

Rochdale Riverside Archaeological Evaluation

Introduction

In January 2018 a series of evaluation trenches were excavated to establish the presence, character and integrity of the archaeological resource at the Rochdale Riverside project (Fig 1). In total 8 trenches were excavated targeting a variety of different structures identified in a Desk Based Assessment. These included worker's housing, industrial buildings, a school and two churches.

It was originally intended to excavate 11 trenches. As six of these trenches were in the main car park for Rochdale town centre, a former bus depot, it was decided to excavate two of the six trenches in this area. The result of this would determine whether the final four trenches need be excavated. It was concluded from the results of trenches 1 and 7, along with an examination of trial holes excavated in the same area that the final four trenches within the car park would not need to be excavated as the construction of the bus depot had removed all remains in the car park area (Fig 2).

Trench 1 (a and b)

Trench 1 was located at the western side of the main Baillie Street car park, immediately east of the former market area. Due to a large number of signals from the CAT scanning of the area it was decided to excavate it in two halves, expanding on two former geotechnical trial trenches. Trench 1a lay to the north and measured 4.8m by 1.9m. Trench 1b lay 4.4m to south of this and measured 5.2m by 1.9m.

Trench 1a was excavated through the concrete car park surface and its stone bedding. Below this was 2m of compact stone levelling/infill with 0.5m of mixed compacted demolition rubble below. This overlay natural mid brown clay at 2.7m below the current ground level.



Depth of levelling material in trench 1a, natural sand at base, looking north

Trench 1b was excavated to a depth of 0.68m through tarmac and stone bedding and into compact stone levelling material. Within this material, at a depth of 0.68m, was an orange plastic duct running east/west with a live electricity cable within it. This was in line with the car park lighting columns.



Cable duct in trench 1b, looking northwest

Trench 3

This trench was located within the fenced compound bounded by Baillie Street to the south, Acker Street to the west, Penn Street to the east and the Wheatsheaf Shopping Centre to the north. This was the site of a former, now demolished, multi-storey office block. The trench measured 18m by 1.9m and lay at the east side of the compound.

The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 3m through homogenous compacted crushed demolition material. At 3m depth reinforced concrete piles were encountered.

Trench 7

This trench was located in the northeast corner of the main car park at the south side of Baillie Street. At this point the car park is considerably lower than the roads to the north and east, with a substantial retaining wall at its north and east sides. This is likely to be due to the demolition of the former industrial works and housing in the area. A CAT scan of the area revealed a number of strong signals suggesting live electricity cables. As such it was decided to expand upon a former geotechnical trial trench.

Trench 7 measured 4m by 1.9m and was excavated through concrete and stone bedding. Below this was compact crushed demolition material to a depth of 3m below the current ground level. At this point natural mid brown clay was observed.

Trench 8

This trench was located within a small car park at the north side of Baillie Street, between Penn Street and the former Conway Street. This was targeted across the former Baillie Street Methodist Chapel, which had later been occupied by a multi-storey health centre. The trench ran east/west and measured 20.5m by 1.9m (Fig 3).

Below the tarmac three concrete piles with concrete ring beams were encountered at a depth of 0.98m to 1.01m. These ran across the trench, radiating from the curved front of the former health centre. Between these piles were rough concrete ducts, all giving strong live electrical signals on the CAT scan. At the east end of the trench 6.9m long section was clear of services and concrete and could be excavated deeper through mixed loose demolition rubble. The rubble contained fragments of architectural masonry including a fluted column.



Fluted column from demolition rubble in trench 8

Below the rubble, at a depth of 2.2m and running below the concrete ring beams, was a wooden herringbone pattern parquet floor surface, probably from the former chapel.



Wooden parquet flooring at base of trench 8, looking southeast

Trench 9

Trench 9 was located at the west side of car park at the north side of Baillie Street, between the former Conway Street and John Street. It was targeted across the former Baillie Street School. The trench was aligned north/south and measured 16.3m by 1.9m (Fig 4). It had to be cut slightly short at its north end due to a large grassed mound.

The northern 5.3m of the trench, below the tarmac, had been heavily disturbed and comprised mixed loose demolition rubble to a depth of 2.6m at which point natural clay was observed. At the immediate south side of this was a concrete duct which gave off a strong power signal with the CAT scanner. This concrete duct had cut through part of the floor of the former school which comprised very hard orangey red square tiles at the west side and a concrete floor surface at the east side. Between these was a 5 course wide brick wall. The central two courses appeared to be the original wall, of machine made brick with hard dark cement. The two courses running along the east side of this, also machine made brick with hard cement, appeared to have been roughly added at a later date. The western course was also later and comprised modern frogged and glazed bricks with a narrow concrete channel, presumably for drainage, running alongside it. At the south side of the floor surfaces was a four course wide east/west wall of machine made brick with hard black cement. At the south end of the trench, beyond the southernmost brick wall, was mixed loose demolition rubble to a depth of 2.1m at which point natural clay was observed.



Floor surface and walls in trench 9, looking south

Trench 10

This trench was located at the west side of car park at the north side of Baillie Street, between the former Conway Street and John Street. It was targeted across a former range of back-to-back workers housing. The trench was aligned east/west and measured 16m by 1.9m (Fig 5). It had to be cut short at its west end due to the presence of a series of interceptors from the garage which formerly occupied the site.

A series of handmade brick walls with lime mortar ran north/south across the trench forming the internal division walls between the cellars of the back-to back housing.



Walling of back-to-back house cellars in trench 10, looking east

The dividing wall between the north and south sides of the range was also visible in the northern trench edge. Two sets of brick and stone stairs were uncovered leading down into the cellars. The narrowness of the structures within the trench meant that the cellars could not be emptied by machine without destroying the in situ walling but the presence of the intact stairs and of

mixed loose demolition rubble filling the cellars strongly suggested that the cellar floors and any internal features survive below.



