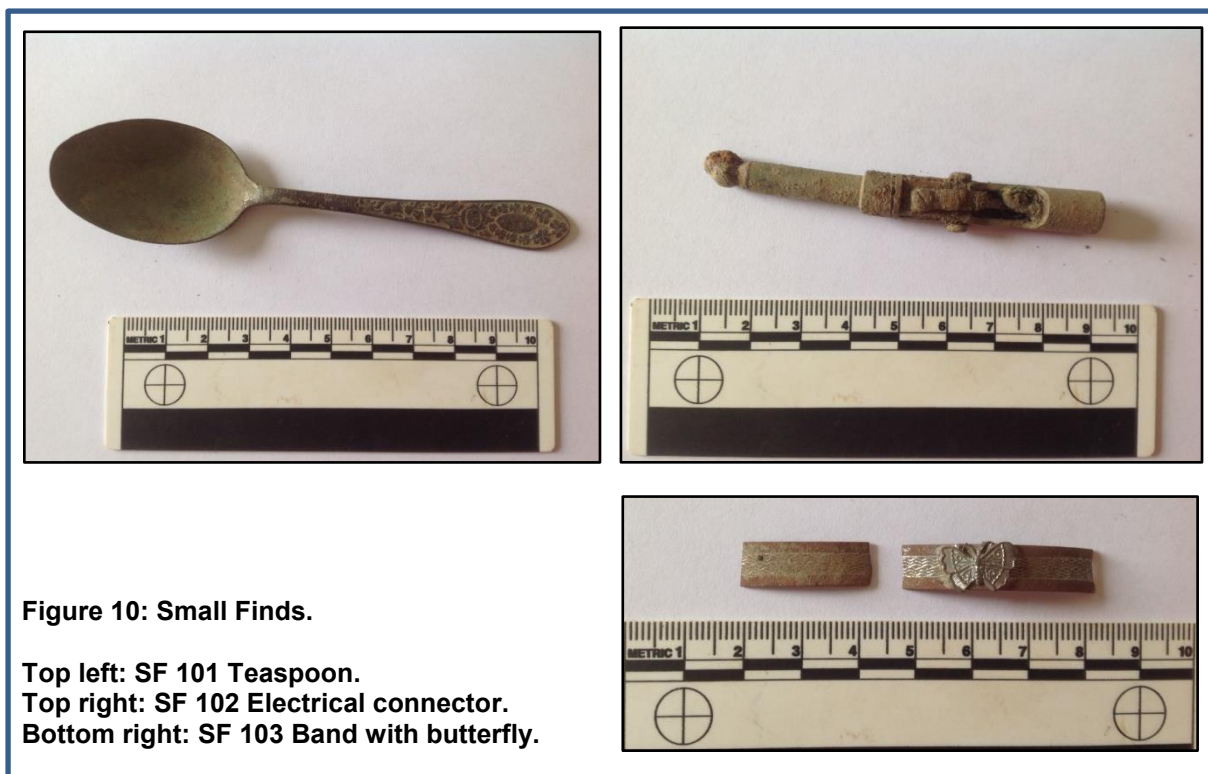
4.3.2 Animal Bones

4.3.2.1 Some butchered animal bone was recovered from the topsoil (101) and from the upper levels of the backfill of the interior of the building (102). It is only in small quantities and probably represents a relatively recent deposition made after the building was out of use.

4.3.3 Small Finds

4.3.3.1 Only 3 small finds were recovered, 2 whilst excavating and one during the post excavation process (Figure 10)

- a. (SF 101) Tea spoon. A silvered tea spoon was recovered from the context (113) the gravelly shallow depression at the centre of the room.
- b. (SF102) Electrical component. A piece of electrical equipment recovered from the fill of posthole 2 (114). Probably redeposited there when the posthole was backfilled for the repair to the roof support.
- c. (Sf 103) Small silvered band with butterfly. A small metal band decorated with butterfly recovered from context (102) during post excavation.



4.3.4 Metal Artefacts

4.3.4.1 A number of iron artefacts were recovered during the evaluation. The vast majority of the iron artefacts were iron nails probably from the roof timbers. Other artefacts included barbed wire, a saucepan handle, an electrical components, a jelly mould and more modern ring pull along with some identifiable twisted iron fragments. In sum the assemblage was consistent with a slow backfill of the building over a period of time in more recent times.

4.3.5 Clay Tobacco Pipes

4.3.5.1 In total 42 fragments of clay tobacco pipe were recovered including one partial bowl (figure 11).



Figure 11: Clay tobacco pipes from (102).

4.3.6 Glass

4.3.6.1 The excavation recovered 315 fragments of glass weighing a total of 4260g. Fragments from all periods from the Victorian period to present were present in the backfill across the site. The more interesting pieces included a number of bases to bottle (figure 12). Some were partially identifiable with partial inscriptions still legible including:

'-ESTER'
'TH & MORETON'
'-DING & CO'
'MONMOUTH'



Figure 12: Selection of glass bottle bases.

