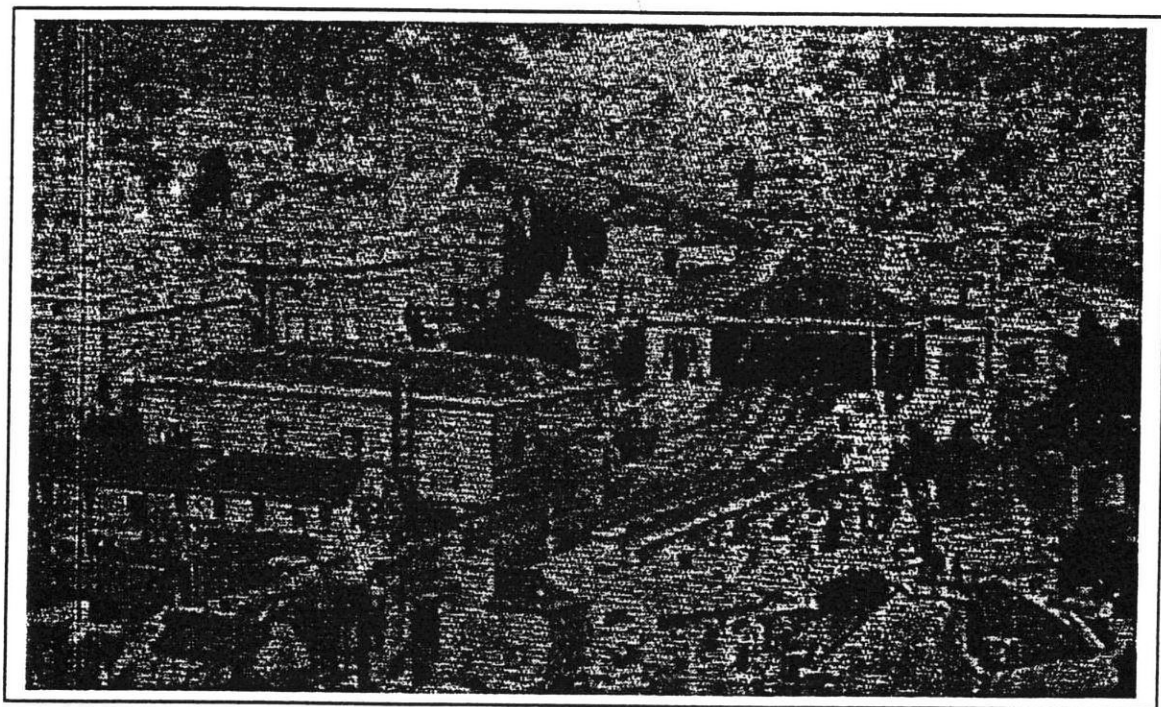


Shearer Property Holdings
CGU Life

GOODS SHED
BATH SPA STATION
BATH

HISTORIC BUILDING ASSESSMENT



13.03.00

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10 March 2000

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GOODS SHED
BATH SPA STATION
BATH

HISTORIC BUILDING ASSESSMENT

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GOODS SHED, BATH SPA STATION, BATH HISTORIC BUILDING ASSESSMENT

Summary

An assessment has been made of the significance of a site immediately to the west of Bath Spa Railway Station on which the original 1841 goods shed formerly stood. The site forms part of the station's Grade II Listing as well as lying within the the Bath World Heritage Site and the proposed Great Western Railway World Heritage Site. Although the goods shed itself was demolished in c.1897 the original stone vaults on which it stood largely survive together with an adjacent ramp, also dating to the construction of the station, which formerly allowed private carriages access to the platform. The assessment relates to the possible redevelopment of the area which may involve the removal of the ramp and some of the vaults. Documentary research and a site visit confirmed that much of the surviving structure is primary and is therefore of a high significance.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) has been commissioned to undertake an historic building assessment of the site of the original goods shed at Bath Spa Railway Station (centred at NGR: ST 7525 6435). The assessment relates to the possible redevelopment of the area immediately to the west of Bath Spa station where the goods shed formerly stood. It is intended to determine the significance of the surviving features on the site in order to inform the layout of the proposed redevelopment and the planning authorities, including English Heritage. The site is at a particularly important and sensitive location as not only is it included within the Grade II listing of the station but it lies within the Bath World Heritage Site and within the proposed Great Western Railway World Heritage Site which is currently under consideration.

1.2 Aims and objectives

1.2.1 The principal aims of the project are to determine:

- the extent of survival of primary Brunel features within area of the former goods shed
- the significance of these and other features within the area
- what form the original goods shed took
- the impact on the listed station of the proposed development

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 A wide range of primary and secondary documentary material was consulted in the preparation of this report. The following sources were consulted.

- Railtrack Archive, Swindon
- Public Record Office, London
- Brunel Collection, University of Bristol Library
- Bath City Record Office
- Bath Local Studies Collection
- Bodleian Library, Oxford

1.3.2 Site visits were made on 9 and 15 February 2000 during which assessments of the surviving structures were made.

1.3.3 A full bibliography is included at the rear of this report. Notes on each of the sources consulted can be found at Appendix 1.

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Bath and the Great Western Railway

2.1.1 The Great Western Railway, the original line of which ran between London and Bristol, is among the most famous and important of the pioneering railway lines established in the first half of the nineteenth century. This fame and significance is largely due to the scale of the ambitions of its engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel who was determined that the GWR should be the 'finest work in the Kingdom' and personally designed a large proportion of the line's engineering and architectural features.

2.1.2 A number of these engineering monuments were in and around Bath where Brunel took particular care to use a route which would be practical and accessible but which would not cut through the Georgian city. The line curves around the south of the centre of Bath with two river crossings close to each other thus allowing Bath Spa Station to be situated on the north of the River Avon. Being located so close to the river the land is substantially lower than that of the town or surrounding area so the station and approach is set on a long viaduct.

2.1.3 The western of the two bridges is immediately to the west of the site of the former goods shed and is called the Skew Bridge after the very sharp angle at which it crosses the Avon. The original bridge had two arches formed of laminated timber but these were replaced in 1878 by iron arches and then in the twentieth century by the existing lattice girder bridge. The care taken to minimise the disruption to the visual harmony of the city is also shown in the cutting within Sydney Gardens to the east of Bath where the route is sunk beneath eye level.

2.1.4 The line between Bristol and Bath was opened in 1840 but Bath Spa (formerly Bath) station opened, together with the entire line of the original GWR in 1841. The station originally included an overall roof, which was a smaller version of the hammer-beam roof at Bristol Temple Meads, enclosing the four tracks. This was removed in 1897 to be replaced by long conventional platform canopies but the original station frontage building survives. As the station was slightly detached from the main city centre the area immediately to the north of the station was also laid out with Manvers Street and Dorchester Street extending west and north from the station forecourt. The streets were intended to be grand avenues linking the city centre to the station but the prevailing economic decline resulted in the area being developed in an adhoc manner with little harmony.

2.1.5 Bath had been in decline from its eighteenth-century heyday and the city appears to have welcomed the railway enthusiastically, seeing in it the possibility of renewed prosperity. A meeting was held in January 1834 demonstrating this enthusiasm at which 600 railway shares were subscribed (Searle M, 1986).

2.2 Nineteenth century goods sheds

2.2.1 In the nineteenth century all but the smallest station had a goods shed for the transfer of freight from train to road vehicles. These generally consisted of banks or platforms at track level up to which carts or other vehicles could be backed and be loaded. They usually incorporated storage facilities but frequently, such as at Bristol Temple Meads, they did not and the unloading and loading would have to be carefully synchronised between train and cart.

2.3 The goods shed and ramp at Bath

2.3.1 The original 1841 goods shed at Bath was located c.50 m to the west of Bath Spa station immediately to the north of the main-line rail tracks and at the east end of the Skew Bridge which takes the line over the River Avon. The shed was supported at the same raised elevation as the station by a series of stone vaults to the south and west of a curved ramp which was constructed at least partially to allow access for private carriages to the platform.

2.3.2 The goods shed and ramp are known to date to the original construction of the station and are shown on the two earliest available maps of the site each of which is from 1852. These are a large scale plan, the principal purpose of which was to detail drainage layout but which also shows buildings, and a much smaller scale plan of the whole of Bath by J H Cotterell (Figure 3). Each of these maps shows the goods shed and the small scale plan labels it *Goods Station*. The shed can be seen to have occupied the west half of the raised platform and the raised spur which projects to the north is also shown to have existed in 1852. The large scale plan shows that the east wall was open and that there was a small detached structure at the head of the ramp and to the east of the goods shed.

