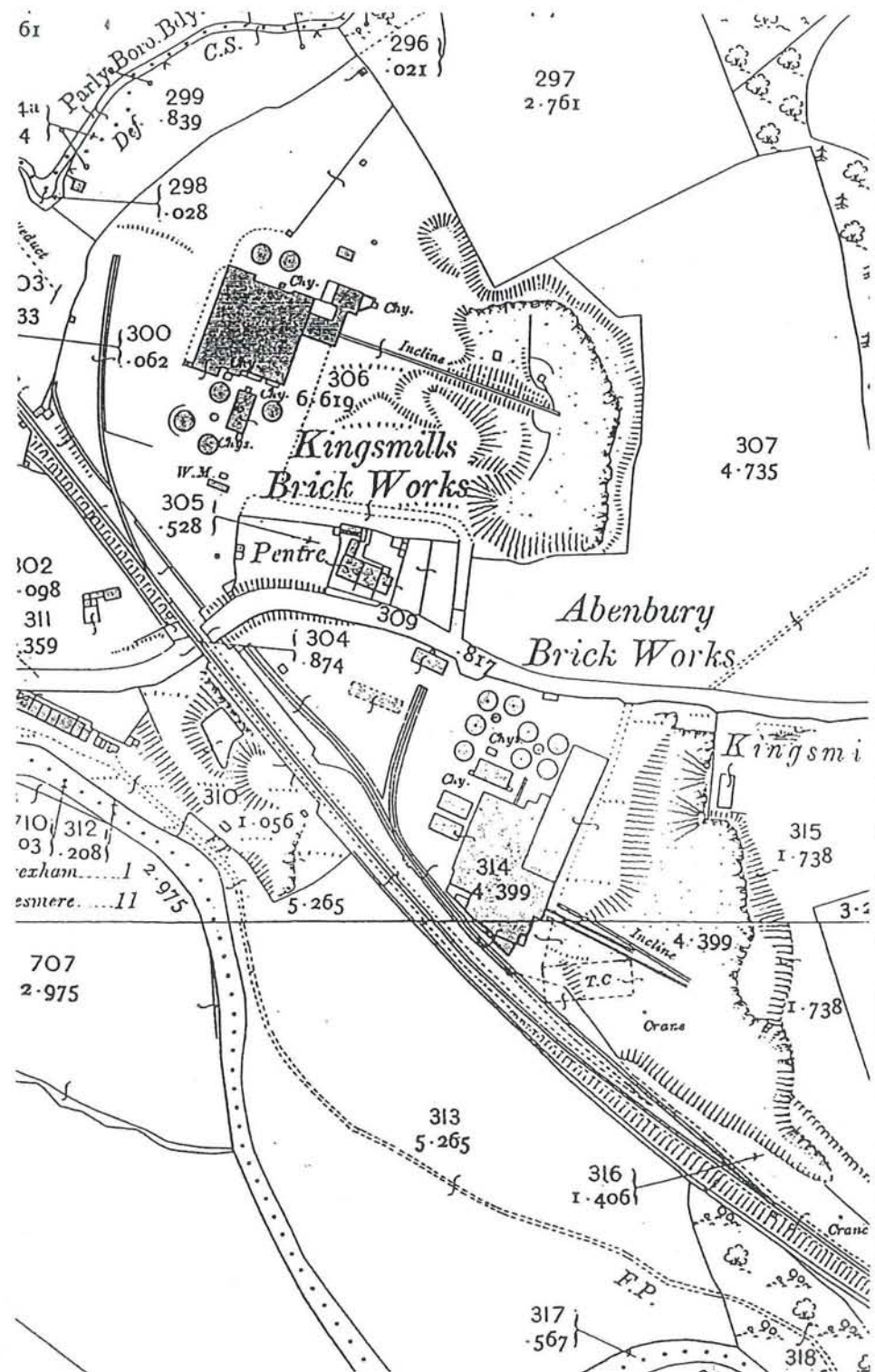


# Abenbury Park South, Wrexham

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



**CPAT Report No 437**

# **Abenbury Park South, Wrexham**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**W.G. Owen**  
October 2001

Report for Gordon Mytton

**The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust**

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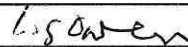


