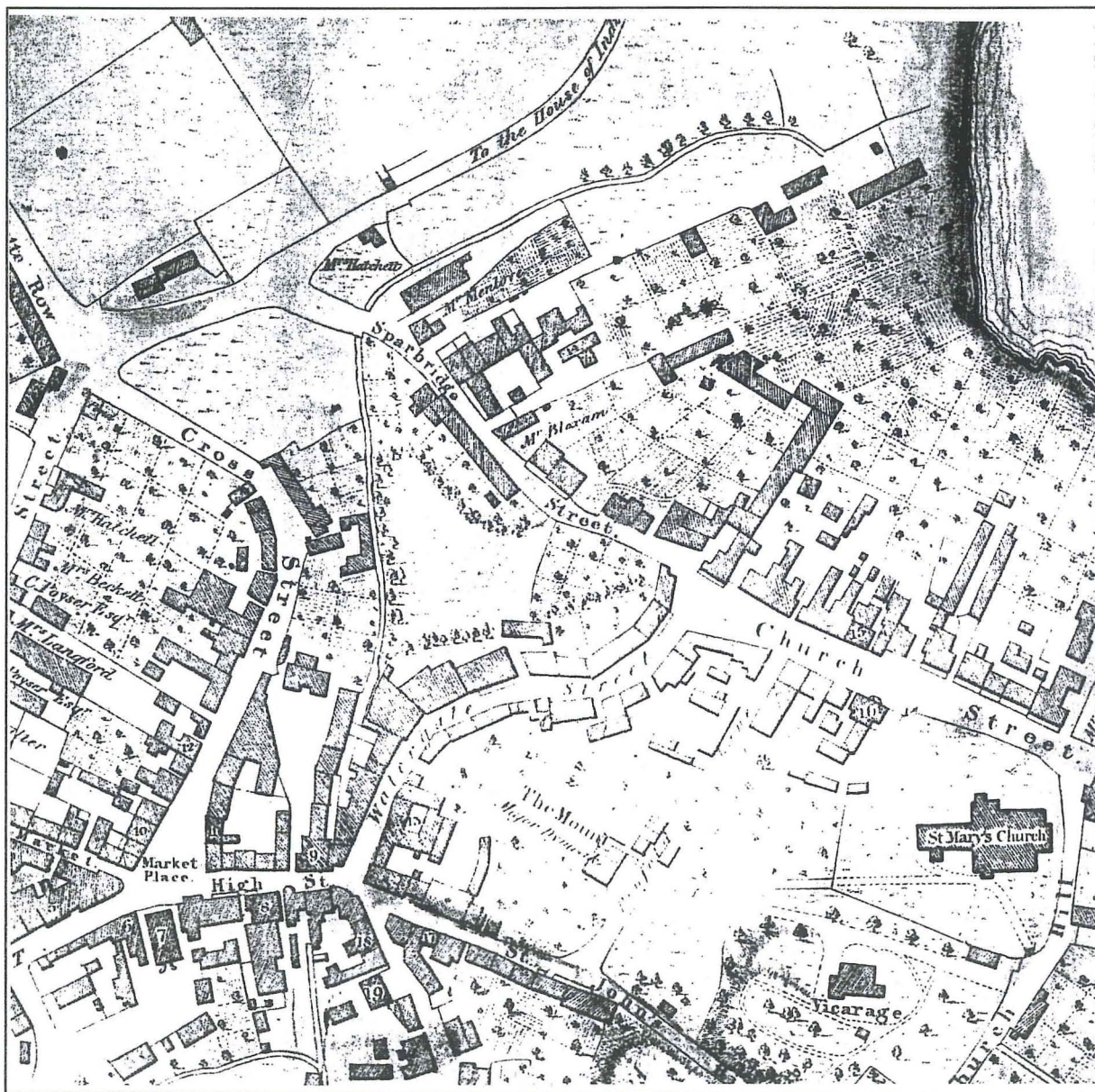


Talbot Street, Ellesmere, Shropshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT



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Report for J Ross Developments

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CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION
2	LOCATION
3	METHODOLOGY
4	RESULTS OF THE DESK-BASED STUDY
5	ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUMMARY
6	CONCLUSIONS
7	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER WORK
8	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
9	REFERENCES

FIGURES

- Fig. 1 Plan of Ellesmere and site location
- Fig. 2 Plan of Ellesmere by John Wood, 1835
- Fig. 3 Tithe Survey of Ellesmere Township, Ellesmere Parish, 1839
- Fig. 4 Plan of the Township of Ellesmere showing the Countess of Bridgewater's Properties, 1842
- Fig. 5 Plan for the Proposed Improvement of Drainage of Ellesmere, 1857
- Fig. 6 Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map, 1874
- Fig. 7 Study area and archaeological sites