- 2.3.3 The first edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1885 (1:500 town plan and 25") suggests that by this date only relatively minor changes had been undertaken including the construction of a structure at the north end of the goods shed linking it with the previously detached building. The map also sheds light on the form and operation of the shed. Three tracks are shown entering the shed at the south end of its east side immediately adjacent to an external wagon turntable and a short spur of tracks to the north. The west half of the north wall is was open and three tracks are shown passing through the opening extending up to the north end of the raised pier. The three tracks confirm that this was a relatively short period before the conversion to the narrow gauge and that at this time both broad and narrow gauge stock were using these lines.
- 2.3.4 The station is known to have undergone substantial alterations in 1897 including the removal of the overall roof and the 1902 Ordnance Survey map confirms this. It shows that by this date the goods shed had been demolished and that the new platform canopy extended west adjacent to the track which formerly entered the goods shed and overlapping the southern end of the footprint of the former goods shed. The previously visible wagon turntable is shown to have been removed together with the short spur of tracks referred to but two further turntables, which would previously have been within the shed are now visible. These would have been at the south-west and north-west corners of the shed and an eastward spur is shown extending along the north edge of the shed. There was a further short spur extending north-east from the turntable at the south-west corner of the shed. The 1932 Ordnance Survey plan shows no significant changes within the track layout at the former goods shed suggesting that the area may have remained in use into the mid twentieth century.
- 2.3.5 The replacement of the passenger station's overall roof with long platform awnings in 1897 appears to have followed a long campaign by many people in Bath. There is a petition within the Public Record Office (RAIL 256/16) dated 6 November 1872 signed by many people including the Mayor of Bath calling for extra accommodation at Bath Spa station. It particularly complains of the insufficient length of covered platform.
- 2.3.6 There are relatively few other documentary sources which are able to shed light on what form the goods shed took and no large scale plans showing it appear to survive. The only evidence are two views of Bath which show the shed in the background. The more valuable of these is a photograph reproduced in *Westbury to Bath* by Vic Mitchell and Keith Smith and is included in this report as Plate-1. The photograph was taken around 1895 from a raised position to the south-west of the town and shows the station complex prior to the 1897 rebuilding including the roof over the station and the surviving goods shed. The shed strongly appears to have been a masonry structure and was almost certainly built of Bath stone similar to most of the other GWR buildings and structures around Bath. It had an M-shaped roof with double hips to either end behind a parapet encircling the building. The valley of the roof would probably have been supported by a row of columns along the spine of the building. The west elevation had four arches, the two

inner ones of which had square-headed openings within them, whilst the south elevation is shown with two similar arches. A small structure is shown to have projected from the south elevation which could possibly have been a winch or loading mechanism for lowering goods down to the river but was more probably just a hut. The only other feature of interest which is shown is what appears to be a chimney strapped to the west elevation.

- 2.3.7 The other view is an illustration from c.1850 entitled *Mr Dredge's Design for the Bath Bridge* which is a lithograph detailing the proposed replacement of the Old Bridge, just to the west of the Skew Bridge, with a suspension bridge. — Although it is dark the goods shed can be seen in the background in a prominent raised position. It does little more than confirm other evidence but the west half of the north elevation is open and the four arches to the west wall are just apparent. The view is not included in this report but has been reproduced in *Images of Bath* by James Lees-Milne and David Ford. The proposal, which was never undertaken, was by James Dredge a local brewer who built the Victoria suspension bridge in Bath in 1836 which became a prototype for more than a dozen such bridges built elsewhere by Dredge.
- 2.3.8 There are many other 19th century engravings and illustrations of Bath Spa station and of the Skew Bridge, particularly those by J C Bourne in *History and Description of the Great Western Railway* (1846) but almost all of these avoid the goods shed. Only one of Bourne's views, that overlooking Bath from the east, includes the shed and adjacent ramp but even then the view is too distant to be of use. Another view however which does provide some useful information however is entitled *The Bath Station* and is included within *Great Western Railway* by G Measom dated 1852. The view does not show the goods station but does show a train entering the west end of Bath Spa station carrying a private carriage in an open wagon which is just the sort of vehicle it is believed the ramp was at least partially provided for to provide access for.
- 2.3.9 A photograph exists within the archive of the Bath City Record Office which was taken in the 1930s from the platform of the demolished goods shed looking north. The view confirms the evidence of the 1932 OS map by showing rail tracks extending along the northern pier and it also shows that the northern edge of the main platform on which the shed formerly stood was covered with timber planks.

3 SURVIVING STRUCTURES

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 As detailed above the goods shed itself was demolished in c.1897 but there are two surviving structures related to it which are of interest in their own right and which are able to provide evidence of what form the goods shed would have taken. These are the ramp which curved around the north and east of the shed to provide access to the platform and the collection of stone vaults which, although they consist of several separate elements and have been partially rebuilt are essentially a single structure.

3.2 Arches

- 3.2.1 As the line of the GWR passes through Bath it is set on a series of arched bridges and viaducts due to its relatively high elevation but the arches with which this assessment is concerned are those between the station and the Skew Bridge and more particularly those beneath the site of the former goods shed.
- 3.2.2 The vaults within this area divide into three sections and the numbers provided here relate to the official numbering of all the arches as the line passes through Bath. Immediately to the west of the station there are a series of vaults (Numbers 45-49) orientated north-west - south-east which form part of the structure supporting the rail line but which are not directly related to the former goods shed. To the west of these are four north-south orientated arches (50-53) which form a raised platform to the north of the rail lines part of which formerly supported the goods shed. To the west of these is a row of 10 smaller arches, five of which adjoin the west wall of arch 53 and five of which project in a spur to the north. The orientation of each of these vaults is at right angles to the large vaults.
- 3.2.3 The footprint of the goods shed was over arches 52, 53 and the southern five of the narrower arches.

Vaults 50-53 and beneath projecting spur

- 3.2.4 The space within the four large vaults is linked by four primary arched openings within each of the three party walls, two of which have been infilled. Each of the openings is almost three metres wide and although they are not tall they are large enough to have allowed relatively easy movement within the space. Thus goods either dropped down from the wagons in the shed (eg coal), or temporarily stored in the arches, could have been carted out of the structure either through the openings to the south and then through the arched cross passage onto the road or possibly through former openings to the west.
- 3.2.5 The main structure, including internal and external walls and each of the vaults are formed of large Bath stone blocks although there are several areas of brick repair and rebuild. The south end, beneath the Skew Bridge has particularly been rebuilt and partly refaced in brick, possibly dating to the 1878 rebuilding of the bridge. The primary stone survives at the west end of the south wall in a small recess, with a narrow arched doorway, at the end of the row of ten smaller arches. There are a number of additional structural elements at the south end of the vaults to secure the river wall and to add strengthening beneath the railway tracks. The south wall of the vaults follows the roughly NW-SE line of the river and tie bars project at right angles to this wall to secure it to the north-south side walls of the vaults. There are also a series of arched iron ribs towards the south end of Vaults 50 and 52 which are in all probability nineteenth-century additions to strengthen the area beneath the railway line. It is likely that there were also formerly a similar set of ribs

within Vault 51 but the south end has been rebuilt with a deep brick arch, beneath the primary vault, set on concrete corbels.

- 3.2.6 An apparently secondary feature is a series of large timber beams set on brick piers c.1.5 m above ground spanning across the four arches. The purpose of these is not apparent. Another set of features are three screens across Vaults 51, 52 and 53 dividing the internal space and formed of upright railway sleepers
- 3.2.7 The most interesting features and the main clues to the operation of the former goods shed are located towards the north end of Vaults 52 and 53. There are two wrought iron up-turned 'troughs' set within the top of each of the arches, c.2.5 m long by c.80 cm wide and c.2.5 m from the north end walls (Plate 2). Each of these iron-lined former openings would presumably have supported a chute down which coal would have been dropped. It is known that they would have been located either directly above or adjacent to a section of rail line and thus coal could have been unloaded directly. If these are the surviving elements of coal chutes their form is open to some conjecture but the form and the other two chutes appears to be more obvious. There are two iron lined chutes supported by the side walls of Vault 53, each of which would have deposited coal through an iron-lined mouth c.2 m above ground into the area enclosed by Vault 53 (Plates 3 and 4). Coal would have been dropped into an iron hopper directly above the western edge of Vault 52 or the eastern edge of one of the ten smaller vaults and it would then have been carried through an opening in the stone wall and been allowed to drop into a waiting cart before being transported out of the vaults and into Bath by road.
- 3.2.8 It appears unlikely that the chutes are primary and it is possible that they post-date the goods shed, possibly having been installed by a small-scale local coal merchant. Although they are probably not primary they remain of interest, relating to the industrial use of the area and it is possible that they replaced earlier chutes. The holes in the walls through which the chutes pass do not appear to be inserted and it is conceivable that they originally supported timber or wrought iron chutes. Possibly further suggesting this is that the 'troughs' referred to earlier do appear to be constructed of wrought iron as opposed to the possibly steel side chutes.

Vaults 45-49

- 3.2.9 These arches are set at a skewed angle to those which supported the goods shed and their sole function is to support the rail line and platforms. They are not under threat by the proposed development and are not the features of principal within this assessment but they were inspected and found to be at least partially of secondary date.
- 3.2.10 The vaults of Arches 45 and 46 were constructed of brick and appeared to be probably of late-19th-century date, possibly dating to the 1897 rebuilding of the station, although they would have replaced (or possibly just refaced) similar primary arches. Arch 45 is a through passage while Arch 46 is still in use as a car park/utility area. The vaults within Arches 47 and 48 were largely

obscured by polythene sheeting but what was visible appeared to be of primary stone. It is likely that each of the primary side walls supporting the arches survives but they are obscured by concrete block facing walls. The vault within Arch 49 is visible and strongly appeared to be primary stone. There was a primary arched recess in the wall shared with Arch 48 which had been infilled with twentieth century brick.

