

INVESTIGATIONS IN THE VIEW GARDEN

Volunteer archaeology work in the
Kings Weston walled gardens

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Action
Group

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An outline of the objectives

During work to fell invasive cherry laurel in the area once known as the View Garden it became clear that there were a number of features that had received little attention previously. An area known predominantly as part of the walled gardens of the 1760s and with the formidable remains of the once mighty glasshouse, the later history was poorly documented. Only a few editions of Ordnance Survey maps showed the outline of what had once been there along with some hints of surviving features on the surface.

Between 1772 and 1884 there's no known documentary evidence for this area. Based on anecdotal evidence, it's assumed that an ornamental garden was laid out here at some time in the 1860s. By the 1880s a formal garden is shown to have been laid out on an east-west alignment, orientated parallel with the Georgian glasshouse. A contrasting rustic winding path negotiated a rockery on its way to the site of Bewy's cross, a feature already moved to this site by 1772. It's location here was perhaps intended to mark the site of the manorial chapel once supposed to be on that site, the remains of which may have been demolished as part of architect Robert Mylne's plans to impose a strictly geometrical walled garden complex across the area. The cross's new location would have seen it located prominently and proud as a garden feature on the high point above Kings Weston Lane, as had, perhaps, the chapel before it.

The name, the View Garden, comes from a short programme handed out to paying guests, accompanying their visit to the Kings Weston gardens in aid of the Red Cross in August 1916. It read:

"half a dozen steps will bring you to the View Garden on the left. This is the gem of the whole garden. You will enjoy the vista looking towards Kingroad and

Avonmouth, and see the ancient Bewy's Cross, which, two hundred years ago, stood by the Severn side, and before which, in ancient days, seamen loved to pay their devotions after a safe voyage."

There's been a good deal of focus on the history and travels of Bewy's Cross, which in 1951 was moved again to the lilypond on the other side of Napier Miles Road, but there's very little about the garden "gem" in which it once sat. Shortly before its final move the garden was described as the Italian Garden, but little must have remained of its past glory.

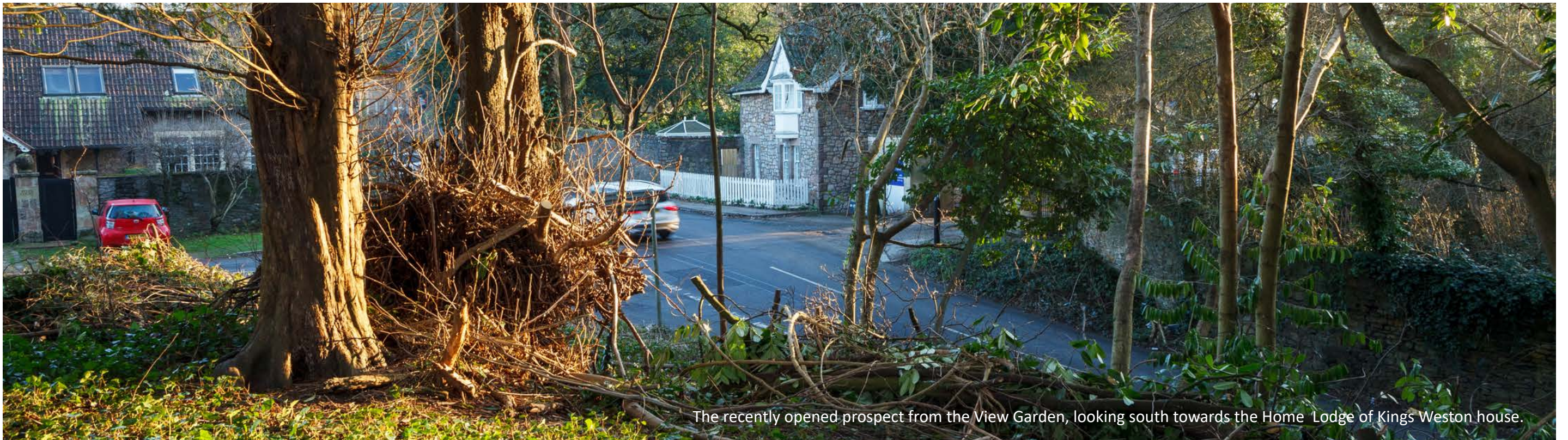
The last private owner of the walled garden areas was Sybil Napier Miles, widow of the last "squire" of Kings Weston house. She lived in newly built house, the House in the Garden, built for her following her husband's death. After her own death in 1947 all of the walled garden areas were purchased by Bristol City Council. Since that time the house and walled gardens to the east of the road have been in school use, but the View Garden has been entirely abandoned.