PLATES

- Plate 1 Talbot Street frontage showing the entrance to the former caravan site
- Plate 2 View of the rear area of the plot

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (henceforward CPAT) was asked by Capita Symonds, on behalf of J Ross Developments to provide a quotation for an archaeological desk-based assessment of a proposed development area along Talbot Street in Ellesmere, Shropshire. The request was made in mid-October 2005 and the archaeological assessment was conducted in the early part of November, following the acceptance of CPAT's quotation.
- 1.2 At this stage it is understood that the site is presently not the subject of any planning applications. Consequently, the Historic Environment Officer for Shropshire County Council has not yet been involved in discussions about the impact on the cultural heritage and therefore no curatorial brief has been prepared.
- 1.3 This report presents the results of a desk-based study and field survey of the area and includes general recommendations for further phases of work which might be required in connection with any planning applications.

2 LOCATION

- 2.1 The development area forms a curving strip of land, running parallel to, but south of the area of Ellesmere known as Swan Hill, and leading off from Sparbridge and Talbot Streets (Fig. 1; SJ SJ40093499).
- 2.2 The development plot was occupied until recently by the Lower Talbot Caravan Park, and is currently overgrown with turf above the former track and hard-standing plots for the caravans. At the south-western end, shrubberies and the access road to this and the property to the south, occupy the former street frontage plots, whilst a timber-built wash-block sits further back with a septic tank nearby. A brick revetment wall, c. 3m high, forms part of the south-eastern boundary, with brick-built buttresses and at least two phases of construction. Part of the hedged northern boundary is formed by a shallow, dry ditch at the rear of the gardens on Swan Hill.
- 2.3 The majority of the development plot falls within, but on the north-east fringe of, the historic core of the town of Ellesmere as defined by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey (Buteux 1996).
- 2.4 The underlying geology consists of undivided Triassic sedimentary rocks, overlain by glacial deposits and topography forming the classic mere and moraine landscape of northern Shropshire.

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The initial phase of the assessment consisted of a desk-based study of the readily available primary and secondary sources. The repositories consulted included: the regional Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), held by Shropshire County Council in Shrewsbury; the Shropshire Records and Research Centre in Shrewsbury, and Ellesmere Local Studies Library.
- 3.2 Following the desk-based study, the area was subject to a walk-over survey to examine all the known sites and prospect for previously unrecorded archaeology. Digital photography, to a resolution of 3 mega-pixels, was taken of selected archaeological sites and locations.
- 3.3 In the following sections the term *PRN* precedes the primary record number of a site already identified in the regional Sites and Monuments Record. Newly identified archaeological and historic features are simply referred to as sites with an accompanying number.

4 RESULTS OF THE DESK-BASED STUDY

Historical Background

- 4.1 Several theories exist as to the origin of the name Ellesmere, with the flooding of Mrs Ellis's pump as retribution for her selfishness with her water supply (Peake 1897, 43) being perhaps the least likely. Aella's mere, or Elli's lake (Buteux 1996) identifies a personal land holding, although 'ael' is early English meaning 'greater', which may physically describe the lake (Peake 1897, 43). The new Cambridge Dictionary of English Place-Names favours 'Elli's Lake' (Watts 2004, 212).
- 4.2 Although the earliest documentary evidence identifies Ellesmere from the Domesday period, a fragment of a Saxon cross was recovered from the town, dating to c. 750-850 AD, suggesting rather earlier origins (Pratt 1983). The Domesday survey identifies Ellesmere (*Ellesmeles*) as being held in 1086 by Peveril from Roger of Montgomery (Thorn & Thorn 1986). A castle is recorded as having been built in stone by Payne Peverill in 1150 (Nankivell 1983) at the site of the bowling green on Castle Hill to the west of the mere. The manor reverted to the Crown, however, when Henry I convicted Peverill of sorcery, implicated in the poisoning of Ranulf, Earl of Chester. Later, the manor, along with Hales, was given to Owen of Gwynedd as dowry for Henry I's sister (Nankivell 1983), and in 1221 Henry III granted Llewelyn, the Lord of Ellesmere, (Owen's nephew), permission to hold weekly markets in the town (Peake 1897). The central tower and transepts of the church of St Mary's date from around this time, about 1230 (Pratt 1983).
- 4.3 By the mid 16th century Leland described the town in the following terms: 'Ellesmere hath a four streets of meately good buildings, privileged with two faires, but no cummun market now' (Adnitt 1881; Smith 1964, iii, 74). The market prospered, with a cattle market being held in Church Street until the opening of the new Smithfield and the advent of the railway in the 19th century. Associated with the cattle trade was the development of a thriving tanning industry, with the mere and its associated streams being utilised as a water source for the processing of the hides, and the development of tanneries along its marshy western shore (Watson 2002). One of the main tannery owners in the late 18th and early 19th century was a Mr Menlove (Nankivell 1983, 43), who is identified on Wood's plan of the town in 1835 (Fig. 2) as an occupier, or perhaps owner of the western part of the development plot. There is, however, no specific evidence to suggest that the development plot was directly linked with the tanning industry. Of perhaps even greater importance to the economic success of the town was the malting industry. In 1773 Pennant remarked on the quality of the barley in the area and of the scale of the malting industry in the town (Peake 1897).
- 4.4 By the early 19th century much of Ellesmere was owned by the Bridgewater Estate, and it had developed into a thriving market and agricultural town, now served by both the railway and the Shropshire Union Canal. In addition to its trades and industry, the town and its mere provided an attractive location for pleasure and shooting holidays, leading to the development of a small-scale, associated, service industry of tours, provision suppliers and accommodation.