4.3.7 Other Artefacts

4.3.7.1 A total of 8470g of ceramic building material (CBM) was recovered. This consisted mainly of glazed pipe, tile and slate (figure 13) all consistent with the construction of the outbuilding.

4.3.7.1 Of note, was the presence of bricks stamped from the Whitfield brickworks of Gloucester that was once located on the lower slopes of Robinswood Hill (Figure 14). G. T. Whitfield opened his brickworks on Robinswood Hill, Tuffley, Gloucester, in the early 1890s. It was closed by the 1950s. Another find was a ceramic electrical insulator recovered from context (102) (figure 15).

4.3.7.2 Other, more modern, artefacts were noted including plastic beads, buttons, golf ball and modern bottle tops.



Figure 13: Selection of CBM.



Figure 14: Brick from Whitfield brickworks.



Figure 15: Ceramic electrical insulator.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 The section placed over the outbuilding to the Victorian tearooms revealed a 3.5m wide building constructed of brick with a tiled roof. The roof was probably held up by wooden structure the main vertical posts being located in the centre of the construction. A sequence of repairs over the lifetime of the building was evident from the succession of postholes in the centre of the room. Post hole 3 [117] is centrally located and is probably the original supporting the central post to support the roof. Located slightly North of this is posthole 2 [115]. This square posthole appears to be a replacement for the original and has itself been repaired. The original square timber in this hole was held in place by the placement of a blue clay (113a). At some point, presumably when this post also became unstable, a metal bar was rammed in next to the wooden post to provide stability. At the base of the hole a tile had been placed to act as a post pad. A gravelly deposit (113) had been placed in a shallow depression over the area of the post holes probably to make the area level

again following repairs. Some local bricks, manufactured at the local Whitfield brickworks, were recovered from the interior of the building. However, the original building was not constructed of these as the brickworks was operating between the early 1890s until the 1950s. The building is shown as existing on local maps before the 1890s. This is probably evidence of repair and modification over the lifetime of the building.

5.2 To the South the building had been cut into the slope behind and a drain ran parallel with the back wall. This was higher than the floor level of the interior of the building and presumably drained water from the roof of the structure and also prevented run-off down the slope to the back of the building. Constructed from clay pipe and held in by rubble it was contemporary structure to the building.

5.3 The finds were to be as expected from a building that probably has its origin in the Victorian period. Dominating the pottery assemblage was fine blue and red patterned china. This was distributed throughout the main backfill of the interior of the building. Also present were some stoneware fragments. It is not clear exactly when the building went out of use and was demolished and a lot of these fragments are probably residual in the backfill. Various pieces of CBM such as tiles/brick and pipework were also recovered. The more personal items are the fragments of clay tobacco pipe. Again well distributed they probably were discarded during the Victorian heyday of the building.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The archaeological investigations at the old tea rooms at Robinswood Hill successfully placed a section over one of the outbuildings located to the West of the main building. It revealed a 3.5m wide building constructed of brick cut into the hillside. The quality of the building and its flooring supports the belief, drawn from mapping sources, that this building is an outbuilding for the former tearooms that once stood in this area of Robinswood Hill.

6.2 The project has enabled members of the public to engage in practical archaeology whilst learning more about their local historic environment. It has also met the wider aim of encouraging more people to visit Robinswood Hill and engage on outreach activities to raise awareness of the facilities of the parkland and better understand the local history of the area.

6.3 Only a small fraction of the buildings, within a much wider site, have been archaeologically examined. The level of preservation of the archaeological remains is good with some areas of the buildings surviving better than others. Further excavations will enable a fuller plan of the buildings on the site to be determined and also identify a more detailed chronology to the occupation of this site in particular the main old farmhouse located to the East of this site that once served as an Inn and Tea rooms.