Western cellar stairs in trench 10, wall dividing the north and south sides of the range visible at left, looking northeast

The area to the east of the eastmost building, and the area between the east and west buildings, were filled with ash, sandy clay and dumps of a very humic dark soil suggesting that some of the cellars may have later been infilled before demolition, possibly when the range was expanded between 1851 and 1893. In conjunction with the infilled soil material the corresponding walls had brick buttresses added.

Trench 11

Trench 11 was located on a grassed mound between Ballie Street and Kelsall Street and was targeted across a former range of back-to-back workers housing. The trench ran east/west and measured 24m by 1.9m (Fig 6). It was cut short at the west end due to the presence of large trees with dense roots.

The western 17.6m of the trench could not be excavated to any depth due to the presence of a number of strong CAT scan signals and a very thick 6.5m wide tarmac surface of a former roadway. The eastern 6.4m of the trench was excavated to a depth of c. 0.7m and revealed three handmade brick walls with white lime mortar running across the trench. Between these walls was loose demolition rubble. These represented the internal dividing walls of the back-to-back houses.



Walling of back-to-back house cellars in trench 11, looking northwest

Although the western 17.6m of the trench could not be accessed due to ground conditions at the time of the evaluation it is unlikely that the tarmac road or the services present would be deep enough to remove the cellars and it is therefore likely that the cellars survive in situ below this.

Trench 12

This trench was located in the southeast part of the study area, within the car park bounded by Baillie Street, Kelsall Street, Smith Street and John Street. It was located at the western side of the car park, across the site of the former Congregational Church, and measured 20m by 1.9m (Fig 7).

At the south end of the trench were a series of 0.4m wide stone walls forming a 2.3m wide room filled with loose demolition rubble. This ran northeast/southwest with the northwest, northeast and southeast walls visible within the trench.



Southern stone walled room in trench 12, looking north

To the north of this were a series of stone structures. The northern and central structure were c 1.9m wide and stepped inwards on the east side. The northern structure stepped in at the south side of its edge and the central structure at the north side of its east edge, mirroring each other, with a 0.8m gap, possibly a basement corridor between the two. To the south of the central structure was a 0.84m wide stone structure. The 1.4m gap between the two was bridged by a four course wide handmade brick arch with lime mortar.



Stone structures and brick arch, looking northwest

The south structure had a chamfered stone block at the south side of its east edge and the northern structure had a similar block at the north side of its east edge. These suggested that originally brick arches sprang from these chamfered blocks running east, possibly forming a north/south basement corridor.



Chamfered stone block, looking northwest

The area to the north of the northern structure appeared to expand into a large basement which was filled loose demolition rubble. This was not bottomed due to the presence of a large live electricity cable at 2.02m below the current ground level, which appeared to run north/south along the basement corridor, possibly having removed the former brick arches.



Rubble filled basement, live cable visible at bottom centre, looking northeast

Within the demolition rubble were large pieces of ornate architectural masonry.



Example of the architectural masonry within the rubble fill of the basement, probably an upper moulding from a door or window arch

Beside the trench a geotechnical trial pit had been excavated and backfilled. Some cast iron had been removed during the excavation of this trench and had been deposited beside the trench. This comprised some piping and an ornate column base with floral decoration.



Ornamental cast iron column base and pipes from former trial pit

Discussion

The area of the main Baillie Street car park has undergone extensive demolition and rebuilding for the former bus depot (trenches 1a, 1b and 7). The same can be said for the area of the now demolished office block at the south side of the Wheatsheaf Shopping centre (trench 3). These works have removed any archaeologically significant remains from these areas.

Some remains survive in situ from the former Baillie Street Methodist Chapel (trench 8) and Baillie Street School (trench 9) but the remains were of a late date, probably due to early 20th century remodelling of the buildings. Modern intrusions have also disturbed significant parts of these buildings suggesting that they may not be worth further investigation.

The basements of the back-to-back housing north of Baillie Street between John Street and Conway Street survive intact, as do the basements of the range of back-to-back housing between Baillie Street and Kelsall Street. The survival of these basements may merit further investigation, particularly for the blocks visible on the 1851 mapping. The survival of remains of the former Congregational Church may also merit further investigation. Although there appears to be some disturbance in this area it may be localised to the laying of electricity cabling and the substantial stone basement structures are likely to have survived intact. The abundant large pieces of architectural masonry present within the basement rubble infill may also merit some re-use as part of the development (Figs 8 to 10).

Further Investigation

Following discussion with the Heritage Management Director (Archaeology) at Greater Manchester Advisory Service, three areas are recommended for further investigation (Figs 11 to 13). These are to cover the blocks of back-to-back housing at the north side of Baillie Street, in the area of trench 10, including the toilets, wash-house and yard areas between the ranges; the east end of the range of back-to-back house between Baillie Street and Kelsall Street (trench 11); and the Congregational Church on Milton Street (trench 12). The east end of the range between Baillie Street and Kelsall Street has been targeted in order to avoid the tree roots and the majority of the parking bays.