Cartographic Evidence

- 4.5 The earliest medium-scale, available map to show Ellesmere is John Roque's Map of 1752 which depicts the town as a settlement on the western side of the mere, and this was followed by Baugh's Map of Shropshire of 1808. However, the first map to show any great detail of the study area is John Wood's 1835 Plan of Ellesmere (Fig. 2). The development site is shown bounded by the Sparbrook to the north, with open ground at the north-eastern end, and buildings associated with enclosed plots and an access track leading from Sparbridge Street to the west. The name, Mr Menlove, is assigned to the properties within the enclosed area at the western end. The area immediately south-east of the development area is shown as sub-divided plots and associated buildings, some of which front on to Sparbridge Street.
- 4.6 The 1839 Tithe map (Fig. 3) and apportionment shows a similar picture, although further detail is provided about the existing buildings and at least three additional small buildings, possibly privies or other out-buildings, are shown. The quality of the map is very poor and recording of the apportionment numbers difficult. In addition, a tanyard is shown to the north-east, adjacent to

the mere, although there is no evidence to suggest any tanning activity within the development plot.

- 4.7 An estate map of 1842 (Fig. 4) showing the Countess of Bridgewater's properties reveals a similar layout to the Tithe map, and further detail is given about the occupiers of the properties and plots, although the function of the buildings is not identified.
- 4.8 In 1857 a plan was drawn up to plot the proposed drainage improvements to the town, including changes to the Sparbrook. The buildings within the development area are shown as before, with the block of buildings which appear to front (or back) on to the brook, accessed by a lane leading from the main Sparbridge Street, and another block of buildings fronting on to the street itself. The division of the plots to the rear of these properties appears slightly changed, although the general, overall layout is the same.
- 4.9 The first edition of the large-scale Ordnance Survey map of 1874 still shows the buildings and plot divisions, although by 1901 there is only one building shown fronting on to Sparbridge Street. By 1975 no buildings are shown at all, and the development area appears as a single open space, with an engineering works just to the north, and the public parks of Cremorne Gardens between it and the mere.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

- 5.1 The locations of the individual archaeological sites are shown on Figure 1. Tables summarising the known archaeology of the study areas are provided below.
- 5.2 The regional Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) identifies 11 sites of interest which fall within or close to the development area, although several of these refer to areas of general interest rather than specific sites. These include the records for the medieval town (PRN 05304), and post-medieval settlement (PRN 05305). In addition an Event Report ESA5898 identifies an archaeological assessment carried out in 2002 of the mere frontage (Watson 2002), which includes the land just to the east of the development site. The following descriptions provide a summary of the recorded archaeology, based on information provided by the SMR and the results of the desk-based study:

5.3 *Sites*

PRN 05237 Old Watercourse SJ 4012 3486 – SJ 4006 3462 – SJ 4017 3510 Line
The line of the former water-course, the Sparbrook, now culverted and diverted, but originally forming the northern boundary of the development site. Although it has been suggested that there is a potential for waterlogged deposits to be preserved adjacent to the stream course, recent test pitting revealed no evidence of waterlogged deposits at the north-eastern end of the site (Capita Symonds 2005).

PRN 05239 Sparbridge
Certainly a post-medieval, and possibly medieval, structure, the site of which was recorded from map evidence (Wood 1835; Fig. 2) as providing the crossing for Sparbridge Street over the Sparbrook, adjacent to the western corner of the development site.