7 REFERENCES

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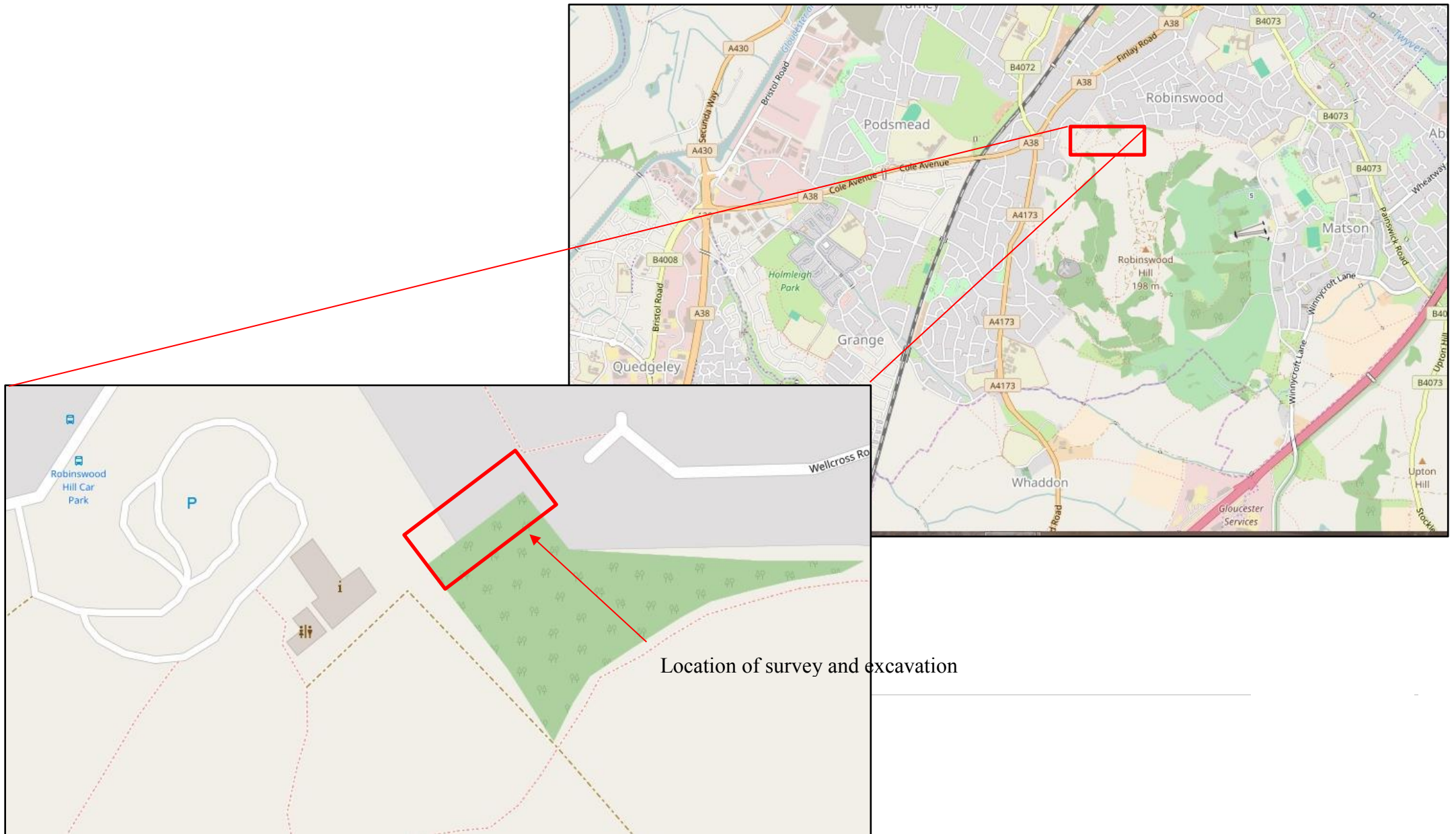
British Geological Survey, Bristol District special sheet, one-inch series.