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## CPAT Report Record

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CPAT Project Name	Abenbury Park		
CPAT Project No	938	CPAT Report No	437
Confidential (yes/no)	No	draft/final	Final

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 In May 2001 the Contracts Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust was invited by Parry Davies Partnership, on behalf of their client, Mr Gordon Mytton, to prepare a specification and quotation for undertaking an archaeological watching brief on land at Abenbury Park South, Wrexham. The quotation was accepted and the watching brief undertaken between July and October 2001.
- 1.2 The proposed development relates to a planning application (Planning Application P/2000/0461) to redevelop the site of Abenbury Brickworks near Wrexham. The County Archaeologist had advised the Planning Authority that a watching brief should be carried out during the initial stages of the development. Accordingly, a brief was prepared by Wrexham Archaeology Service detailing the works required.
- 1.3 The development site is situated within an area of 19th-century industrial development. A previous evaluation by CPAT (Owen 1995) indicated that no standing structures remained and that the site had been heavily disturbed by levelling and dumping. However, it was considered likely that substantial subsurface remains could survive.

## **2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY**

- 2.1 The development site occupies an area of c. 1.8ha on the south-east side of Wrexham (centred at SJ 34954915), located between Abenbury Road and to the north and the course of a former railway to the south (Fig. 1). The area is generally flat, having been cleared and levelled a number of years previously.
- 2.2 The site lies at around 60m OD and the underlying geology consists of Ruabon Marl and Pen-y-glog Grit (Smith and George 1961). Soils noted on the site consisted of compact clays varying in colour from reddish-orange to grey and coarse, grey sands and gravels.

## **3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The focus of archaeological interest in the area relates to the Abenbury Brickworks which developed from 1895 and continued in use until the late 1980s. From 1964 the works, then owned by Moler Products Ltd, were amalgamated with the King's Mill Brickworks to the north of Abenbury Road and became known as Thomas Marshall & Co. (Loxley) Ltd. From the outset the brickworks concentrated on the production of rustic and plain terracotta bricks, ornamental ridge tiles, finials and chimney pots which were fired in beehive kilns (Edwards 1987). Clay was extracted from a substantial clay pit immediately to the east, from where it was raised on an incline depicted by the Ordnance Survey in 1900. The development of the brickworks can be illustrated with reference to the Ordnance Survey 1:2,500 maps of 1906 (Fig. 2) and 1964 (Fig. 3).
- 3.2 The southern boundary of the area follows the line of the Wrexham and Ellesmere Railway which opened in 1895. The single track railway was carried over Abenbury Road by a single span bridge, with sidings serving the Abenbury Brickworks (see Figs 2 and 3). The railway was closed to passengers in 1962 but remained open to freight until 1982 (Bolander *et al.* 1992).

## **4 WATCHING BRIEF (Fig. 4)**

- 4.1 The watching brief was conducted intermittently between July and October 2001, largely relating to the excavation of house foundations and trenching for services. A full written and photographic record was maintained throughout. By comparing the development plan with the Ordnance Survey 1964 mapping (fig. 4) it was possible to interpret a number of features identified in foundation trenches, as well as to predict where further features might be expected.