PRN 05293 Tenement Plots
The areas to the north of Church Street and Talbot Street, including the development site, are recorded as possible tenement plots of medieval date.

PRN 08590 Tanyards by the Mere
The main tannery lay to the rear of Church Street alongside the western shore of the Mere, with other tanyards in the same general area. The site of the main tannery was incorporated into the pleasure grounds of the Cremorne Gardens (PRN 08591) after its closure in 1855.

PRN 05294 Medieval street system

Sparbridge, Talbot Street and Church Street are recorded as having possible medieval origins, although this is based upon map evidence alone as it has not been archaeologically tested. The later development of the street system has also been little investigated, and as such the site is also included in a record for the post-medieval street system PRN 05295.

PRN 12443 Cremorne Cottage

A 17th-century timber framed cottage, protected by Grade II listing, is recorded on Sparbridge, adjacent to the development area.

PRN 12485 1-3 Talbot Street

The site of early 19th-century brick-built houses, now demolished. These would appear to be the properties shown on the early 19th-century maps occupying the street frontage area of the development site.

Site 1

Various buildings are depicted on 19th-century mapping close to the Talbot Street frontage, although their date and function are unknown.

RN	Name	Type	Period	Condition	NGR
05237	Old Watercourse	Stream	Post-medieval	Culverted & diverted	SJ 4012 3486 SJ 4006 3462 SJ 4017 3510
05239	Sparbridge	Bridge	Medieval or Post-medieval	Demolished	SJ 4006 3500
05293	Tenement Plots	Tenement	Medieval or Post-medieval		SJ 4018 3498
05294	Street System	Road	Medieval		SJ 3974 3470
05295	Street System	Road	Post-medieval		SJ 3974 3470
05304	Urban Form	Town	Medieval		SJ 4017 3478
05305	Urban Form	Town	Post-medieval		SJ 4017 3478
08590	Tanyards	Tannery	1700 – 1899 AD	Demolished	SJ 4025 3503
08591	Cremorne Gardens	Park	Mid 19 th – present		SJ 403 351
12443	Cremorne Cottage	House	17 th century		SJ 4020 3505
12485	No. 1, 3 Talbot Street	Dwelling	1800 – 1832 AD	Demolished	SJ 4009 3499
Site 1	Talbot St Building	Building	Post-medieval	Unknown	SJ 4010 3500

Table 1: Summary of archaeological and historic sites

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 The potential impact of the development proposals on the archaeological resource have been assessed, based on information provided by the client relating to the proposed layout of the development. Figure 7 shows a comparison between the existing site plan, the proposed location of new dwellings and access, and the approximate location of 19th-century buildings. Any changes to the development layout may affect the potential archaeological impact.

- 6.2 The available 19th-century cartographic evidence indicates two ranges of buildings close to the Talbot Street frontage (PRN 12485 and Site 1), with no evidence for any structures in the rear two-thirds of the plot.
- 6.3 Information from the field survey and desk-based study have revealed that significant areas of the plot appear to have been disturbed to some extent as a result of its use as a caravan site. At present the site includes an access road off Talbot Street which extends almost the full length of the plot with a turning area at the end and a parking area adjacent to the wash-block. A septic tank lies within the parking area. The Sparbrook runs through the site in a culvert and evidence from recent test pitting indicates that the north-eastern end of the site has been levelled at some point by the deposition of a significant amount of material, possibly building rubble, which included brick, slate and wood (Capita Symonds 2005).
- 6.4 The existing access road runs across both areas of buildings depicted on 19th-century mapping and has presumably disturbed any subsurface remains along its course. The development proposals include the reuse and resurfacing of the existing access within the street frontage area, with some management and replanting of the adjacent shrubbery areas. There is therefore unlikely to be any significant additional disturbance to the street frontage buildings (PRN 12485 and Site 1).
- 6.5 The majority of the proposed new dwellings lie along the course of the existing access road, in areas likely to have been disturbed by the construction of the wash-block and septic tank, or in what appears to be made-up ground at the north-east end of the development area, while part of the new access road lies in the area of the culverted stream. The only part of the development area which, on present evidence, appears to remain relatively undisturbed is that between the existing access and the south-eastern boundary, within which there are proposals for one new dwelling, two garages and part of the new access road.