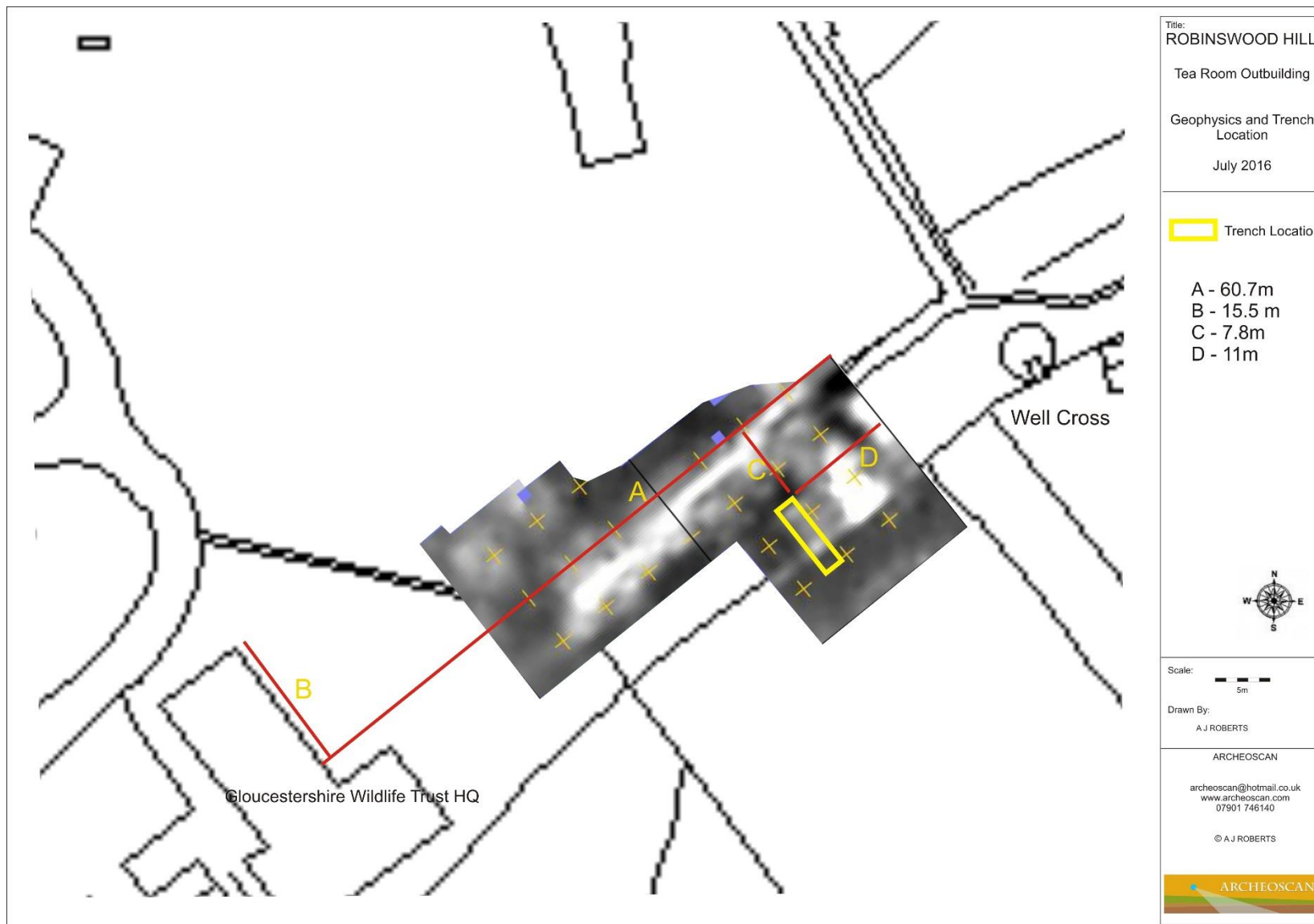
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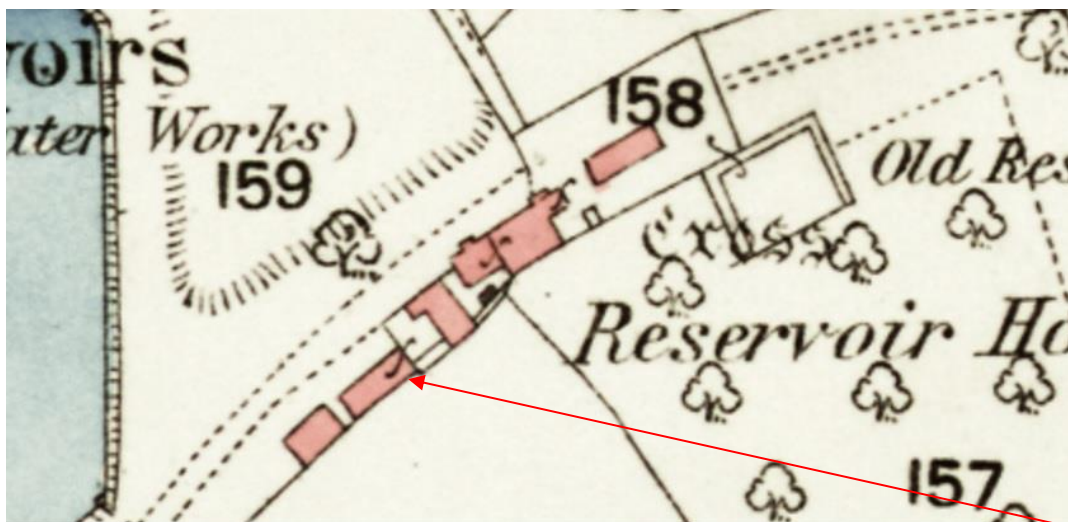
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LOCATION OF EXCAVATION