3.3 Ramp

- 3.3.1 The ramp is currently used to allow access to the station car park on the site of the former goods shed. Although it has been covered with modern tarmac its basic form appears to remain very little changed from that shown on the nineteenth-century-maps.

3.4 Possible buried remains of goods shed

- 3.4.1 Although the goods shed no longer survives it is likely that some archaeological evidence remains buried beneath the existing floor slab. As referred to above it strongly appears that the external walls of the shed were constructed of Bath stone and the roof valley along the spine of the building was supported by a row of columns. It is likely that the foundations for these survive together with other evidence of features such as turntables and chutes. Due to original or early plans of the building apparently not having survived it is only through intrusive archaeological investigation that details of the layout and operation of the building can be determined

3.5 Operation of goods shed at Bath

- 3.5.1 The mode of operation by which freight would have been transferred from a train's goods wagon to a road vehicle is open to some interpretation. At the raised level of the tracks it is clear from maps that wagons would have entered the goods shed at the south end of the east wall and would be rotated on one of two turntables onto tracks running north. A further turntable at the north-west corner of the shed would have enabled wagons to progress along a line of track running along the north end of the building over the fragmentary remains of two apparent coal chutes. Thus coal could have been dropped down to vehicles waiting in the vaulted undercroft below. The earth bank which supported the ramp would have prevented any exit from the arches to the north and east but vehicles could have left through the southern openings before re-crossing beneath the lines through the cross passage to Dorchester Street. Alternatively it may be that there were originally openings at street level in the west wall of the ten small vaulted rooms and there is evidence of at least one former opening within this wall towards the north end. This would suggest that there was a connection with the adjacent flour mill. The earliest maps show buildings adjoining this wall and apparently along the street frontage which would prevent any way out onto the street. The drainage plan (Figure 4) does however suggest that several of these buildings on the street front had wide openings to allow access to the yard behind.

3.5.2 At track level a further section of line projects to the north from the end of the goods shed and from here it would have been possible to load carts which had been pulled up half the ramp and backed up to the platform. Apparently supporting this is the fact that although there is a parapet wall to the north and west walls of the bank there is none to the east face. The east wall of the goods shed was open and it may be that carts were also sometimes raised up the full height of the ramp to the same level as the shed to enable them to be loaded by hand with lighter goods.

4 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 Significance

4.1.1 Although the goods shed itself no longer survives the supporting arches and access ramp which do survive are of a high significance for a number of reasons:

- They are primary features of Bath Spa railway station and are therefore locally important landscape features which provide evidence of how the city's original railway station operated.
- In a wider context they are primary features of the Great Western Railway, the most ambitious and among the most important of the early inter-city railway lines nationally or internationally. Their survival allows comparison with other stations and goods sheds along the line.
- Closely linked to this is the probability that as primary GWR features they were designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel the GWR's engineer and among the greatest of all nineteenth-century engineers.
- The arches are of importance for the evidence they provide relating to the form and function of the now-demolished goods shed. The very existence of the arches, which provide a platform now used as a car park, is evidence of the former shed but also internal features such as the coal chutes provide a good indication of the operation of the shed. Use of the arches in recent decades appears to have been very limited and much internal evidence survives.
- The ramp is significant partly due to the evidence it provides as to the early use of passenger railways in apparently allowing access for private carriages to the platform to enable them to be loaded onto the train.
- The site is also of significance due to it being legally protected as part of a Grade II Listed Building (Bath Spa Station) and officially recognised as being of historic significance as part of the Bath World Heritage Site. It is also one of the sites of the Great Western Railway which are collectively under consideration for World Heritage Site status.

4.2 Impact of proposed development

4.2.1 Detailed development proposals have not yet been finalised and from the options under consideration there are three possible levels of impact on the historic structures:

No impact

4.2.2 The surrounding area may be redeveloped with no direct impact on either the arches or the ramp. This would entirely preserve the integrity of the structures and allow their understanding and further future interpretation.

Partial removal of the ramp

4.2.3 The pavement immediately to the north of the site may be widened to improve links between the coach station and the railway station. It is likely that this would involve the truncation of the northern end of the vaulted projecting spur which faces onto the pavement and the removal of the grass bank which forms the northern edge of the ramp. Although this would cause some damage to the integrity of the structures they would remain fundamentally intact. The distinction between the projecting northern spur and the main vaulted area would be preserved as would the ramp.

Complete removal of the ramp

4.2.4 One possible scheme would preserve the main vaulted area but would remove the entire projecting vaulted spur and the ramp. This would have a significantly negative impact on the integrity and historic character of the structures particularly the complete removal of the ramp which is an important element of the primary station. It appears that the surviving vaults would either be converted to commercial or office use or would be opened up to form a semi-public space. Making the vaults more publicly accessible would increase appreciation of their existence and understanding of their form, as well as potentially creating a pleasant space, but achieving this through removing the ramp would create a false understanding of the original station layout. It is also likely that much of the evidence of the former use of the structure, such as the chutes, would be removed or hidden by paint or plaster.

4.3 Recommendations

4.3.1 If a scheme is undertaken which involves the complete or partial removal of the ramp and some of the vaults it is anticipated that a detailed programme of building recording would be undertaken prior to the development. This would record both the structures to be removed and the evidence relating to the use of the structure contained within the surviving arches.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1.1 Although the original goods shed at Bath Spa station was demolished over a century ago the vaults on which it stood and the adjacent ramp are primary GWR features of a high significance. They form part of the station's Grade II

listing and are within both the Bath World Heritage site and the prospective GWR World Heritage site. There is a significant potential for the existing car park platform to contain substantial archaeological remains relating to the layout and operation of the goods shed

Jonathan Gill
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February 2000

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Maps

- Plan of the City and Borough of Bath and its suburbs. J H Cotterell (1852)
- Ordnance Survey 1:500 town plan (1885)
- First edition 25" Ordnance Survey map (1885)
- Second edition 25" Ordnance Survey map (1902)
- Third edition 25" Ordnance Survey map (1932)

Appendix 1 Notes on Sources

Public Record Office

The Public Record Office in Kew was visited and material relating to the Great Western Railway and Bath station was consulted. The most useful material were the minute books of the GWR although even these had limited evidence relating to the goods shed.

Railtrack Archives

The Railtrack Archives in Swindon were consulted but there were no plans which showed the goods shed or the vaults on which it was constructed.

Brunel Collection, University of Bristol Library

The archivist at the University of Bristol Library was consulted with regard to any documents within the Brunel collection relating to the goods shed. Although there are several sketches and notes relating to Bath Spa station there was nothing showing the goods shed.

Bath City Record Office

The record office contained a good collection of maps including two from 1852. It also contained several photographs although none of these showed the standing goods shed.

Bath Local Studies Collection

The local studies collection at the Bath reference library contained a wide variety of sources such as newspaper cuttings, photographs, books and journals.

Bodleian Library

A large number of secondary sources were consulted at the Bodleian Library in Oxford which shed the clearest light on what form the goods shed took.