7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The assessment has identified a limited number of known archaeological sites within the proposed development area, concentrated at the western end of the plot, and these are summarised below.
- 7.2 Cartographic evidence identifies several blocks of buildings present on the site in the 19th century. These include a large building (Site 1), apparently sub-divided into individually occupied properties along the southern edge of the former Sparbrook (the north-western boundary of the development site). A smaller building is identified at the eastern end of the main block. Separated from these buildings by a road or lane, and fronting on to the main Sparbridge Street (now Talbot Street) were two adjacent, early 19th-century buildings, nos 1 & 3 Talbot Street (PRN 12485). The land immediately to the east of these buildings was sub-divided into plots with small out-buildings, presumably associated with the main properties.
- 7.3 As a result of the proposed reuse of the existing access road and siting of new dwellings away from the street frontage it is considered, unlikely on the basis of existing evidence, that the proposals will have a significant impact on any surviving subsurface remains. There is, however, the potential for unrecorded buried archaeological deposits within the area.
- 7.4 The course of the Sparbrook (PRN 05237) forms the north-western boundary of the development site for just over half its length, while the section crossing the north-eastern end of the plot has been culverted.
- 7.5 Although the study has revealed evidence of the tanning industry close to the development area there is no specific evidence to suggest that a tannery existed within the development area.

However, the property appears to have been occupied in the early 19th century by Mr Menlove, a leading tannery owner at the time.

- 7.6 Advice should be sought from the Historic Environment Officer of Shropshire County Council, regarding any further stages of investigation, before any planning applications are submitted.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 8.1 The writers would like to thank the following for their assistance and co-operation: Penny Ward, Sites and Monuments Records Officer for Shropshire County Council; the staff of Shrewsbury Records and Research Centre; and the staff of Ellesmere Library.

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Maps

SRRC = Shropshire Records and Research Centre, Shrewsbury

Map of Shropshire by Roque 1752 (copy in Ellesmere Local History area, Ellesmere Library)

Map of Shropshire by Baugh R 1808 (SRRC)

Plan of Ellesmere by Wood J 1835 (SRRC 3551/1)

Tithe Survey of Ellesmere Township, Ellesmere Parish 1839 (SRRC PF105/12/4 [122/12])

Plan of the Township of Ellesmere showing the Countess of Bridgewater's Properties 1842 (SRRC 380/3)

Plan for the Proposed Improvement of Drainage of Ellesmere 1857 (SRRC 380/20)