Visiting the garden today it is difficult to visualise it as anything other than secondary woodland. Entirely obscured from the road by a bank of cherry laurel, the topographical prominence of the area, raised up above Kings Weston Lane, was obscure. KWAG's recent clearance of that laurel has reunited the garden to the landscape beyond and reignited interest in how it once fitted into the landscaped parkland around the house.

KWAG identified four areas to investigate, with the ambition to understand more about the garden structures and their appearance. Just behind the gateway into the area from the east was a raised bank coinciding with the location of a small building at the head of a long axial path on the Ordnance Survey maps. A few well-aimed kicks at the ivy had shown there to be something here, but only a concerted effort might uncover more. The location of Bewy's Cross was entirely lost, and it was impossible to visualise where it once stood. Here then was another target for exploration: to locate the location on the ground. Finally, two areas of the woodland floor where ornamental stonework stubbornly clung on were likely the sites of two sets of steps set out along the axial path heading in the direction of a former viewing point at the far west of the garden. The two sites together offered a good opportunity to get a glimpse of the intended ornamental aspirations of the garden's creators.

Run as one of KWAG's regular working party events in January 2024, volunteers undertook to clear the four areas and gently dig them out of obscurity. Our ambition has been simply to uncover and record rather than to make more invasive investigations into lower levels. The following report aims to provide a permanent record of what we uncovered, aiming to put it into context of the gardens as a whole. Our work has added "flesh to the bones" of the Victorian era gardens, giving them a new and amplified significance as part of the Grade II Listed Registered Historic Landscape.

We're grateful to our regular band of KWAG volunteers who so readily turned their hand to some amateur archaeology, and have enabled us to build a better picture of this interesting area.



The recently opened prospect from the View Garden, looking south towards the Home Lodge of Kings Weston house.