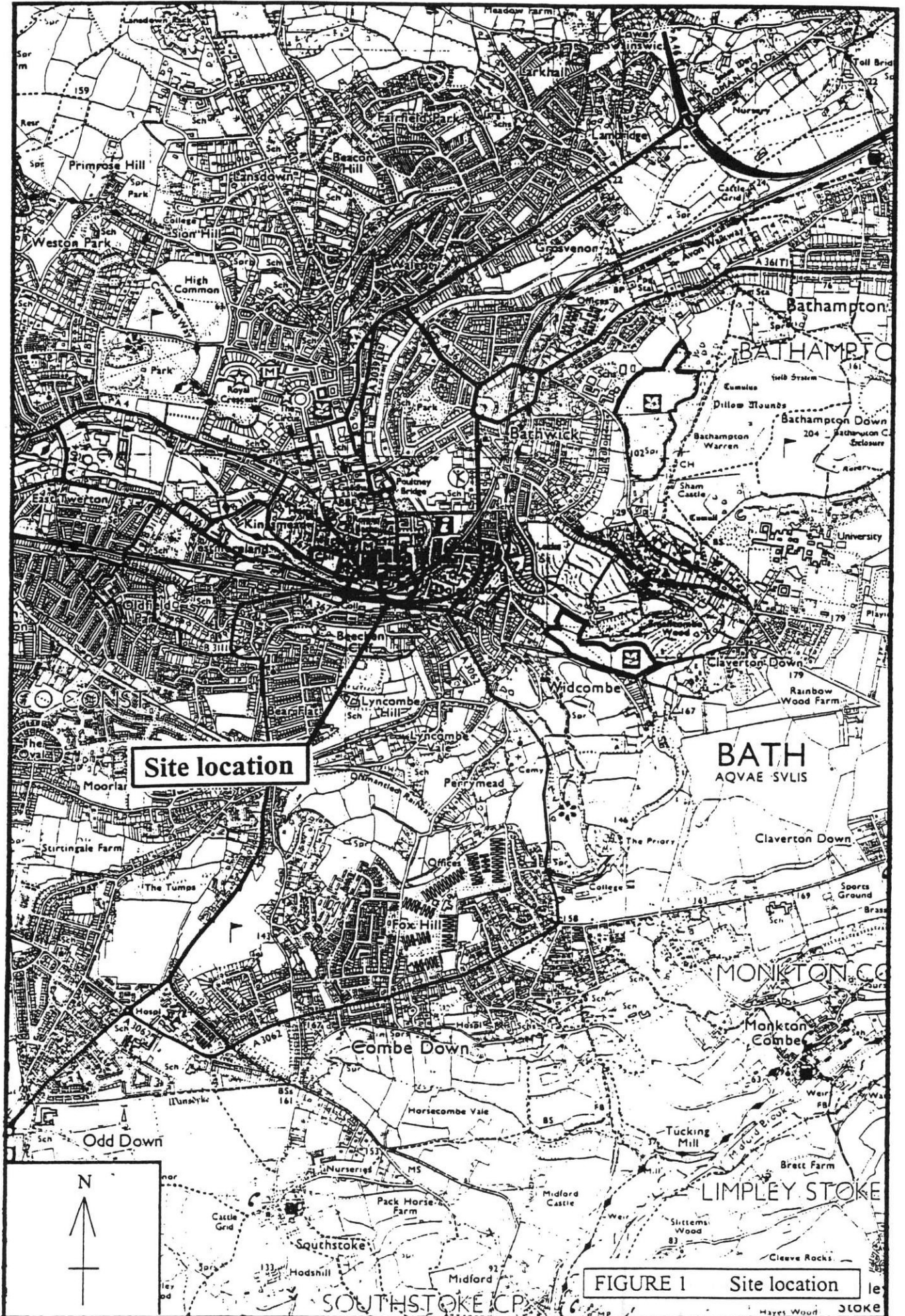


FIGURE 1 Site location

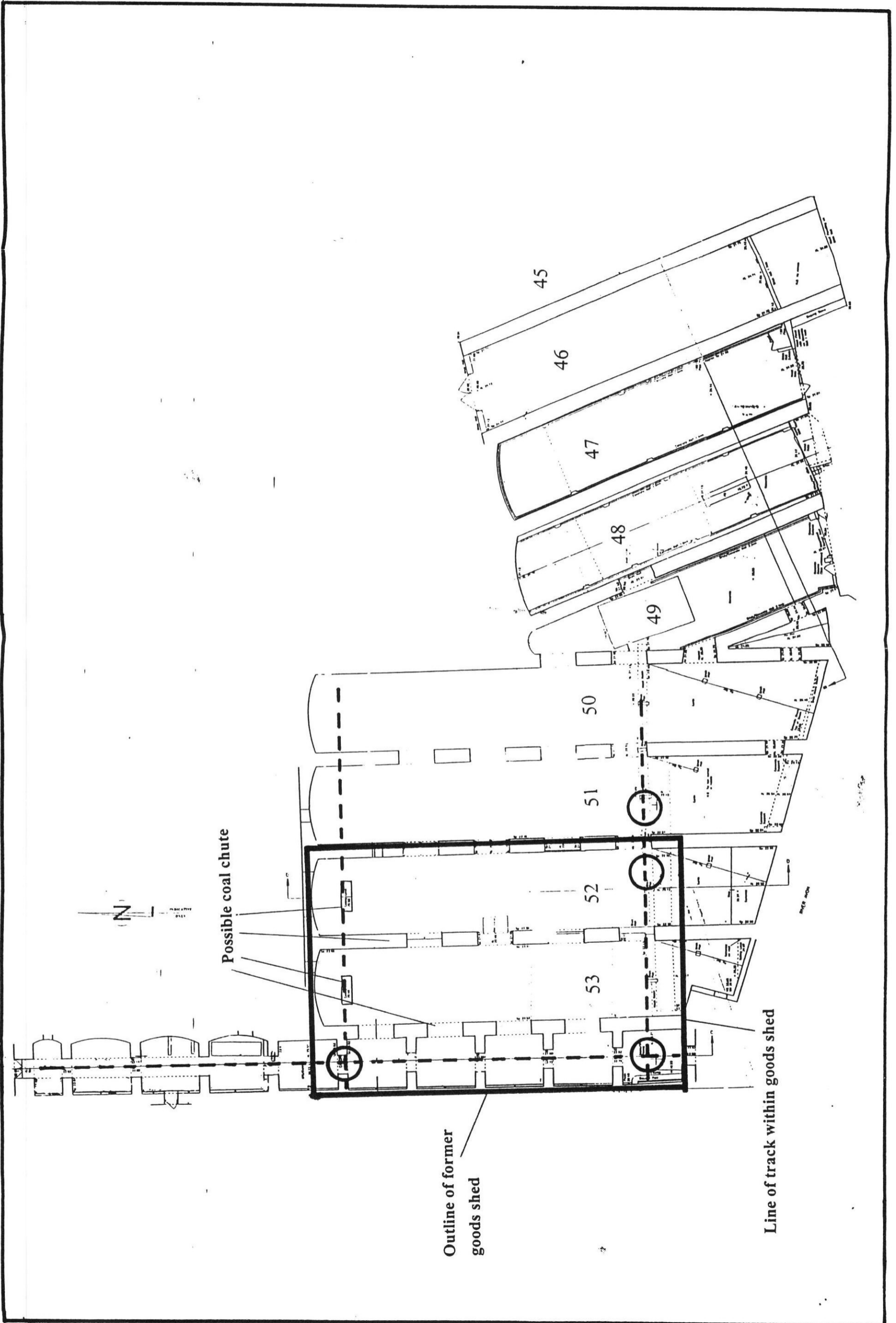


FIGURE 2 Plan of arches showing outline of former goods shed.

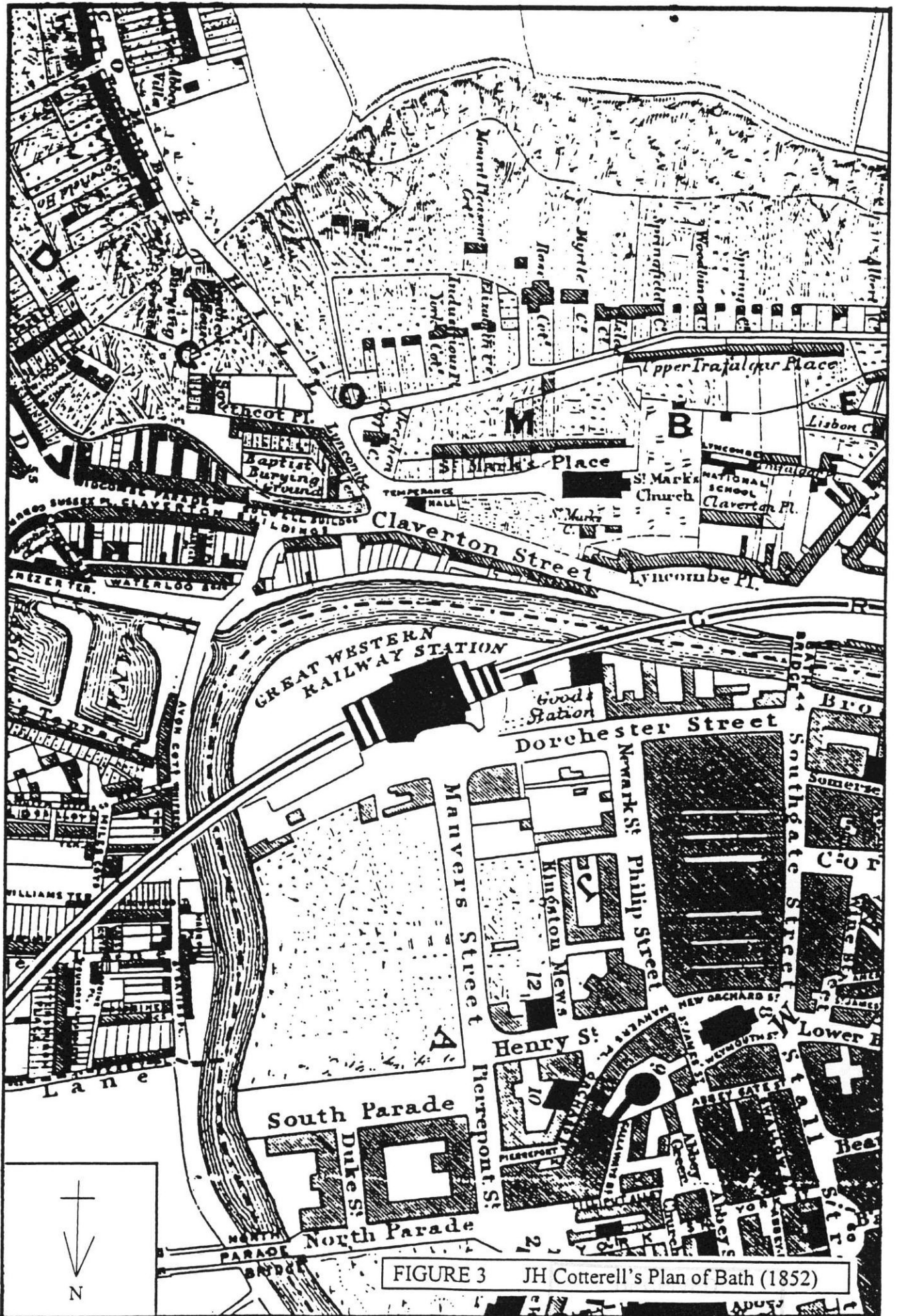


FIGURE 3 JH Cotterell's Plan of Bath (1852)