Ordnance Survey 1:10560 map, Sheet 13NW 1874

Ordnance Survey 1:10560 map, Sheet 13NE 1874

Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map, Sheet 13.02 1893

Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map, Sheet 13.03 1893

Ordnance Survey 1:2500 SJ 4035-4135 1975

Ordnance Survey 1:10000 SJ 43NW 1980

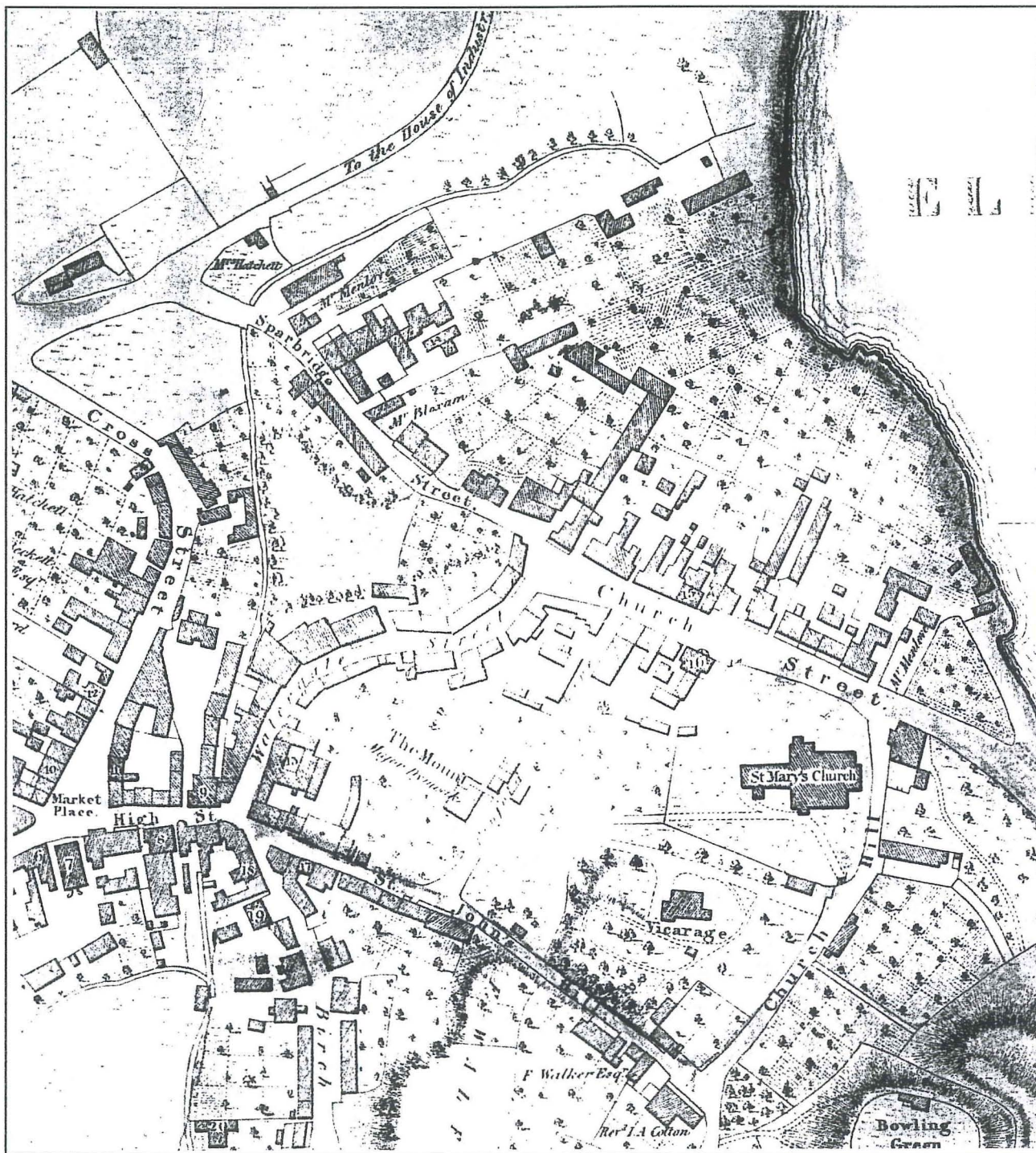


Fig. 2 Plan of Ellesmere by John Wood, 1835



Fig. 3 Tithe Survey of Ellesmere Township, Ellesmere Parish, 1839



Fig. 4 Plan of the Township of Ellesmere showing the Countess of Bridgewater's Properties, 1842