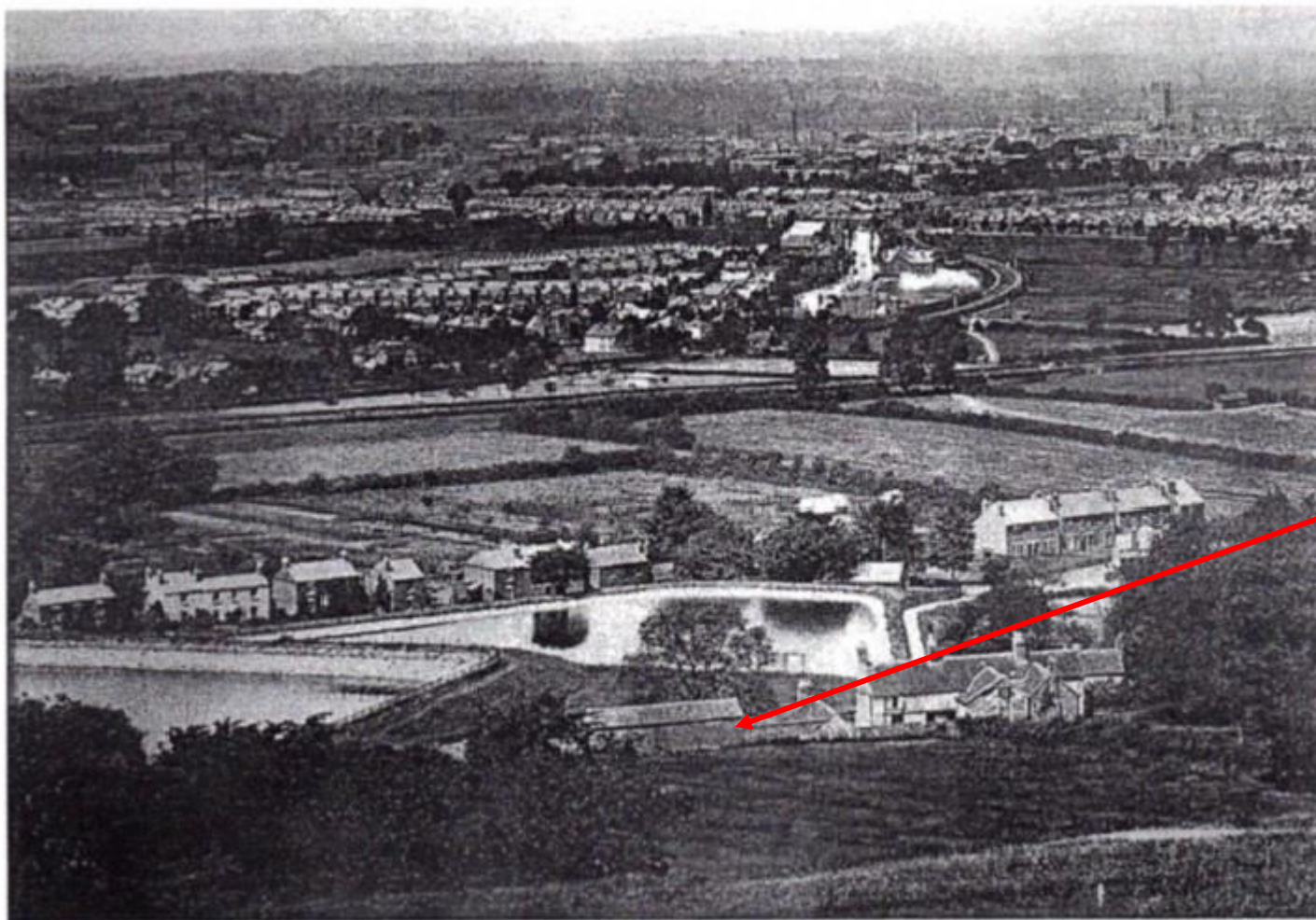
Ordnance survey 1880

Building excavated



Ordnance survey 1913

Annex D



Building excavated

c1900 view from Robinswood Hill looking NW towards the city

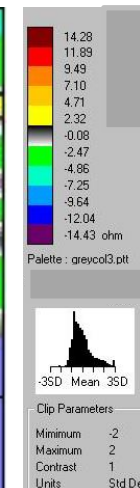
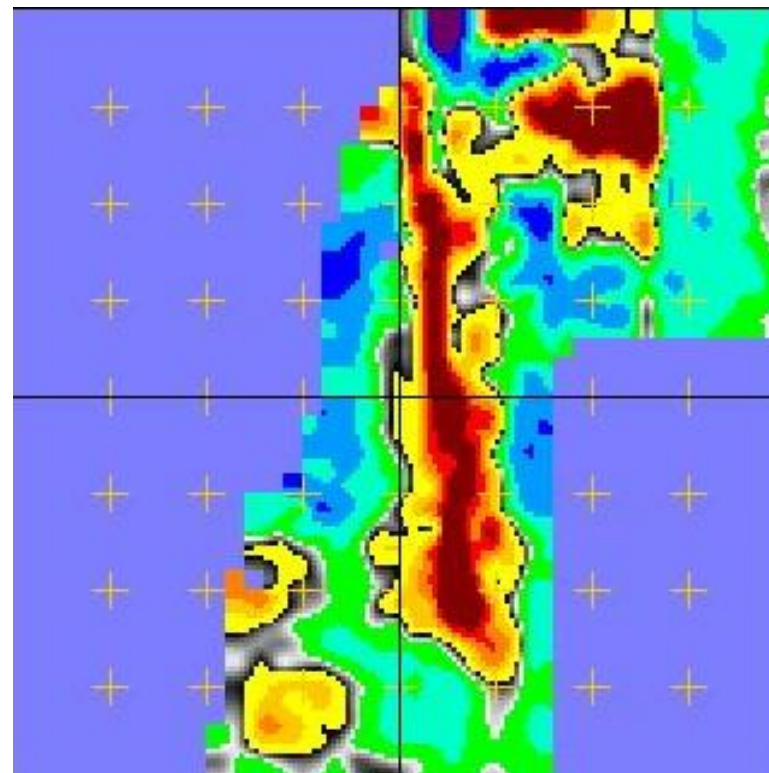
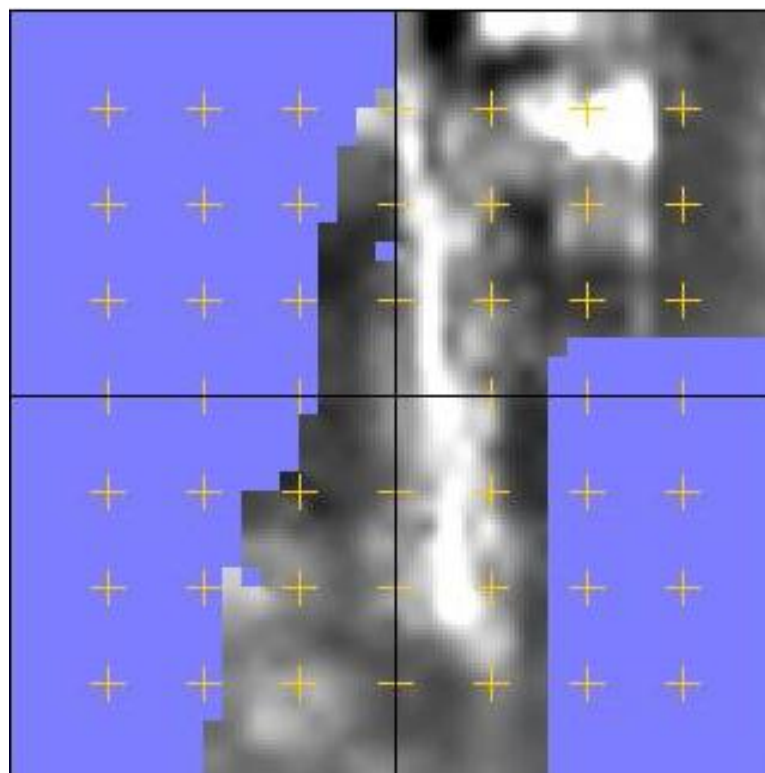