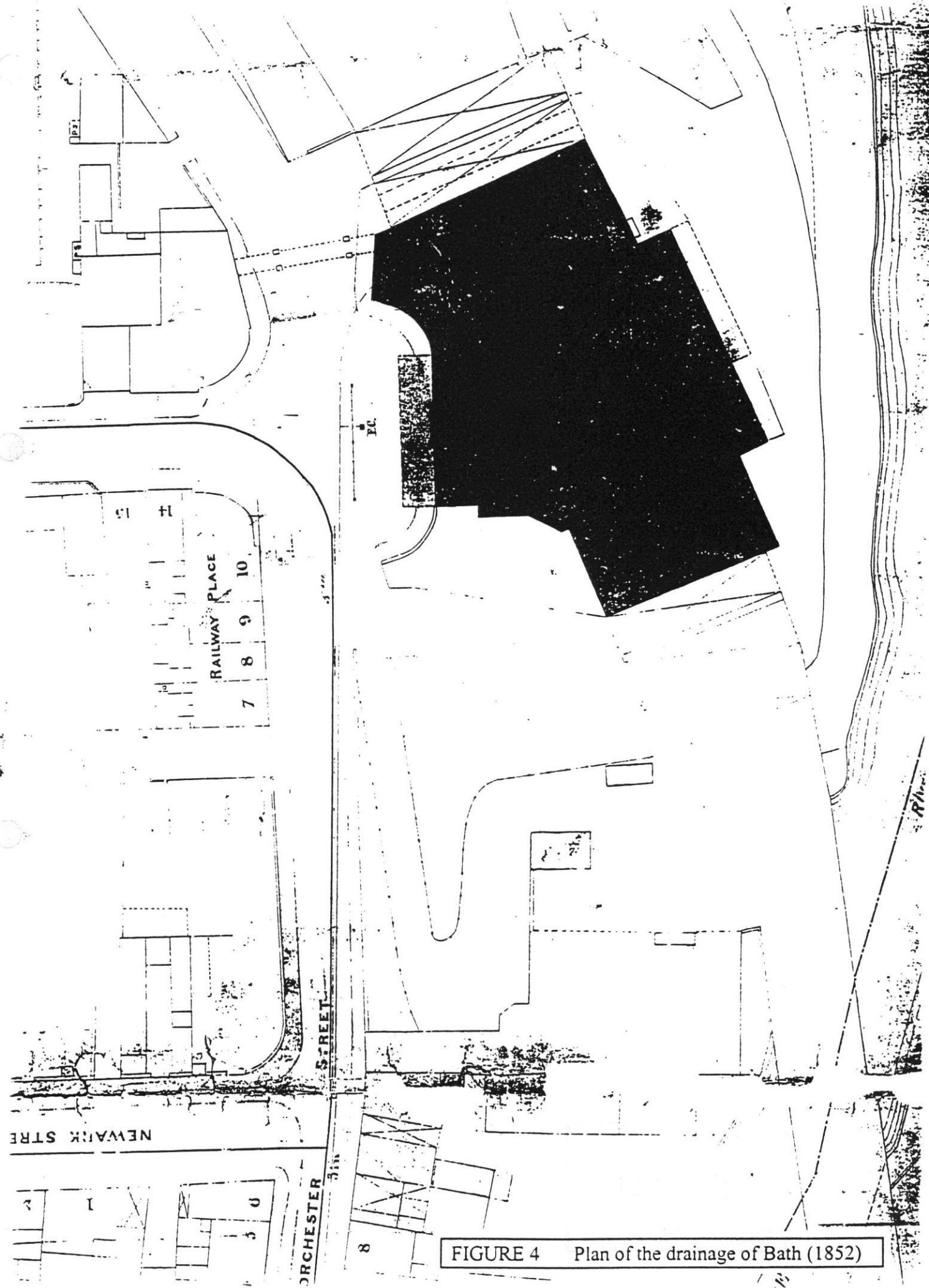


FIGURE 4 Plan of the drainage of Bath (1852)

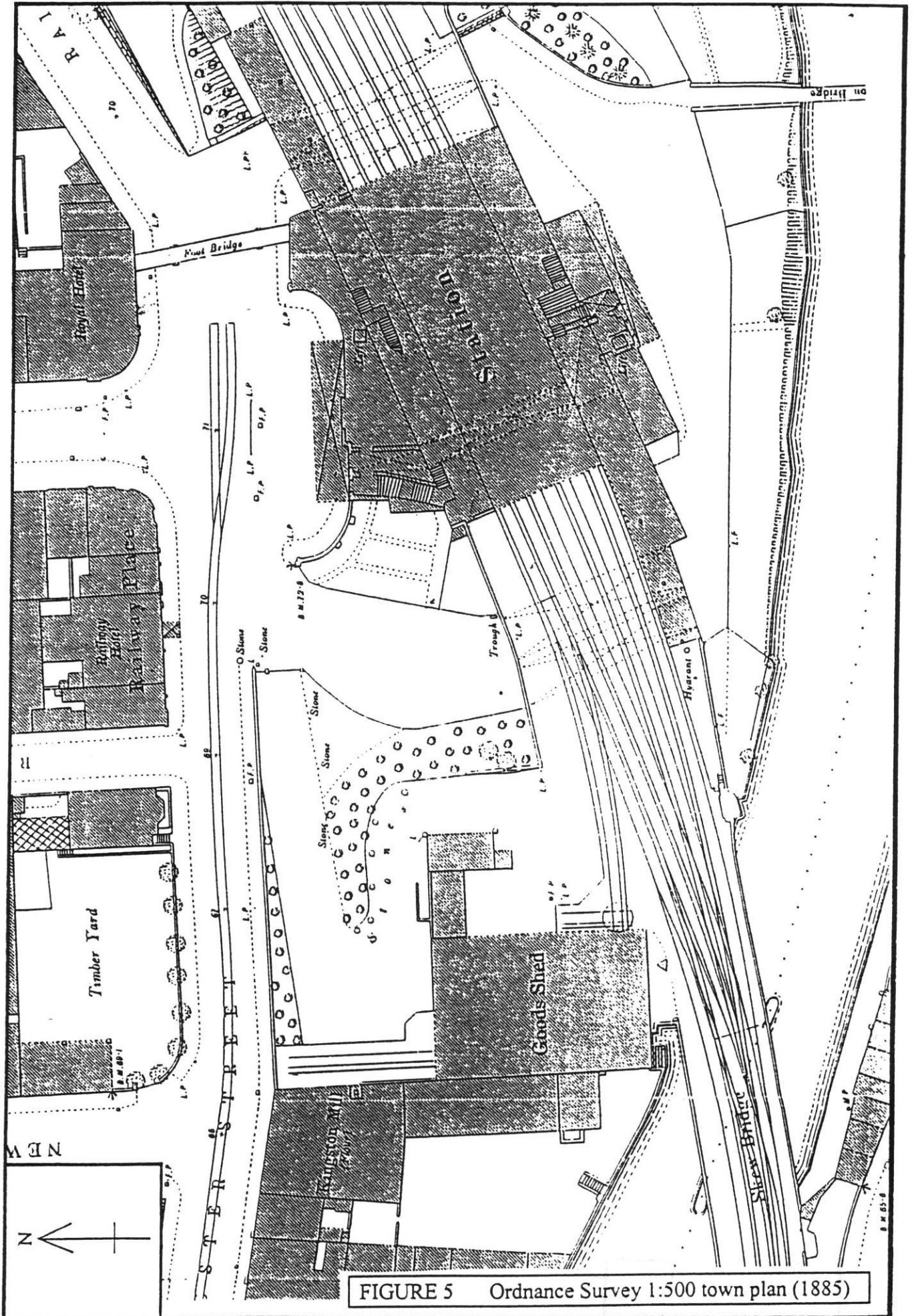
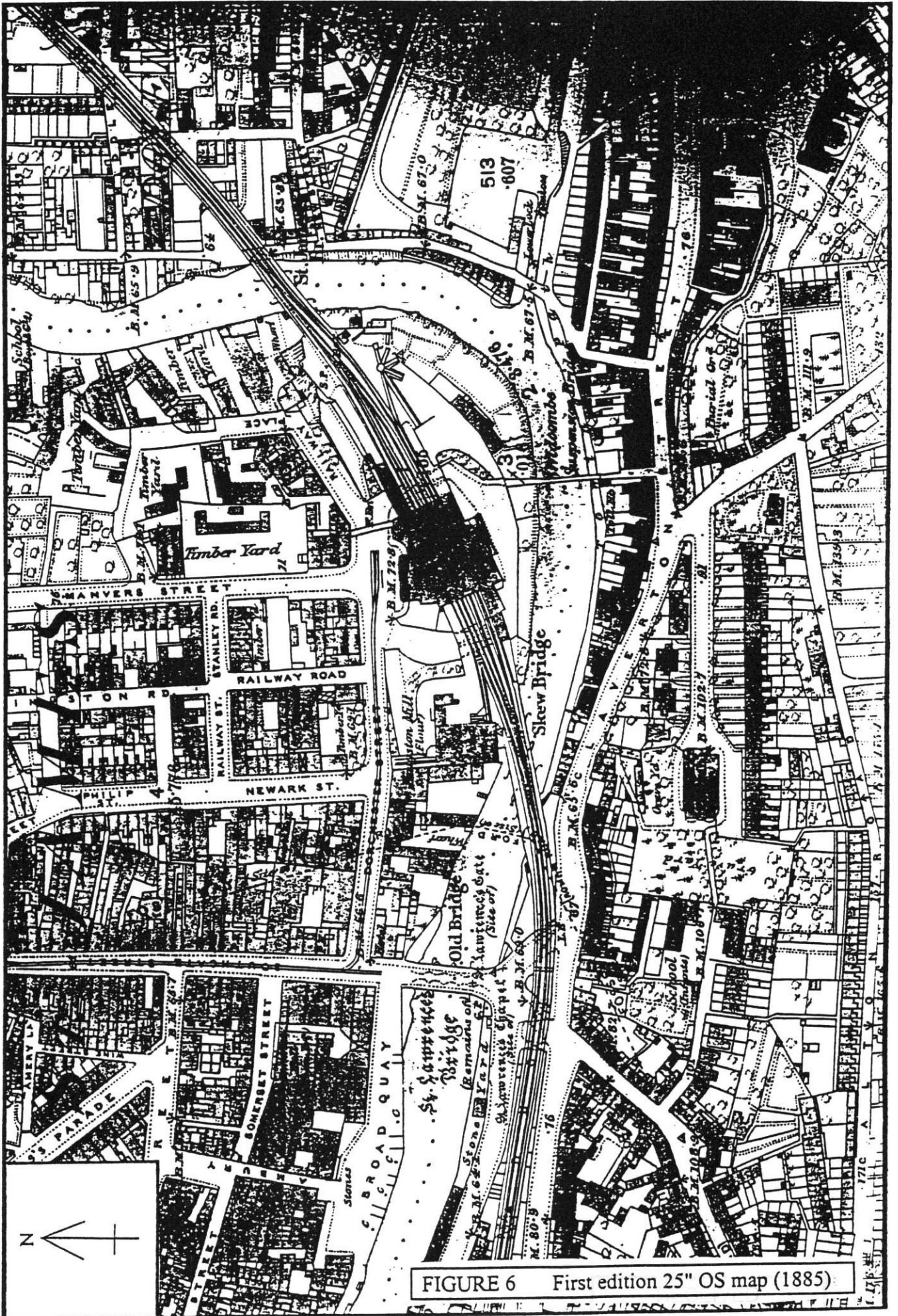