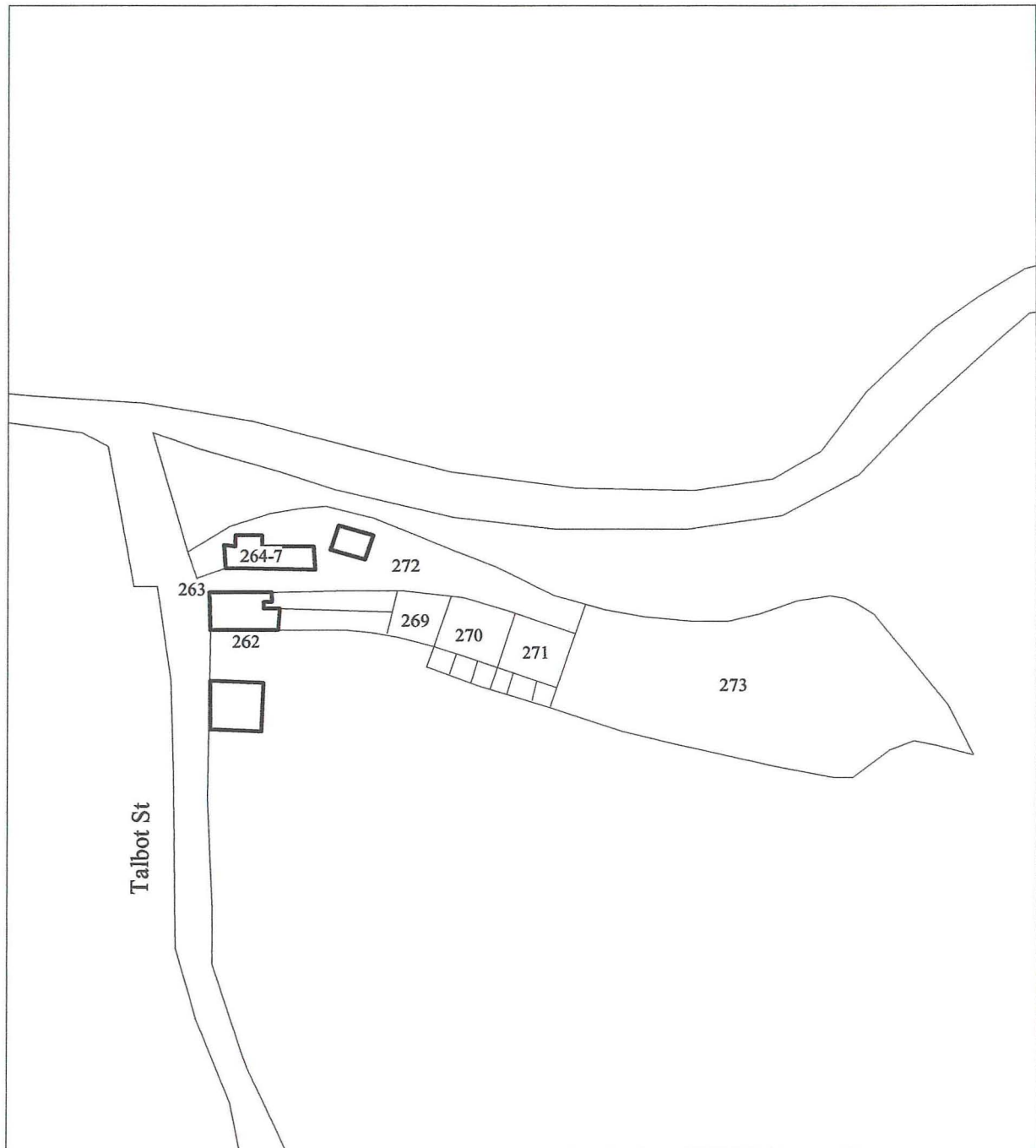


Fig. 5 Plan for the Proposed Improvement of Drainage of Ellesmere, 1857

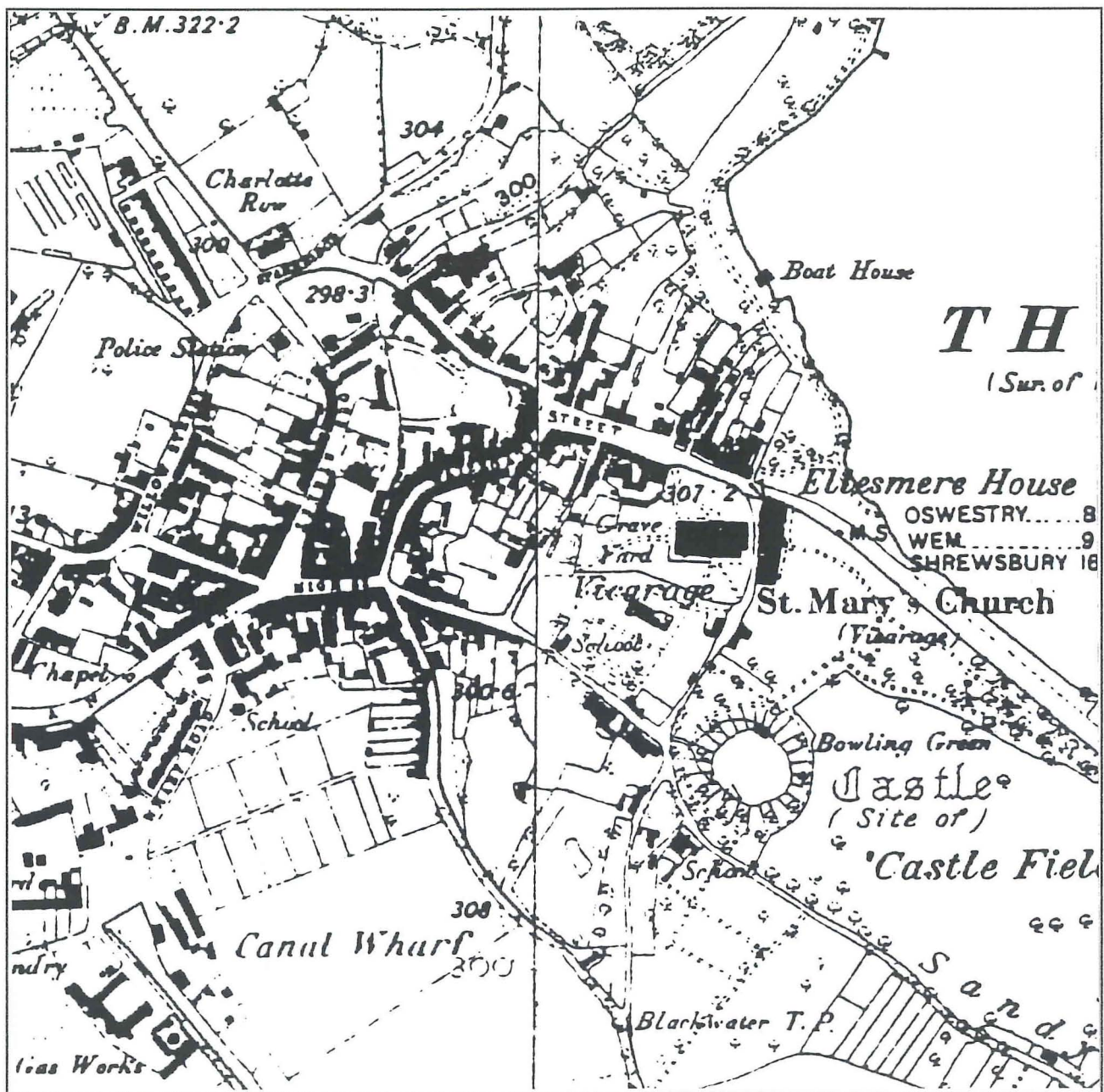


Fig. 6 Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map, 1874