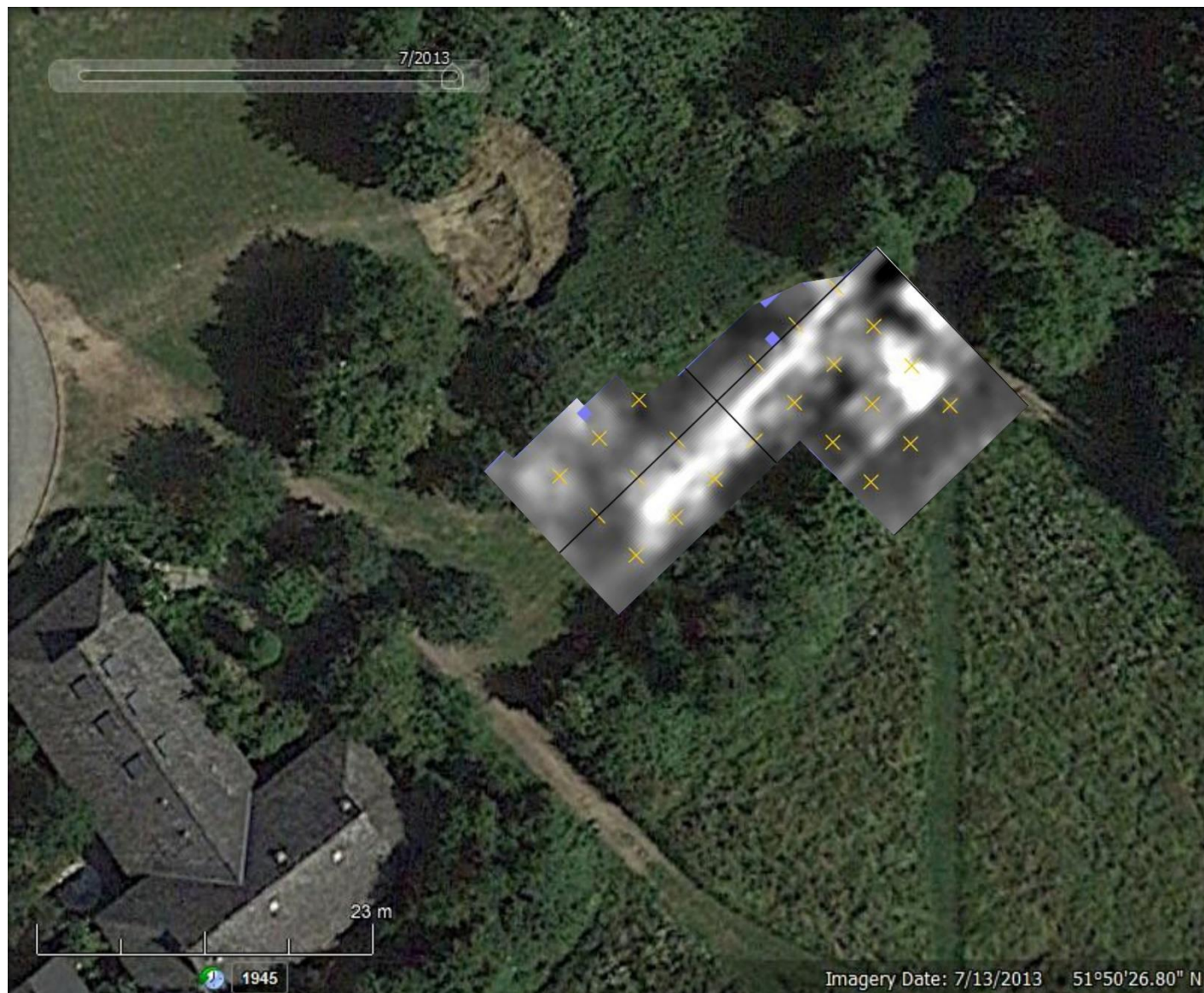
■ A reminder of the days at the beginning of this century when people were happy to spend a day out on the slopes of Robinswood Hill. This party at the Robinswood Hill tea rooms (no longer there) were believed to have been from the city's Ryecroft Street Church. For those willing to go further afield there were also tea rooms at Chosen Hill.