FIGURE 5 Ordnance Survey 1:500 town plan (1885)



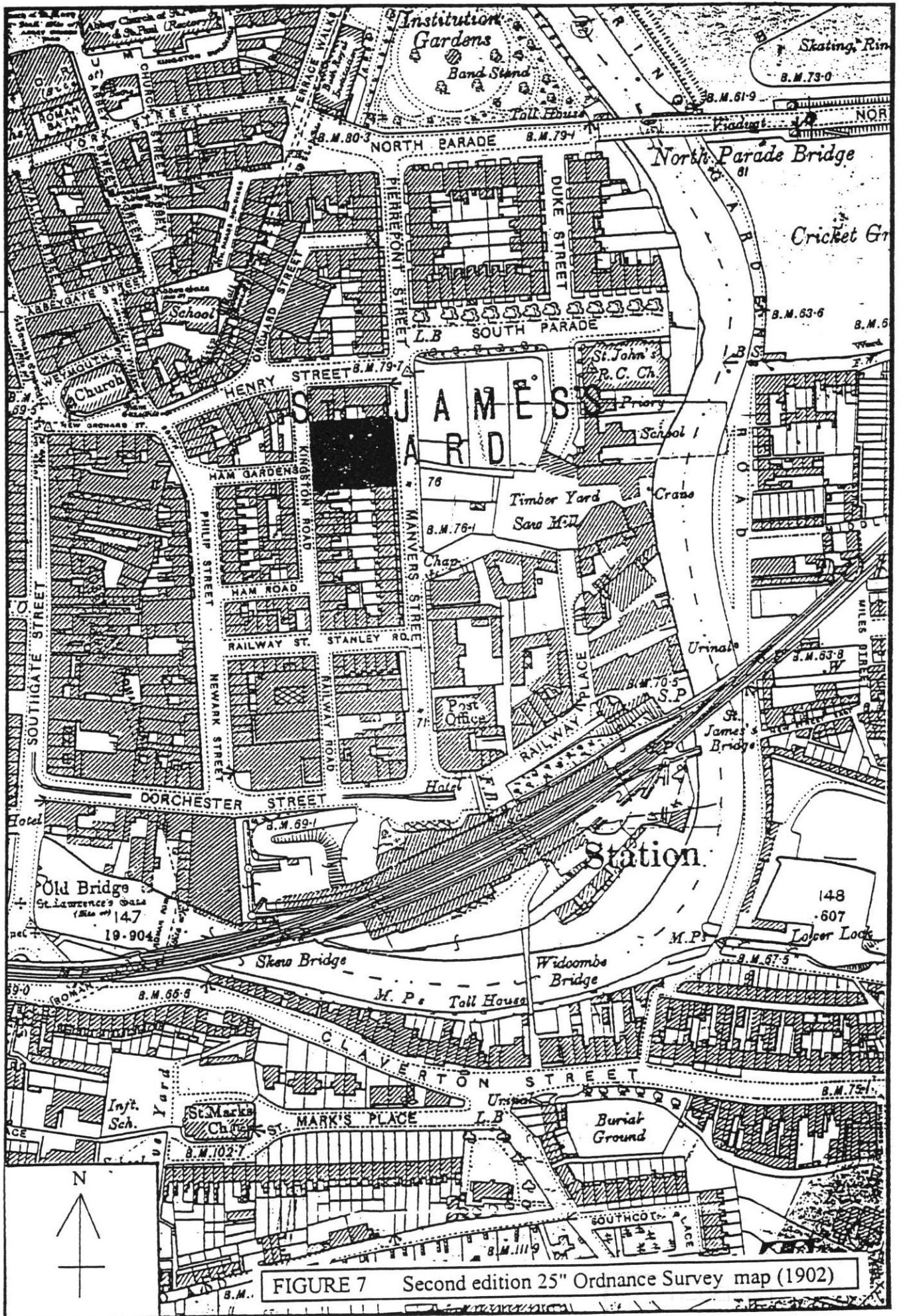


FIGURE 7 Second edition 25" Ordnance Survey map (1902)