- 4.2 Following the demolition of the brickworks in the late 1980s the site had been levelled, resulting in the deposition of a layer of demolition rubble up to 1.0m thick across much of the site.
- 4.3 The pre-construction phase of the present development involved the demolition of the south-east abutment for the railway bridge constructed in 1895 as part of the Wrexham and Ellesmere Railway. Prior to demolition a photographic survey was undertaken of the structure (plate 1), together with a basic measured survey, although both were restricted by vegetation. The south abutment, which was constructed of ashlar blocks, measured c. 9m wide and c. 5m high with wing walls on either side. The abutment on the north side of Abenbury Road had already been removed at some time in the past.
- 4.4 The development adjacent to Abenbury Road involves the excavation of foundations for 36 house plots. Of these, eight were examined during the course of the watching brief. No visible structural features were exposed in the foundation trenches of Plot B even though some evidence could have been anticipated (fig. 4). During the excavation of foundations for Plot C, where Ordnance Survey mapping indicated the location of a beehive kiln, structural remains were identified in the south-western corner of the plot, consisting of a length of brick wall 1.50m long, 1.10m high and 0.80m thick with a hint of a slight curvature to it (plate 2).
- 4.5 The foundation trenches of Plot D exposed the basal remains of parts of four beehive brick kilns (plates 3 and 4), but these were insufficient to give any detail such as overall diameters, although evidence from the Ordnance Survey mapping would suggest a diameter of c. 8m. The base of a brick-built chimney was also identified in Plot D, measuring c. 2m in diameter (plate 5). No structural features were exposed in Plot E whilst material such as plastic sheeting etc exposed in the trenches of Plot F indicated that the eastern side of this plot had been part of a dump some 2.2m deep. The western side revealed no structural features. Monitoring during the excavation of further foundations for house plots G-I, together with service trenches, failed to reveal any features of archaeological significance.
- 4.6 As the development progressed it became evident that the watching brief was merely confirming the position of features already recorded by the Ordnance Survey and it seemed unlikely that significant new detail would be revealed. Accordingly a site meeting was arranged with the curator, Ms K Kucharski, on 15 October 2001 at which it was agreed that the continuation of the watching brief was unlikely to reveal any features of archaeological significance and the programme of monitoring would therefore come to an end.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The watching brief identified a number of structures associated with the former brickworks, although the nature of the development severely limited the archaeological returns. Basal remains of four beehive brick kilns were identified where they had been cut by foundation trenches, together with the base of an associated chimney. These remains all belonged to structures which had been recorded by successive editions of the Ordnance Survey 1:2,500 maps.
- 5.2 A basic photographic and drawn record was made of the surviving railway bridge abutment, although this was limited by dense vegetation cover.

## 6 REFERENCES

- Bolander, A, Hambly, M, Leadbetter, H, Southern, D & Weatherby, S, 1992. *Wrexham Railways: a Collection of Pictures*. Wrexham.
- Edwards, I, 1987. Gazetteer of Clayworks in the Wrexham and Ruabon District, *Denbighshire Historical Society Transactions* 36, 47-83.
- Owen, W G, 1995. *Land at Abenbury Brickworks, Wrexham, Clwyd: Archaeological Evaluation*. CPAT Report No. 123.
- Smith, B. and George, T.N. 1961. *British Regional Geology; North Wales*. HMSO London.

Ordnance Survey 1:2,500 3rd edition Denb 28. 1906

Ordnance Survey 1:2,500 1964

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **SITE ARCHIVE**

8 Watching brief daily visit forms  
11 black and white negatives  
11 colour prints  
11 colour slides

photographic catalogue

2 A4 site plans of bridge abutment and wing wall



## APPENDIX 2

### LAND OFF ABENBURY ROAD, WREXHAM SPECIFICATION FOR A CONTRACTED ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF BY THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

#### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The proposed development relates to a planning application (Planning Application P/2000/0461) to redevelop the site of Abenbury Brickworks, Wrexham. The County Archaeologist has advised the Planning Authority that a watching brief should be carried out during the initial stages of the development. Accordingly, a brief has been prepared by Wrexham Archaeology service detailing the works required.
- 1.2 The development site is situated within an area of 19th century industrial development. A previous evaluation by CPAT in 1995 indicated that no standing structures survived and that the site had been heavily disturbed by levelling and dumping. However, substantial subsurface remains may survive.

#### 2 Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of the archaeological works are:
  - 2.1.1 to record the nature, condition, significance and, where possible, the chronology of any archaeological deposits and/or features revealed within the area of the proposed development during the development works in so far as these aims are possible;
  - 2.1.2 to prepare a report outlining the results of the watching brief.

#### 3 Methods

- 3.1 The watching brief will be undertaken during all relevant groundworks, with the inspection of revealed surfaces and sections for archaeological features.
- 3.2 Excavation of all significant contexts will be undertaken where possible following negotiations with the developer. Where appropriate, samples will be taken for environmental and technical evidence. All significant archaeological deposits and/or features noted during the watching brief will be recorded by written record, drawn plan/section at an appropriate scale, and photography in 35mm colour slide and black and white and colour print. All features will be tied in locationally to the Ordnance Survey as accurately as possible.
- 3.3 Following the on-site work an illustrated and bound report will be prepared according to the requirements in the brief (section 8). This will be in A4 format and contain conventional sections on: Site location, Topography and Geology; Historic Background; Catalogue of sites identified with notes on their condition and significance, Conclusions and Recommendations and References, together with appropriate appendices on archives and finds. Further publication of the results in an appropriate regional or national journal will be undertaken at a later date and as considered appropriate depending on the nature of the findings.
- 3.5 The site archive will be prepared to specifications laid out in Appendix 3 in the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991). Following agreement with the landowner, arrangements will be made for the long term conservation and storage of all artefacts in an appropriate repository.