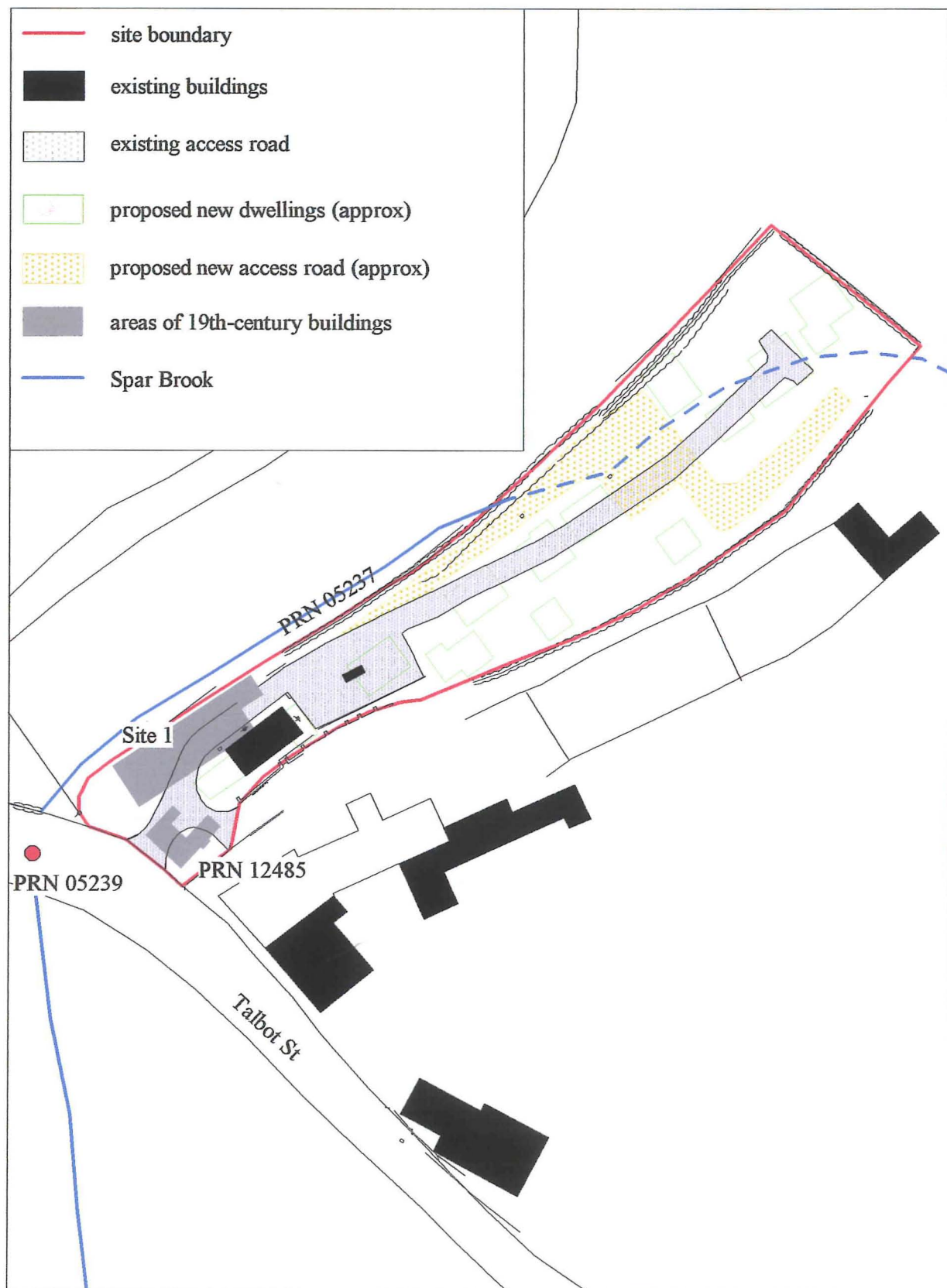


Fig. 7 Site boundary and archaeological potential



Plate 1 Talbot Street frontage showing the entrance to the former caravan site



Plate 2 View of the rear area of the plot