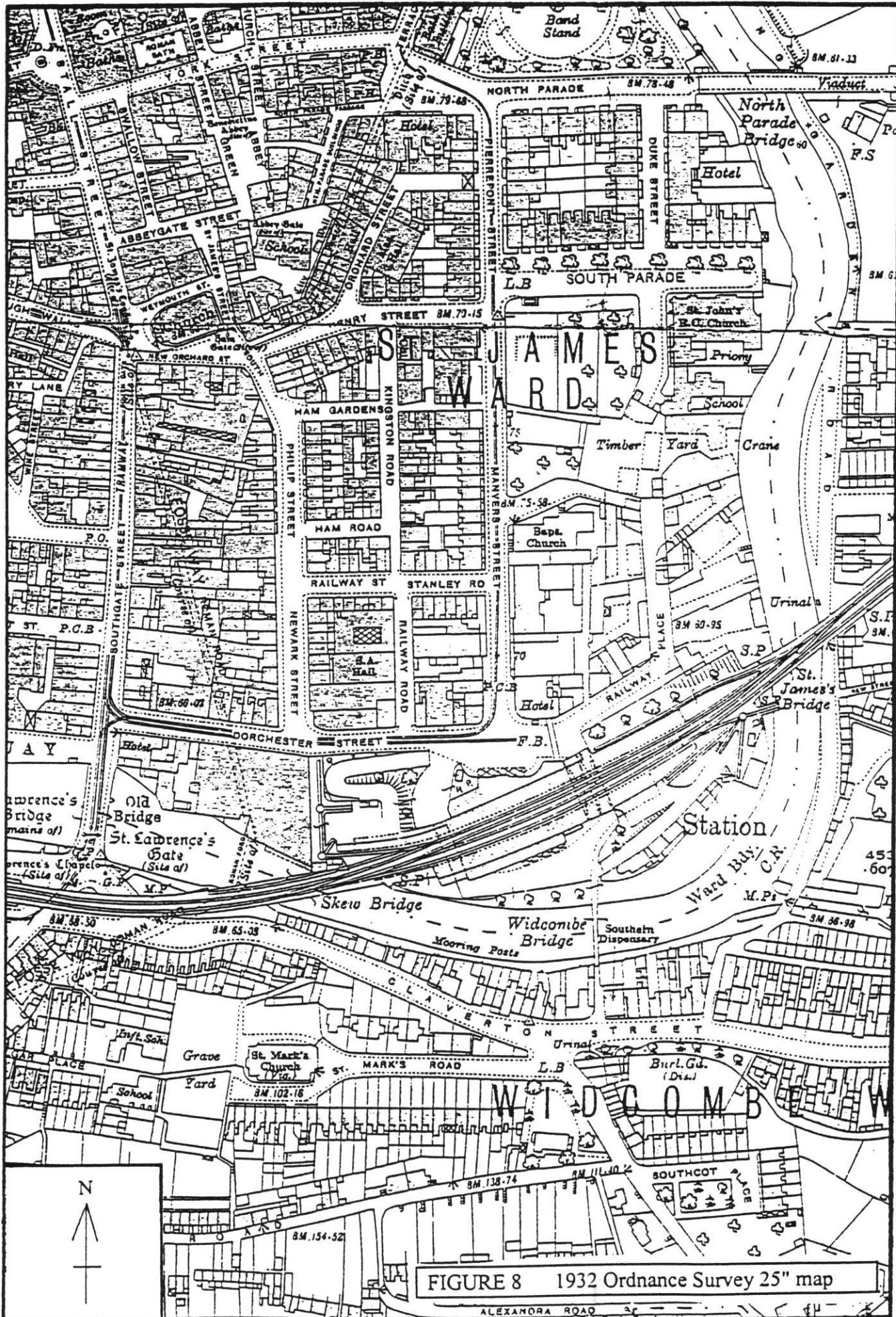


FIGURE 8 1932 Ordnance Survey 25" map

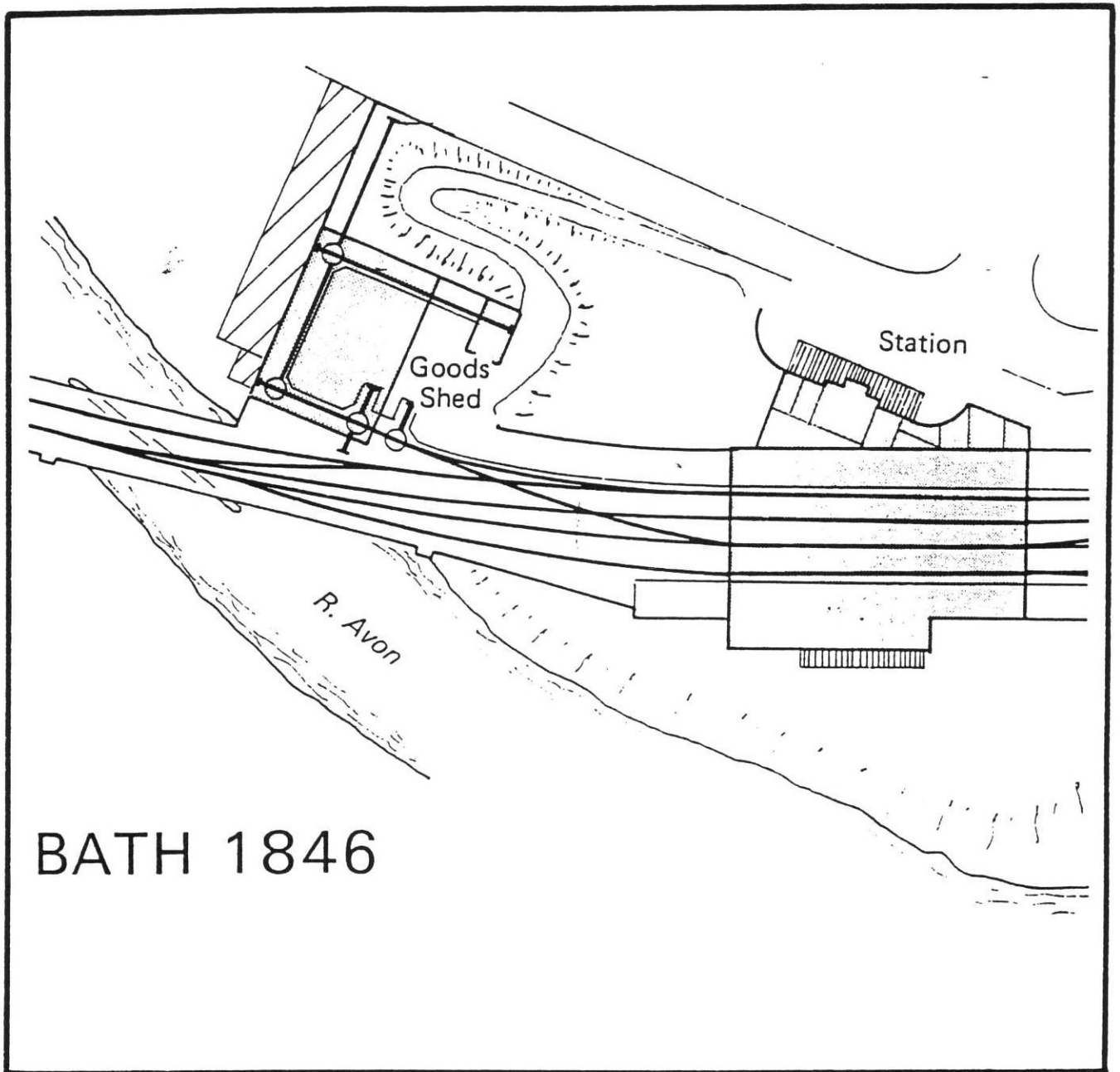


FIGURE 9 Plan showing track layout within goods shed
(From *An Historical Survey of Great Western Railway Engine Sheds 1837-1947*,
Lyons ET and Mountford ER (1947))

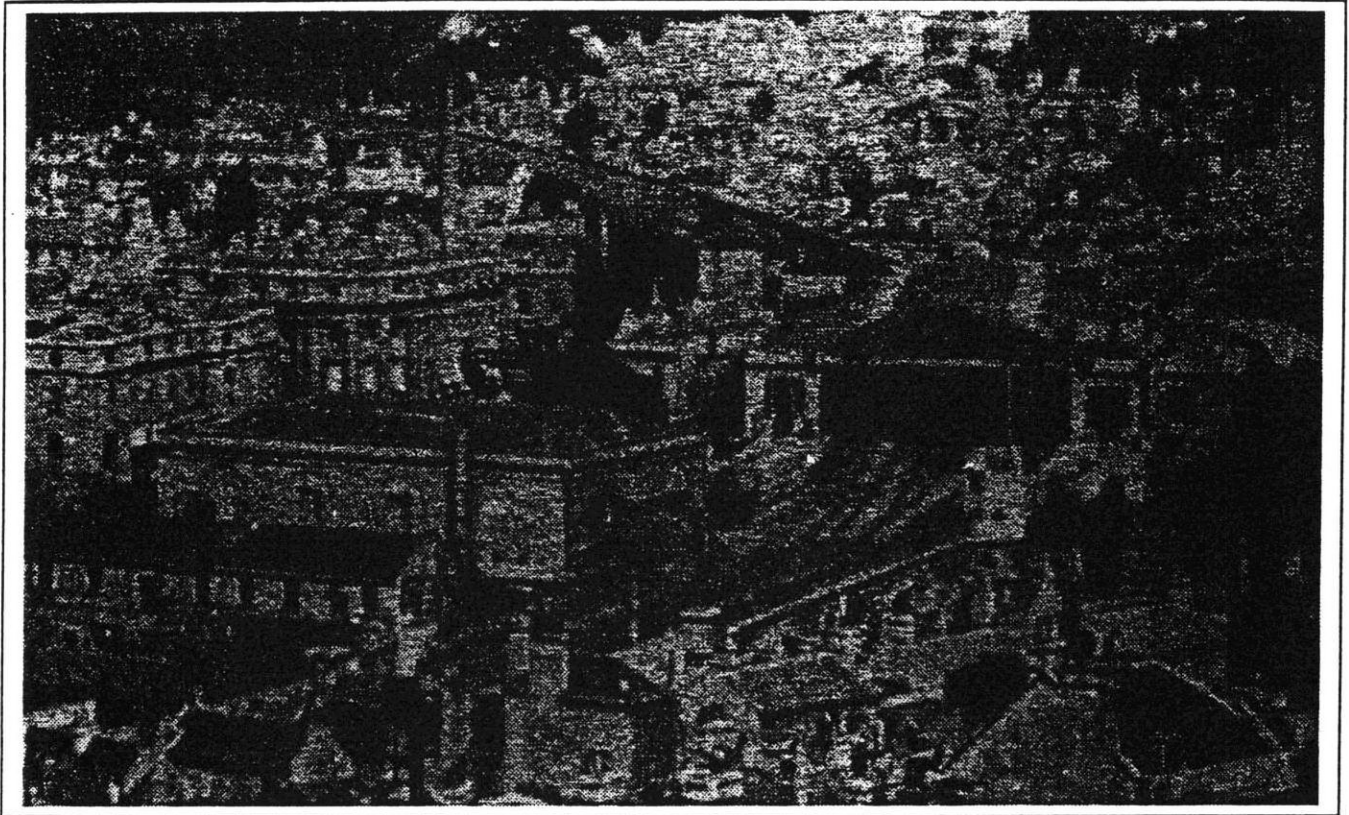


Plate 1: View of goods shed and station taken in c.1895 before 1897 remodelling of station.