#### **4 Resources and Programming**

- 4.1 The watching brief will be undertaken by a skilled and experienced archaeologist. Overall supervision will be by Mr R.J.Silvester, a senior member of CPAT's staff who is also a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.
- 4.2 All report preparation will be completed by or with the assistance of the same field archaeologist who conducted the watching brief.
- 4.3 The duration of the watching brief will depend entirely on the developers programme of work. The subsequent report will be prepared immediately following completion of on-site recording, dependent on the client's instructions and the arrangement of a suitable timetable. The date of commencement, at the time of writing, has yet to be agreed with the client, and will be dependent on the state of the site and negotiated access. CPAT would normally require at least one week's written notice prior to work commencing. The archaeological curator will be informed of the detailed timetable and staffing levels when agreement has been reached with the client.
- 4.4 Requirements relating to Health and Safety regulations will be adhered to by CPAT and its staff.
- 4.5 CPAT is covered by appropriate Public and Employer's Liability insurance.

N.W. Jones  
Senior Project Archaeologist  
15th May 2001



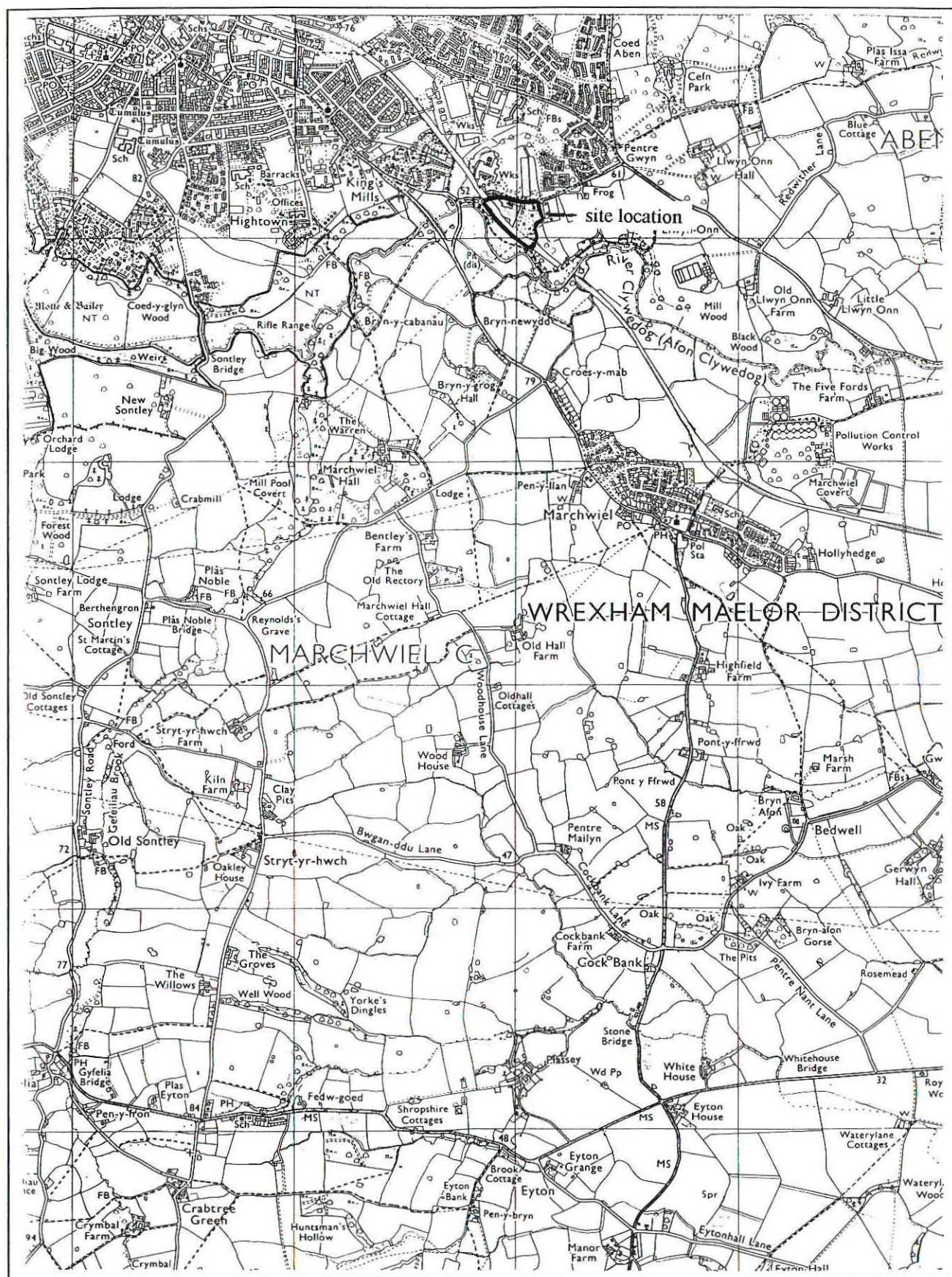


Fig. 1 Site location. Scale 1:25,000



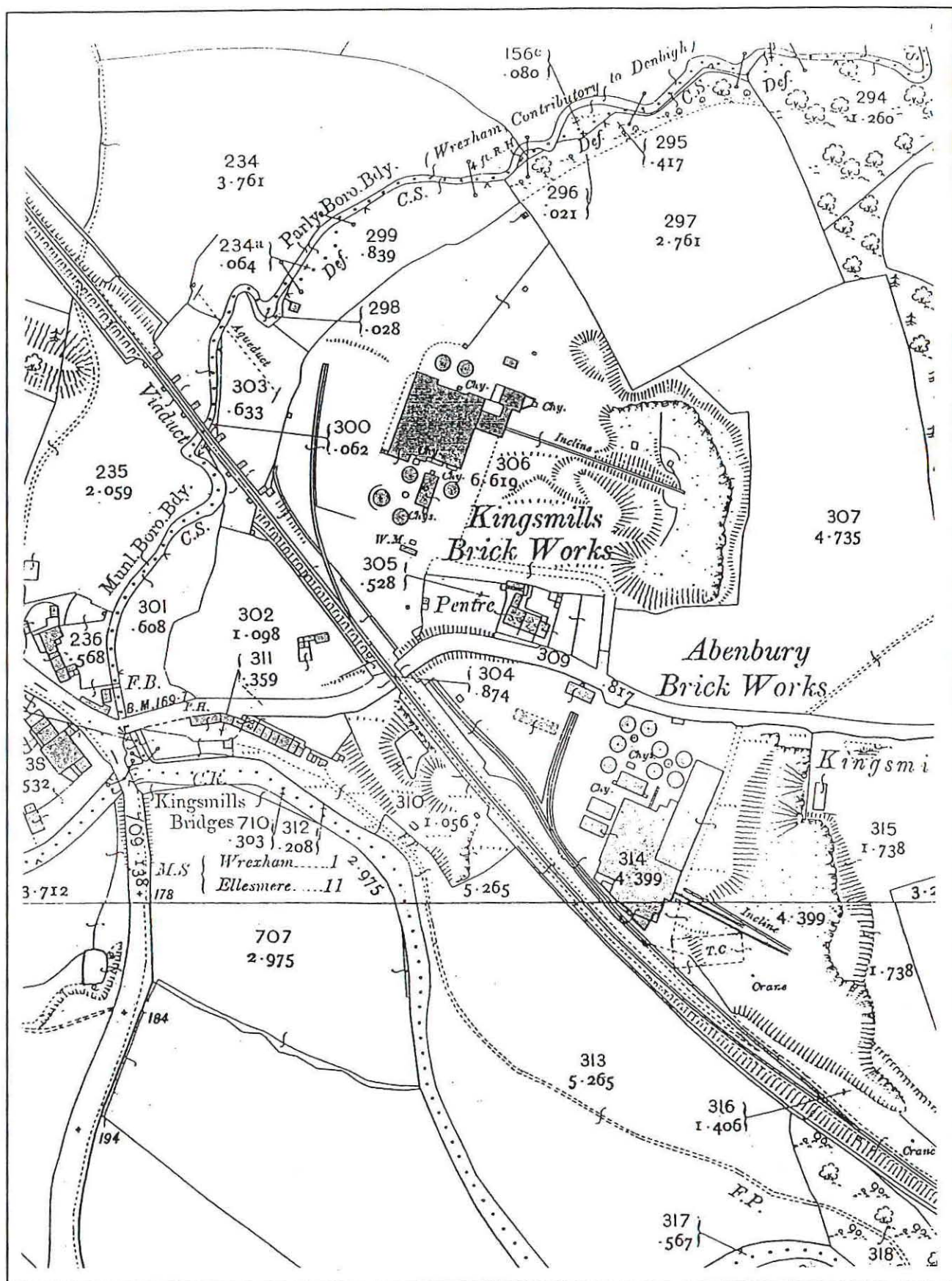


Fig. 2 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 3rd edition 1906



Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey's  
1:2,500 map of 1964 with the permission  
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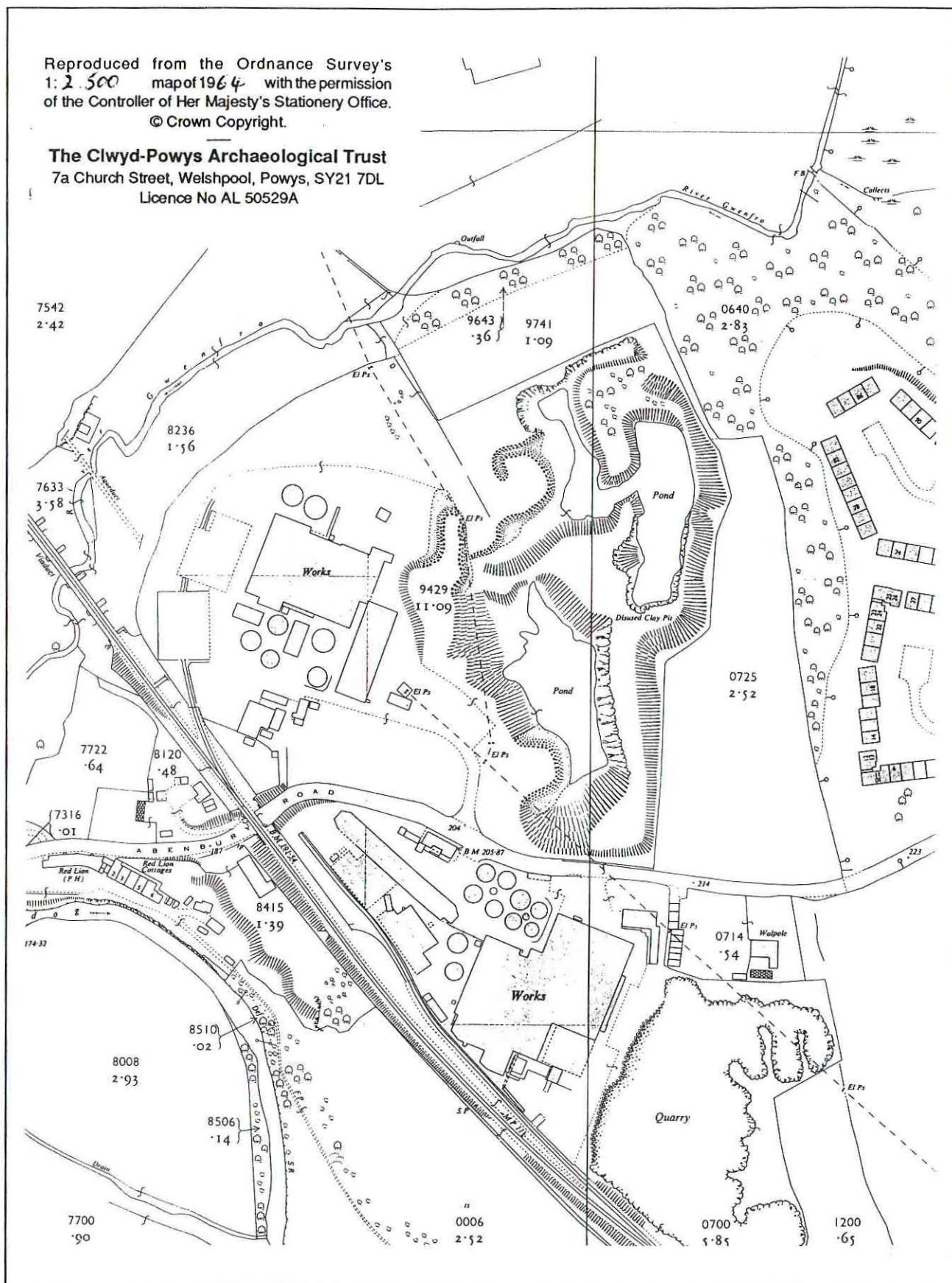