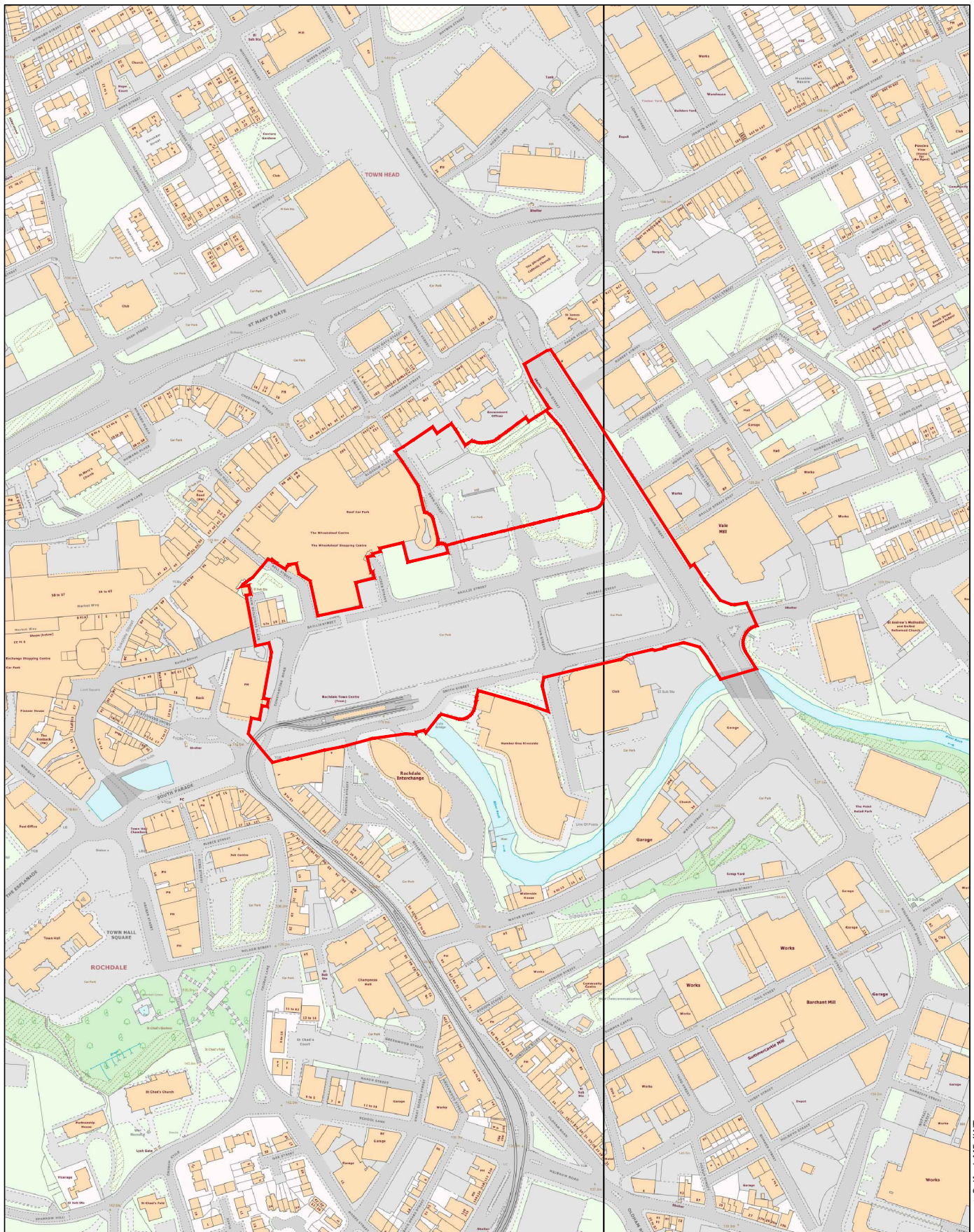


Figure 1:
Site location



Key:
— Site boundary



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ARCHAEOLOGY

0

200 m

Scale at A4 1:4000

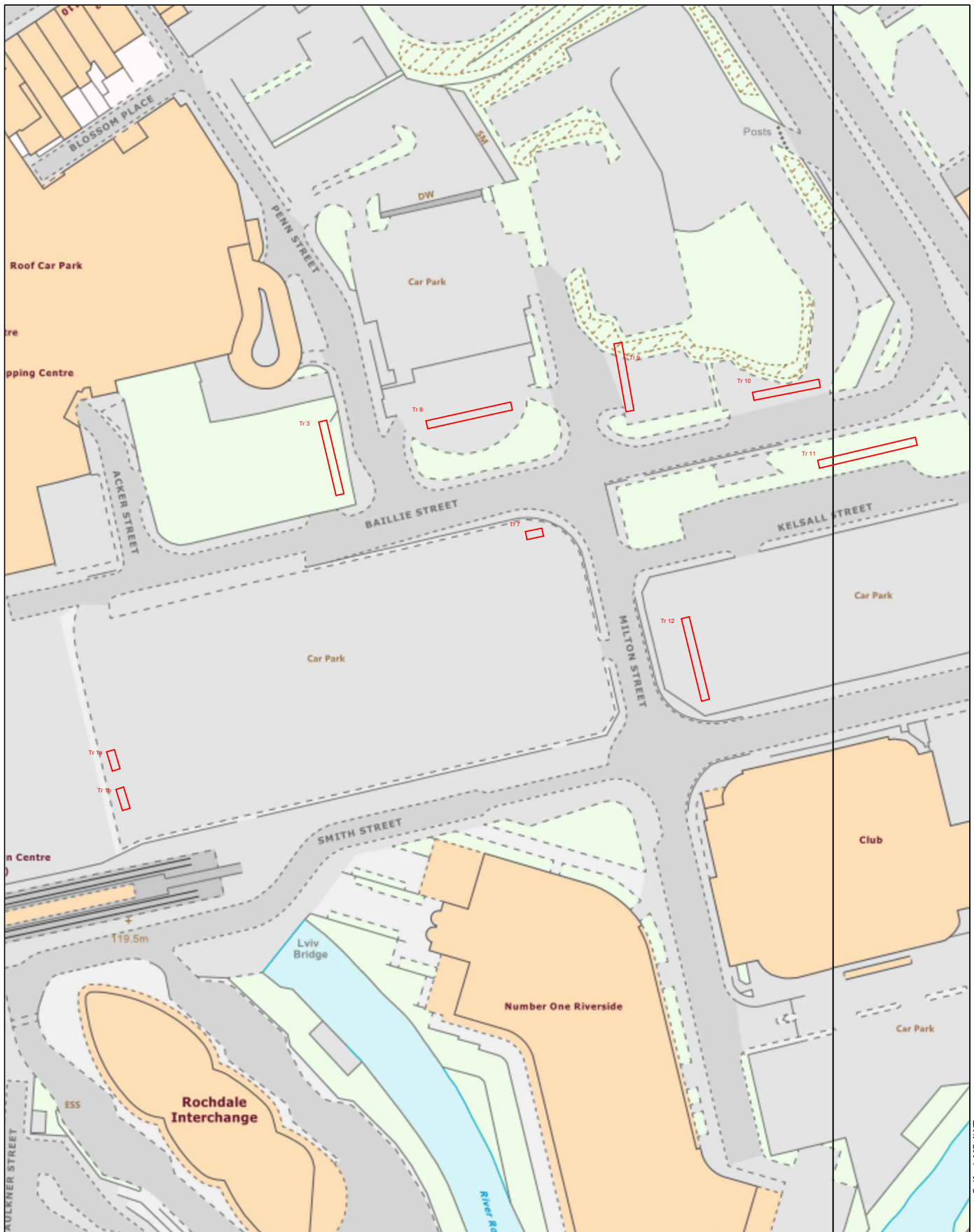


Figure 2:

Trench location



Key:

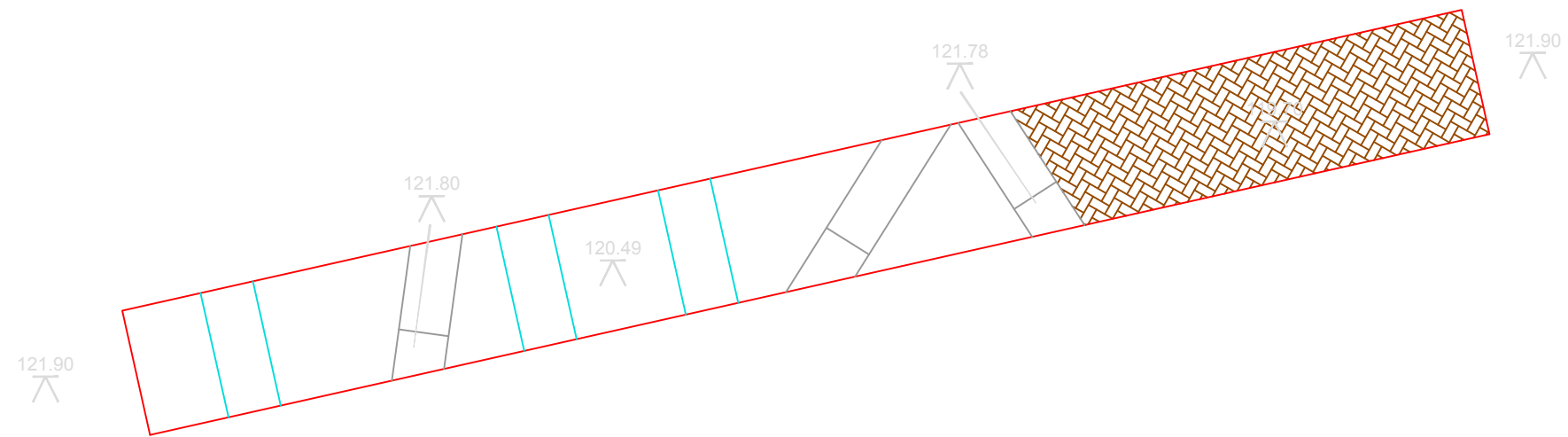
— Trench

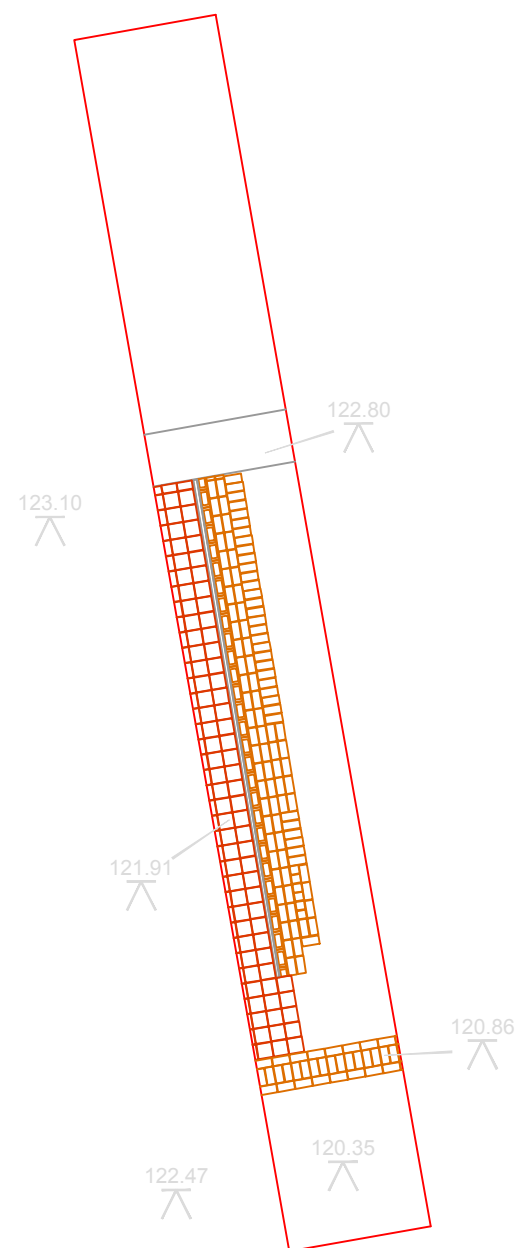


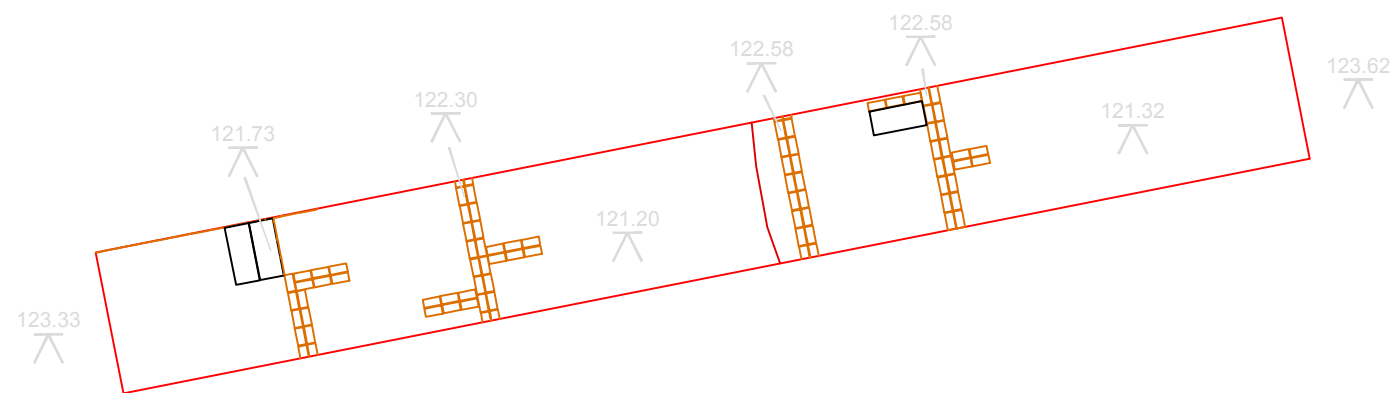
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