(From *Westbury to Bath, Country Railway Routes* by Vic Mitchell and Keith Smith, Middleton Press, 1995)

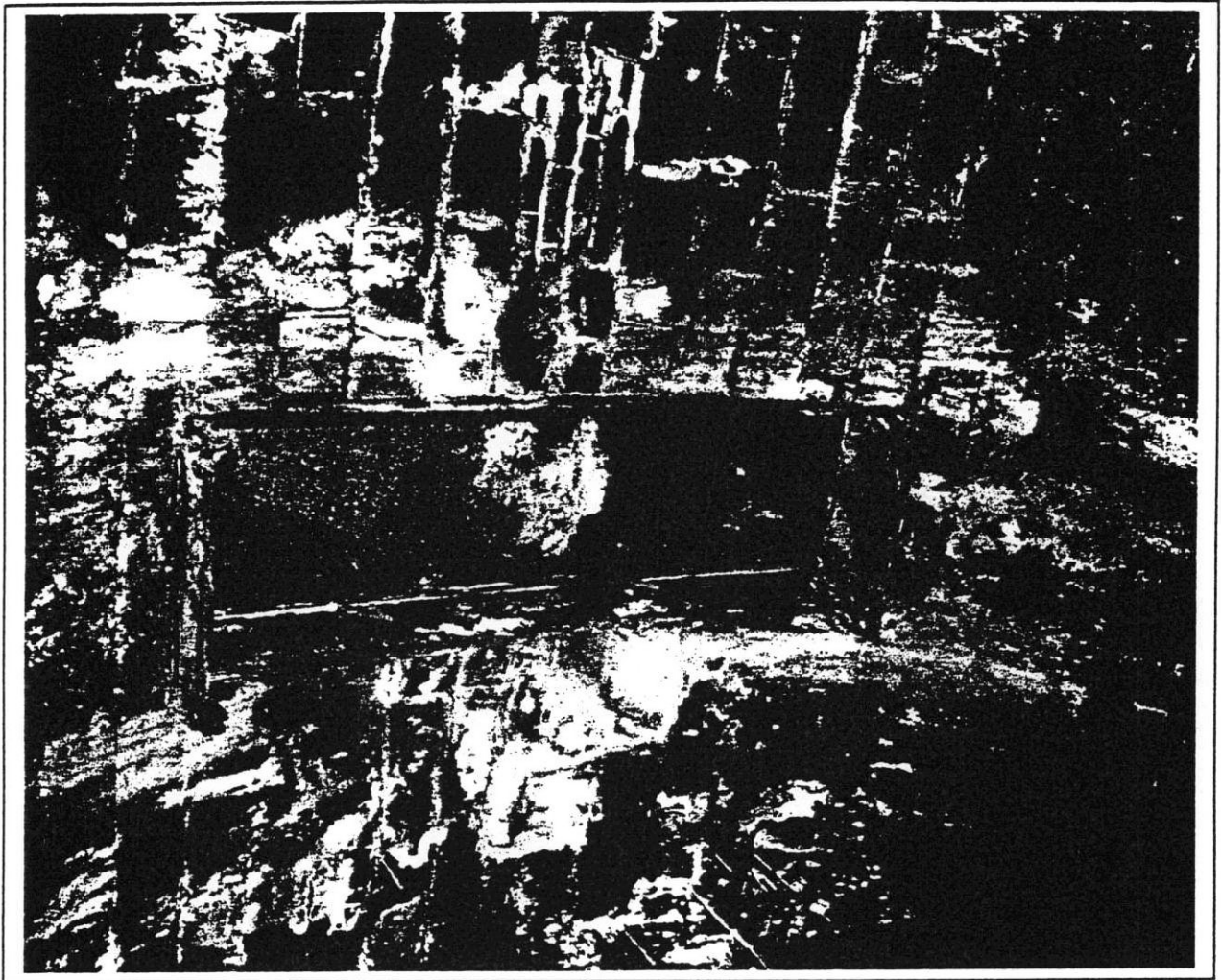


Plate 2: View of remains of possible former coal chute in top of Vault 53

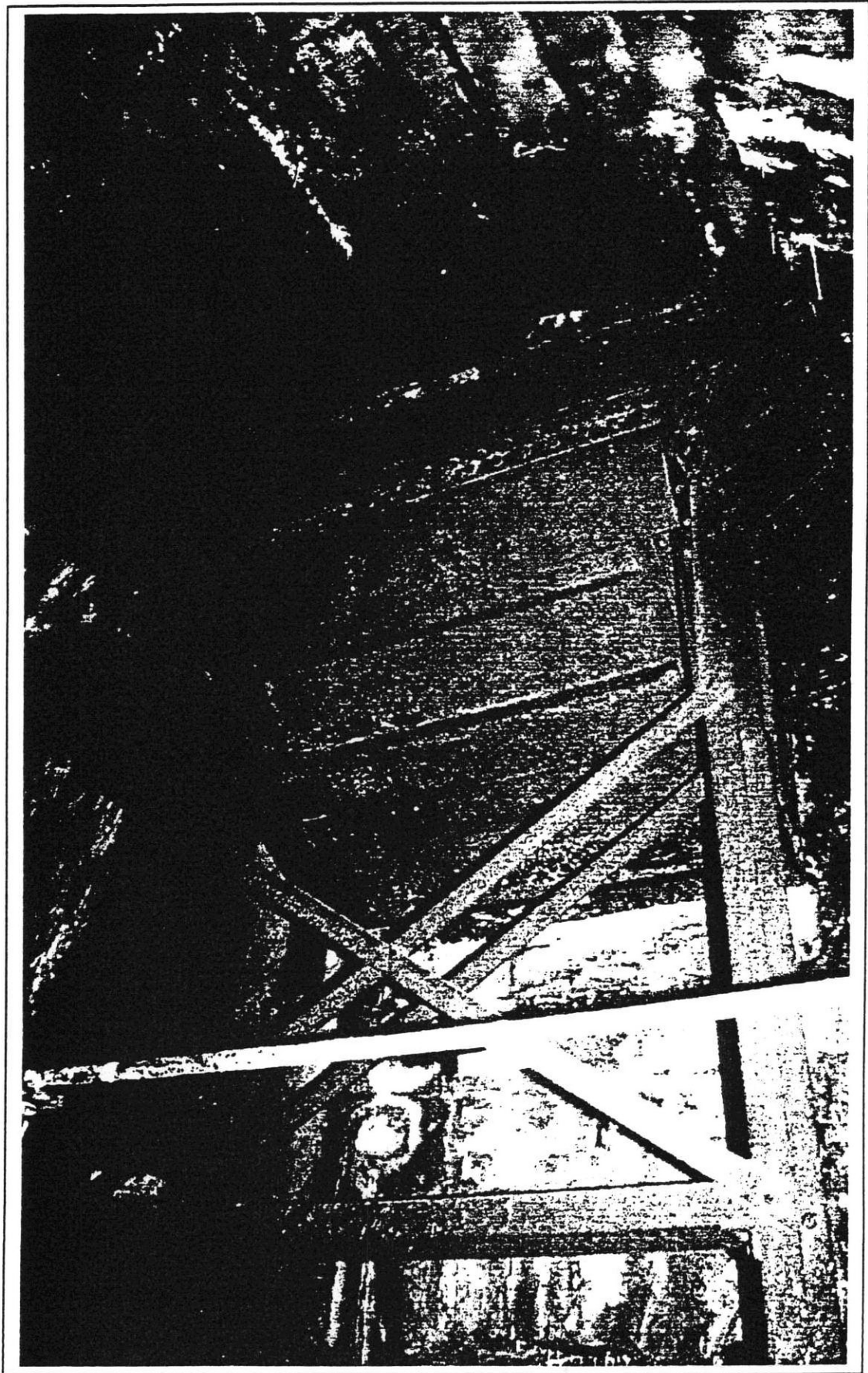


Plate 3: Rear of coal chute hopper to west of Vault 53



Plate 4: Mouth of coal shute to west of Vault 53



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