Source unknown

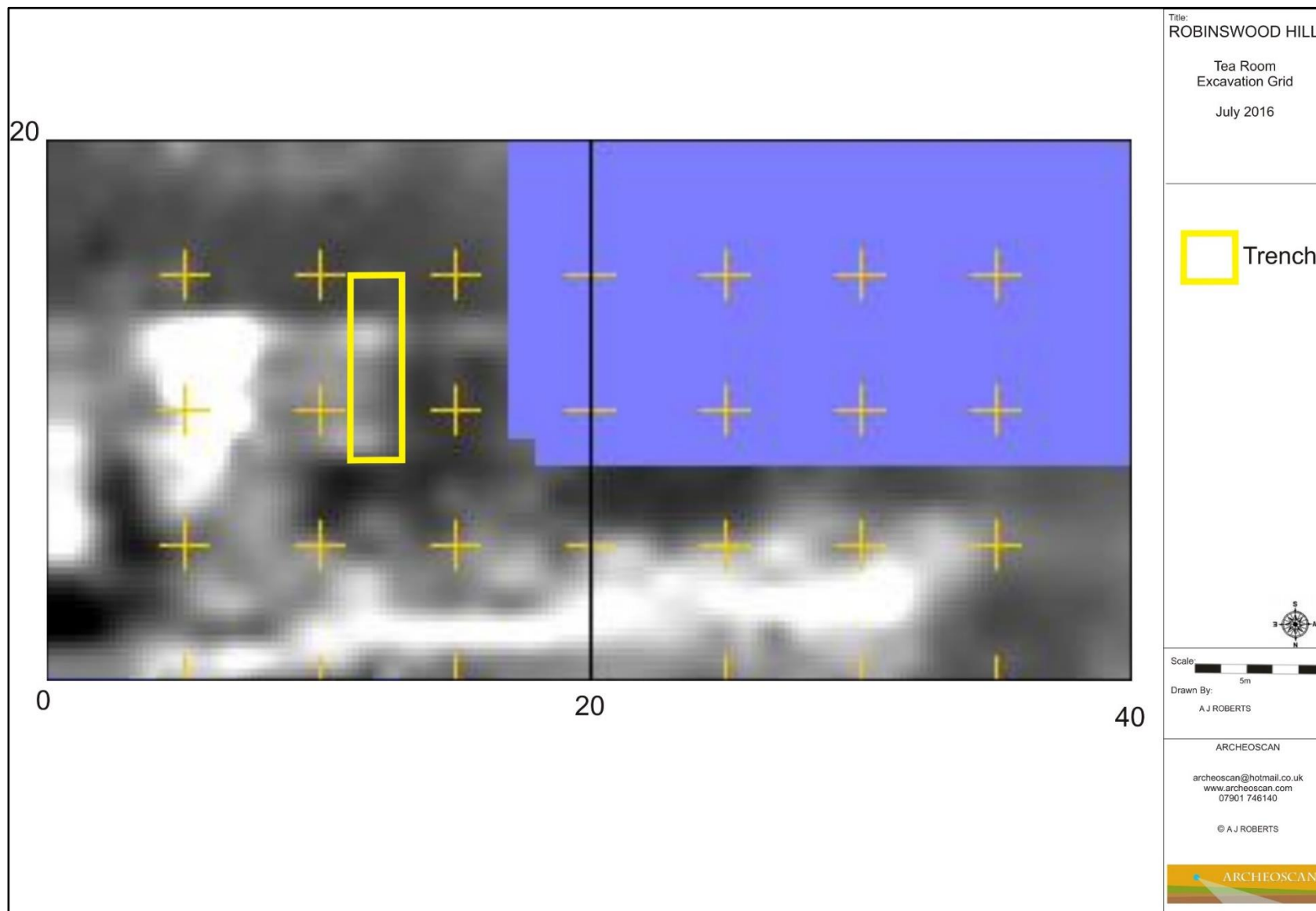
RH 38

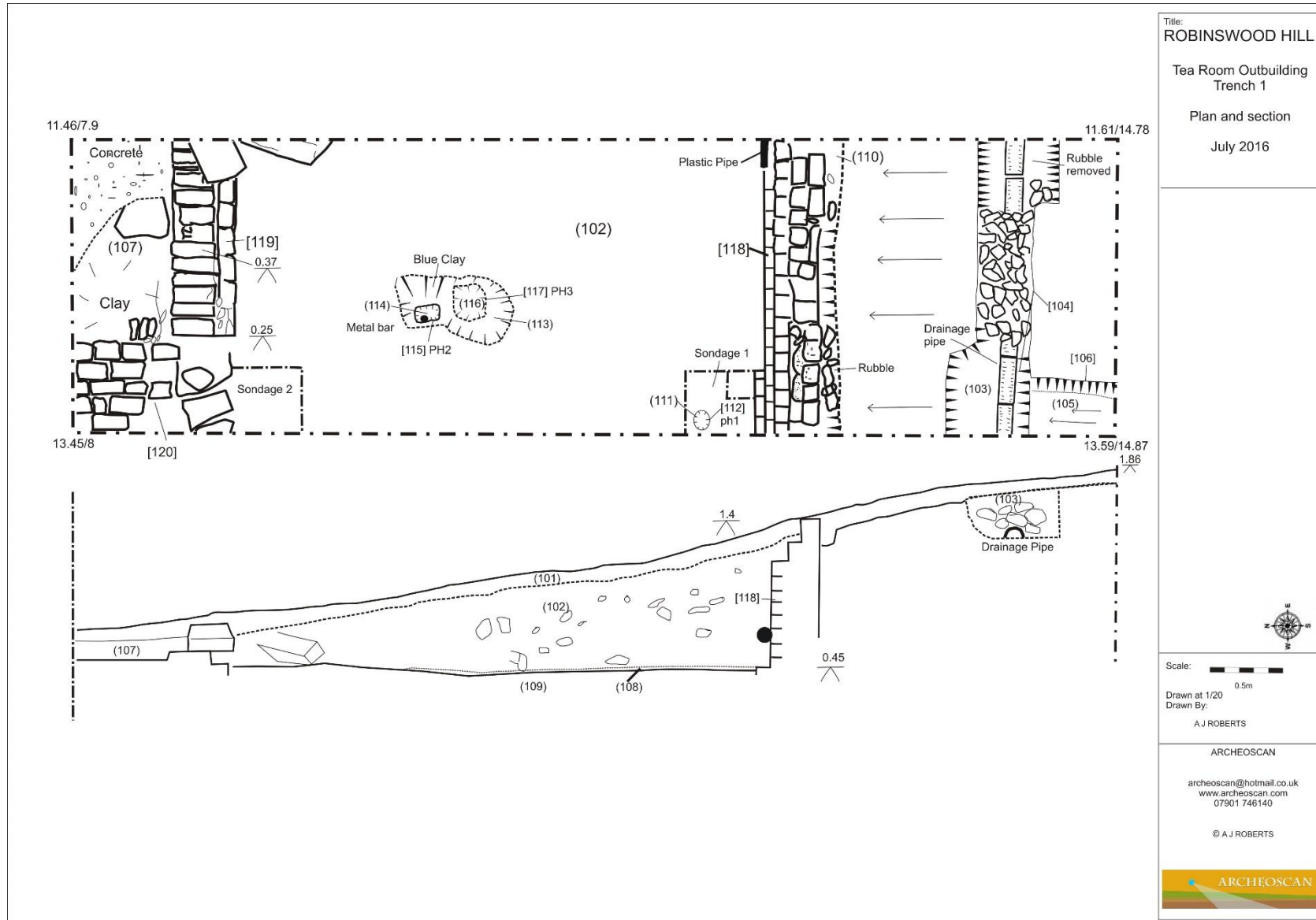
GEOPHYSICS





Title: ROBINSWOOD HILL
Tea Room Geophys July 2016
Scale:
Drawn By: A J ROBERTS
ARCHEOSCAN archeoscan@hotmail.co.uk www.archeoscan.com 07901 746140 © A J ROBERTS





Finds Quantification Table

Context	Description	Blue Pattern Pottery	Blue Pattern Pottery (g)	Other Pottery	Other Pottery (g)	stoneware	stoneware (g)	Animal Bone	A. Bone (g)	Glass	Glass (g)	Charcoal	Charcoal (g)	Fe	Fe(g)	Wood	CBM	CBM (g)	Clay pipe	Plastic beads	painted plaster	Coke	Coke (g)	buttons
101	Subsoil across trench	44	240	2	1			5	40	27	180	14	30	9	80		97	880	1	3				
102	Backfill inside building	217	1410	18	110	14	260	8	170	263	3950	22	200	65	1980		131	6760	39		1			2
103	Fill of Pipe trench	9	45	1	5					4	5						4	50	1					
104	Cut of Pipe trench																							
105	Fill of small ditch																							
106	Cut of small ditch																							
107	Outside front of building	5	20							16	70			12	150		11	560		2		11	40	
108	Gravel levelling course																							
109	Clay																							
110	Fill of rubble line back of wall	5	100							4	50			1	5				1					
111	Fill of post hole 1																13	170						
112	Cut of post hole 1																							
113	gravel fill over post holes													4	50		4	50						
113a	Blue clay packing																							
114	Fill of post hole 2									1	5			6	40	5								
115	Cut of post hole 2																							
116	Fill of post hole 3																							
117	Cut of post hole 3																							
		280	1815	21	116	14	260	13	210	315	4260	36	230	97	2305	5	260	8470	42	5	1	11	40	2