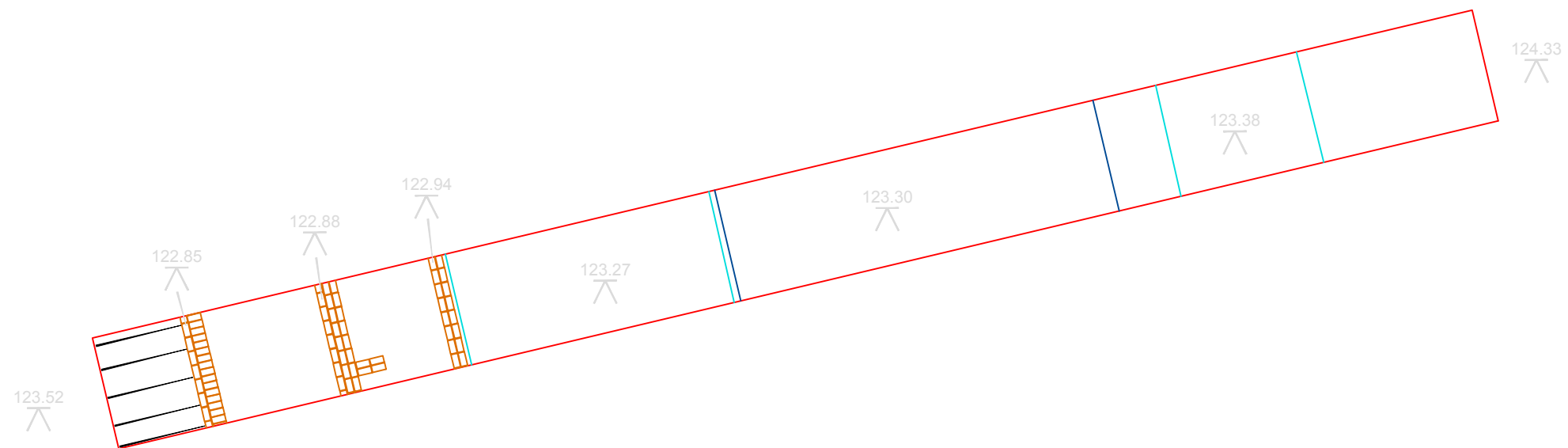
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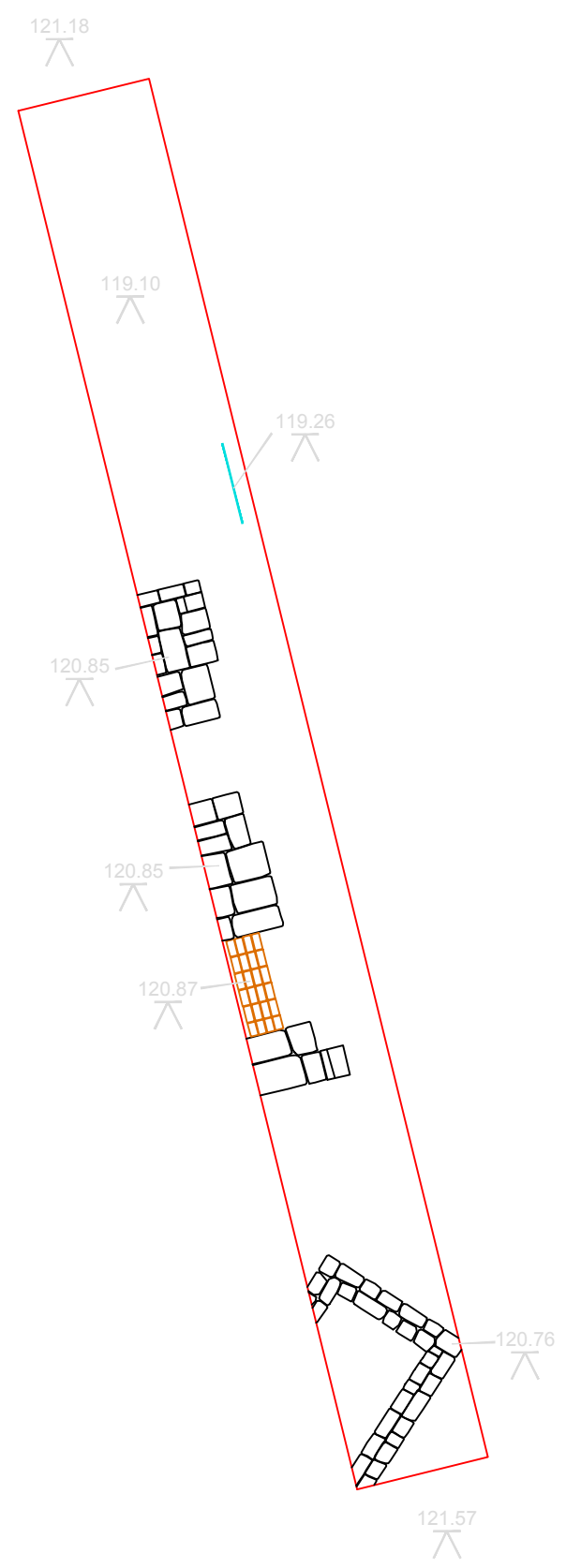
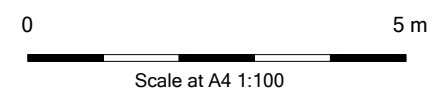