Fig. 3 Ordnance Survey 1:2,500 1964



Fig. 4 Abenbury Park South: Development plan and brickworks c. 1964. Scale 1:1,000



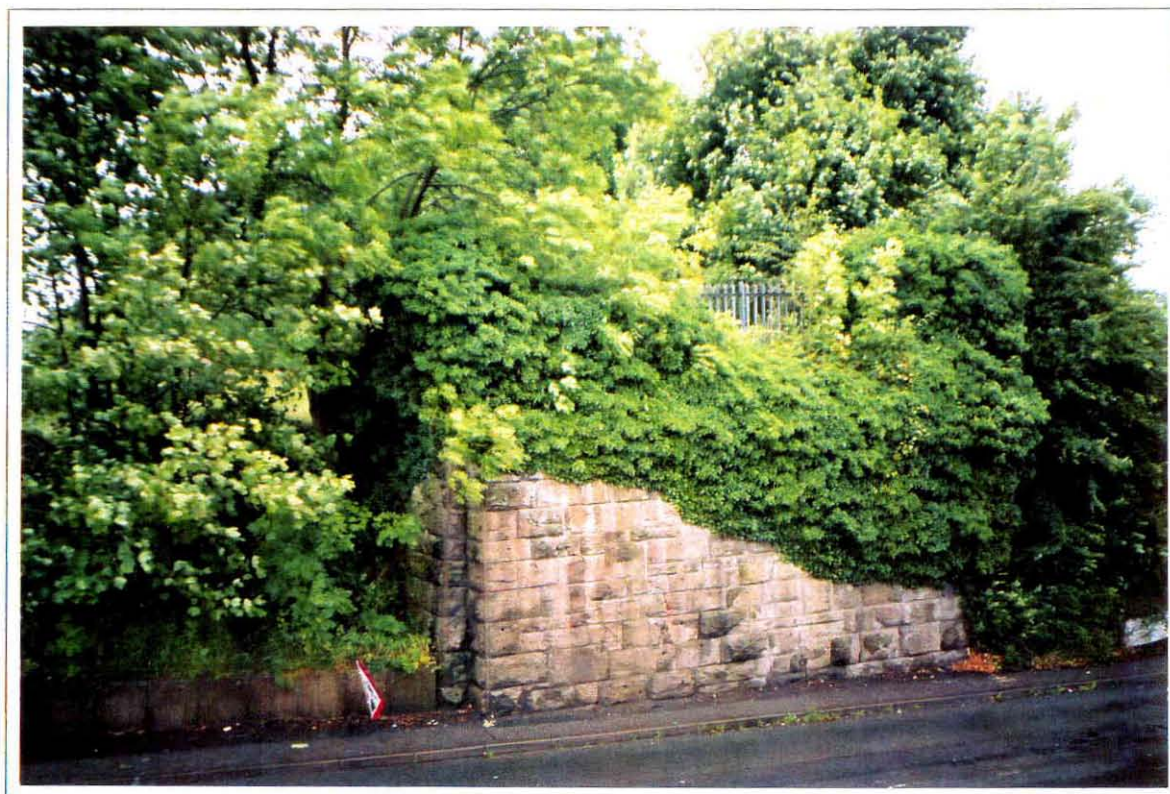


Plate 1 Railway bridge abutment. Photo CPAT 1096.03



Plate 2 Basal remains of beehive kiln in foundations of house C. Photo CPAT 1096.04





Plate 3 Basal remains of beehive kiln in foundations of house D. Photo CPAT 1096.09



Plate 4 Basal remains of chimney in foundations of house D. Photo CPAT 1096.06