Figure 7:
Trench 12 plan



Key:					
	Brick wall		Service		Tile
	Concrete		Stone		Trench
	Feature		Tarmac		Wood

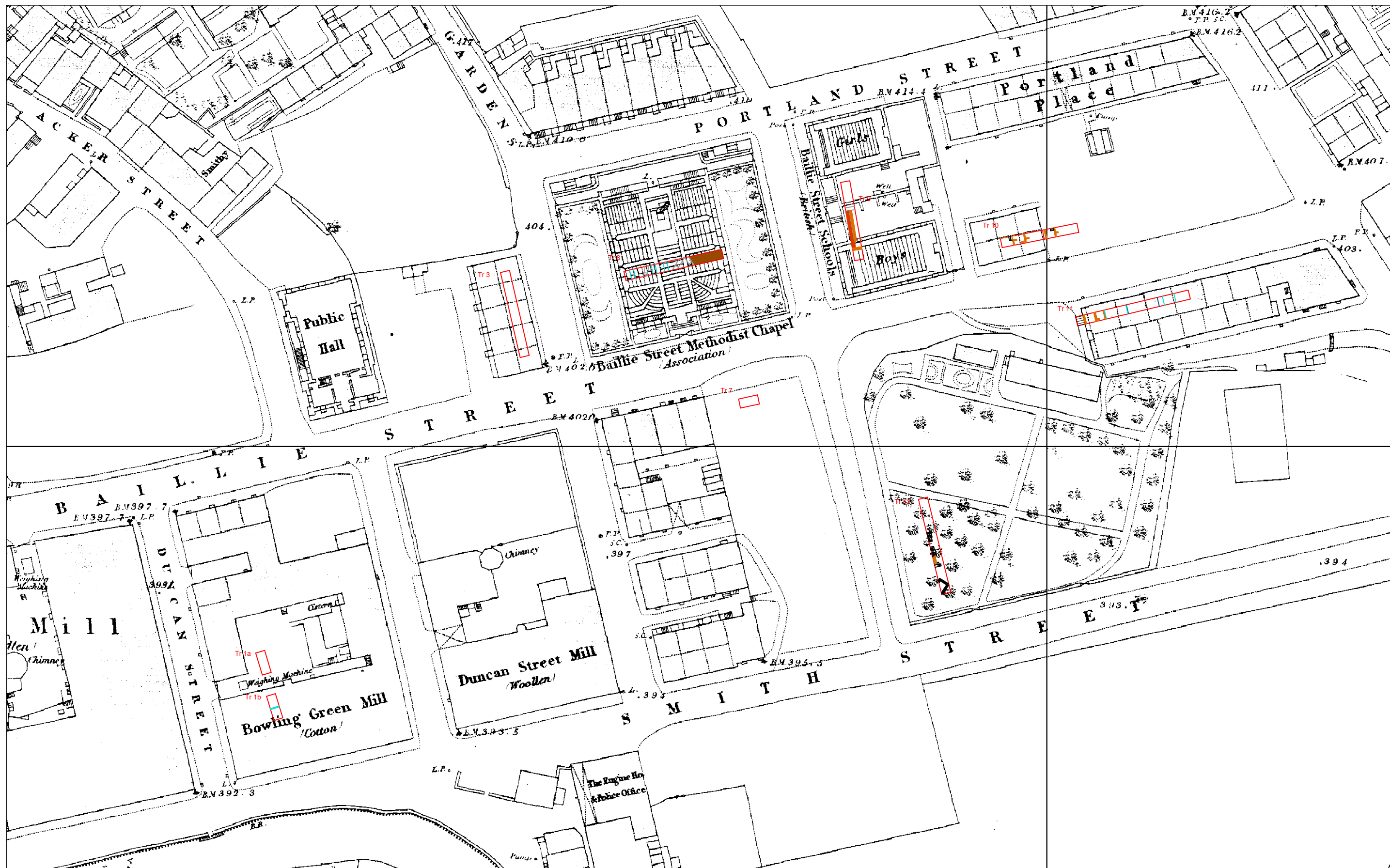
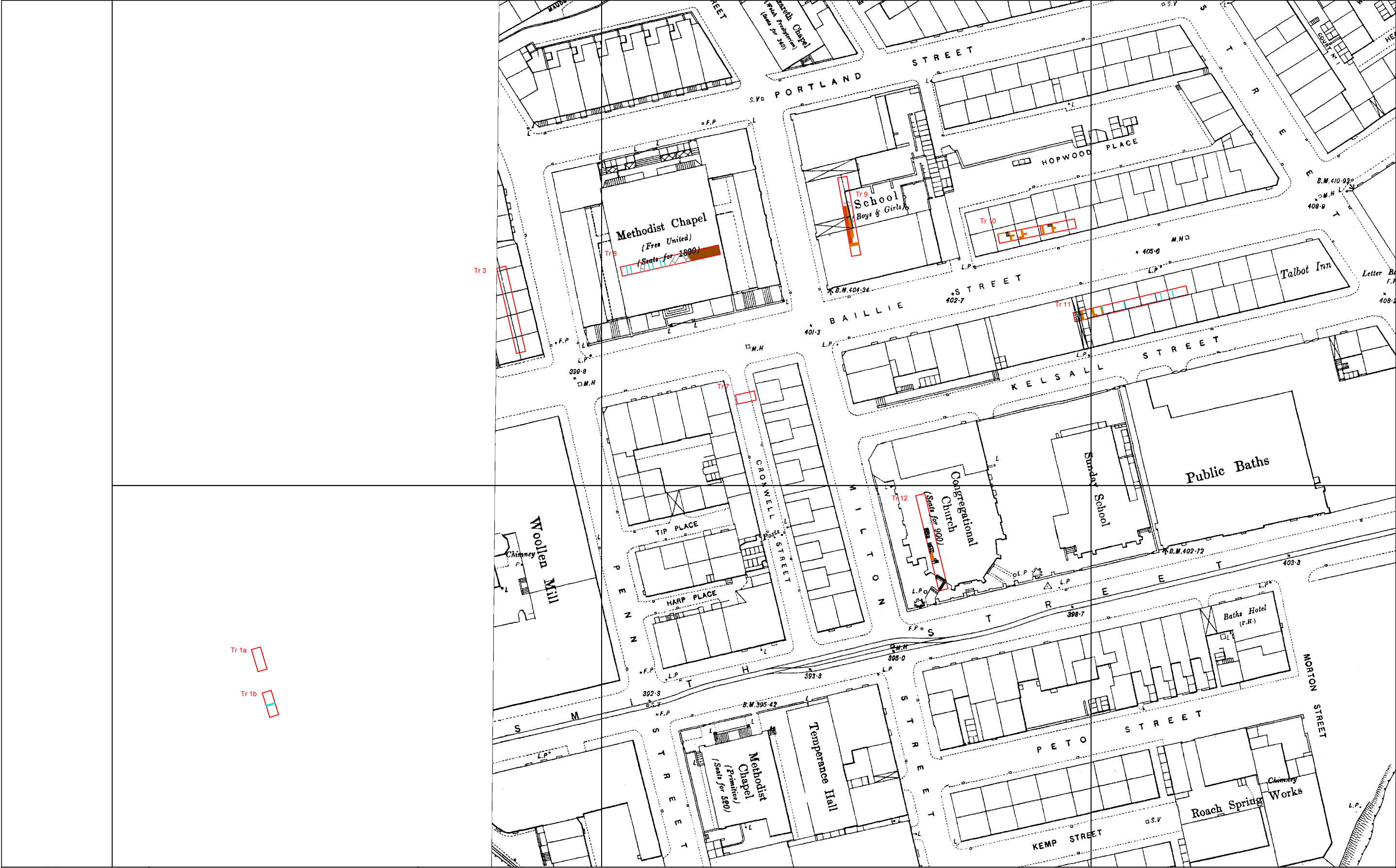
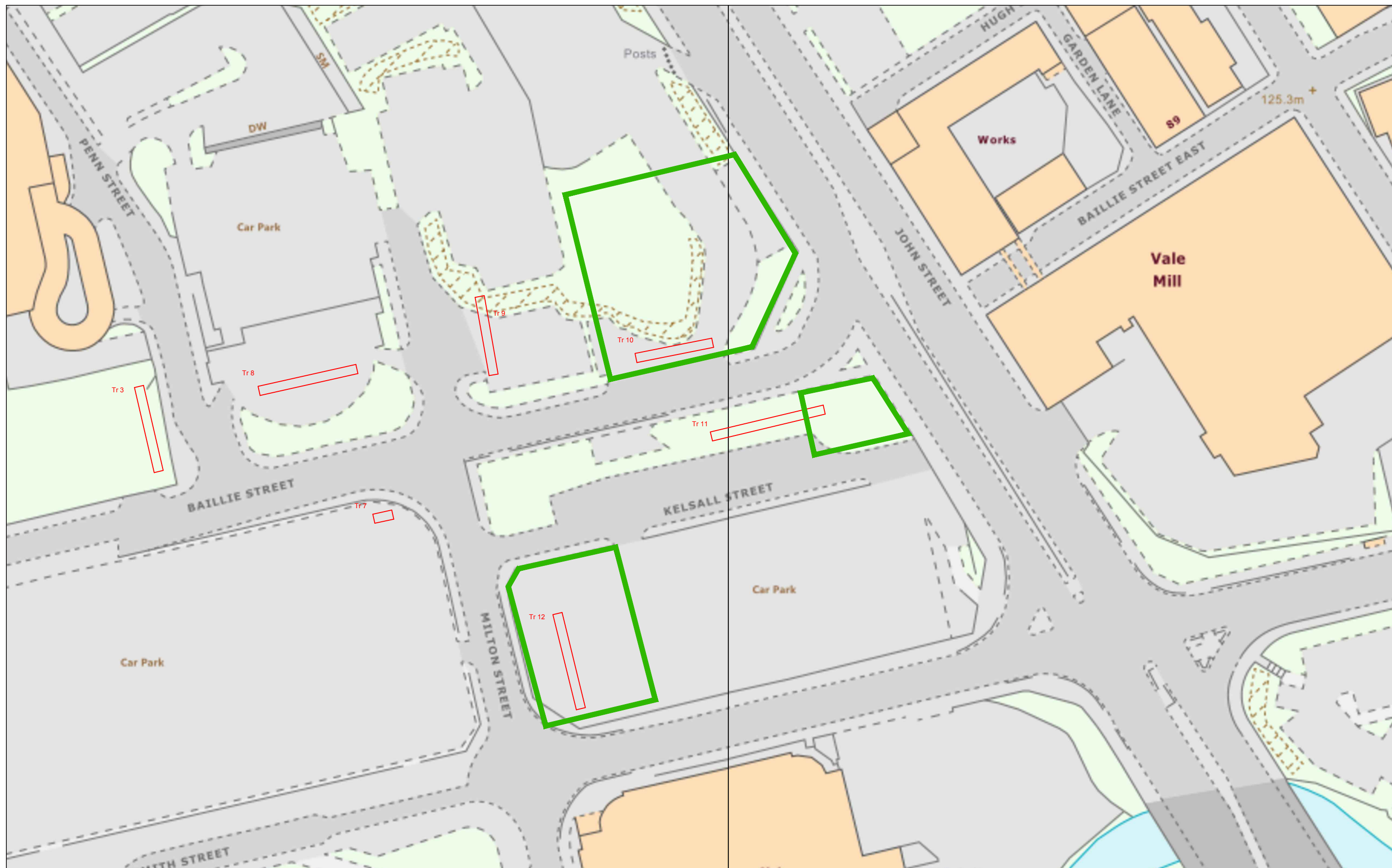


Figure 8:
Trenches overlaid on O.S. 1:1056 Town Plan 1851







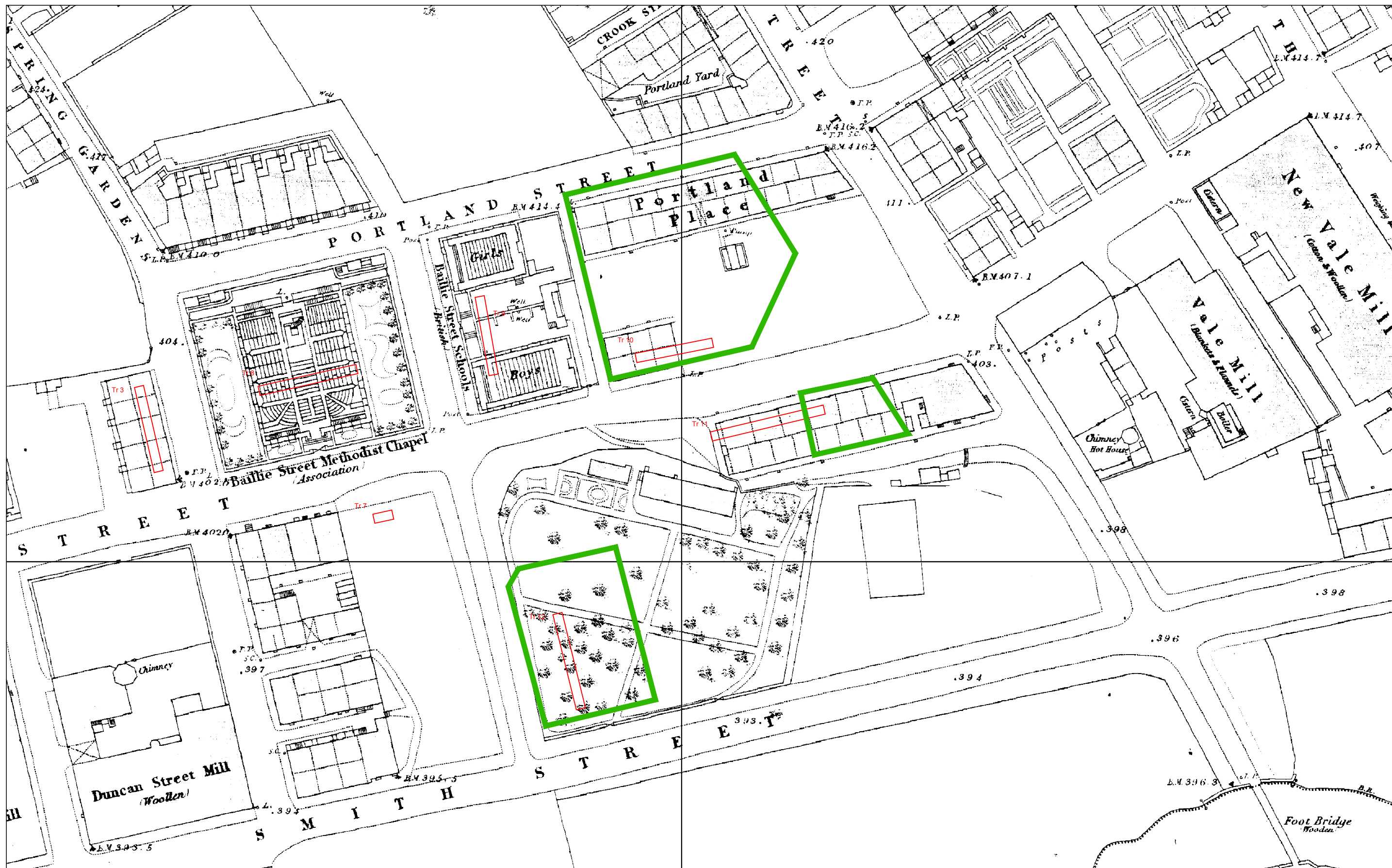




Figure 12:
Proposed further investigation areas overlaid onto O.S. 1:1056 Town Plan 1851



Figure 13:
Proposed further investigation areas overlaid onto O.S. 1:500 Town Plan 1892

Key:
 Proposed Area of Further Investigation
 Trench