The base of Bewy's Cross

Documentary evidence

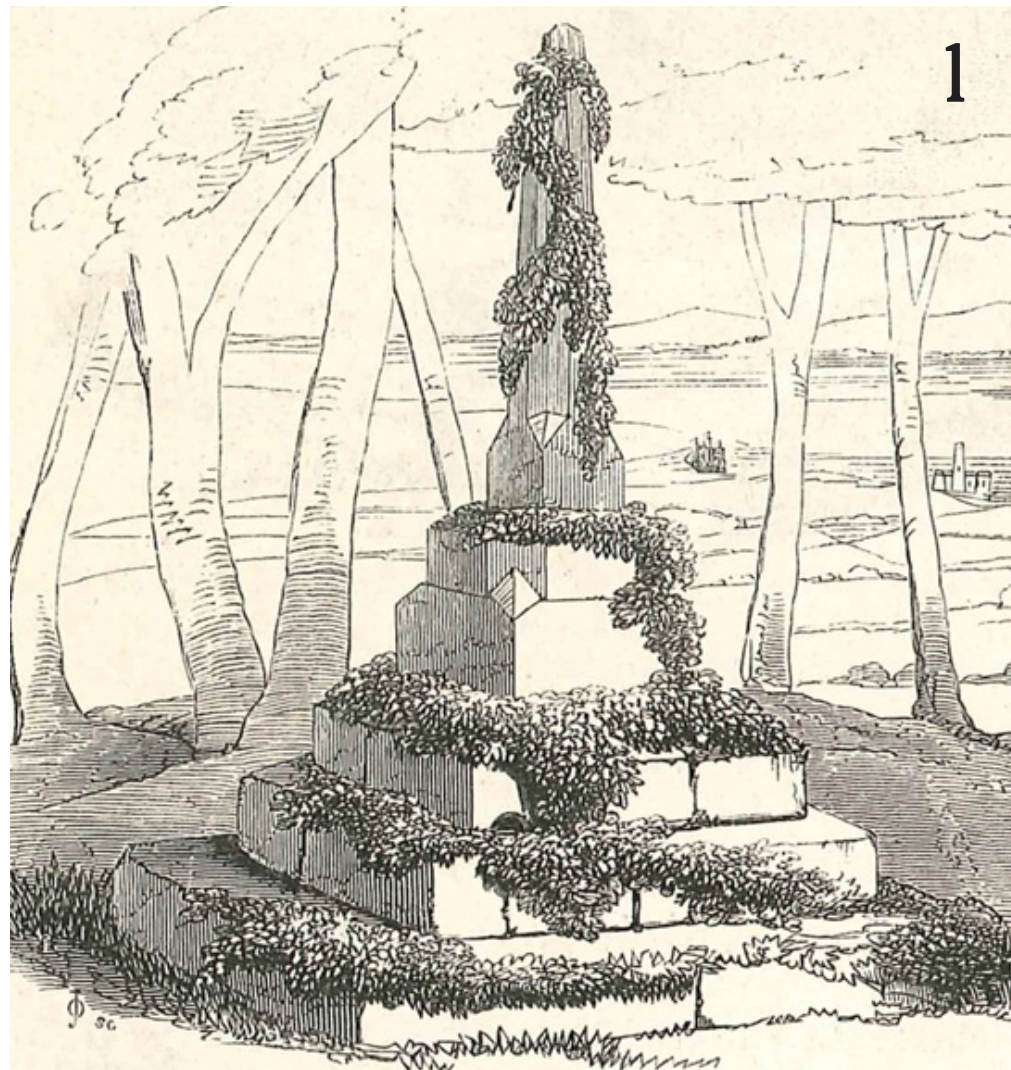
A cross is shown in the location to the north east of Kings Weston House in 1772, when Isaac Taylor's estate survey indicates on at the "site of a old church". This is likely to be the same cross that is later recorded here by Charles Pooley in his Notes on the Old Crosses of Gloucestershire, published in 1868, though no evidence dating from intervening years is yet known. Pooley's description is worth including in its entirety:

"A very noted Cross, called Bewy's Cross, formerly stood in this parish near the Severn, and was held in high estimation by sailors, who paid their devotions to it on landing. The Cross, which stands in the garden in the rear of King's Weston House, and in a line with the cliff, is said to be the veritable 'Sailors' Cross.' It has a curiously worked hole in the upper step, which tradition says is the place wherein they deposited their offerings. The three steps measure respectively 7 ft. 6 in., 5 ft. 7 in., and 4 ft. 2, in. square. The shaft is a tapering octagon, squared at its foot by broaches, and fits into a deep mortise, cut in the solid socket, whose upper bed is wrought into a square lower bed, by broaches of convex outline at the angles. The total height is about 9 ft. It is covered with ivy, and bears the impress of early fifteenth century work. A few years since, in digging the ground near the Cross, the workmen came upon the foundations of a chapel; but I have been unable to ascertain to what Saint it was dedicated."

Pooley helpfully included a line drawing identifying the cross as the same as that now relocated beside the lilypond but with little reliable detail that helps locate the cross more accurately in its former location. Additionally, Pooley seems to overlook a fourth step to the base of the cross. This, it might be calculated, would have been in the region of 9ft 5 inches square.

The only other known illustration is a newly found photograph from 1950. This shows Mr W T H Elms, Avonmouth Churchwarden, having freshly uncovered the cross by pulling ivy off. This was undertaken as part of the final, ultimately unsuccessful, campaign to have the cross moved to the churchyard in Avonmouth, abandoned after the Council's Education Committee's permission being dependent on the parish funding the move. There is little in the photo that helps locate the cross, but following work it has been useful in confirming the finds in relation to the large tree trunk shown in the background; this, it seems, survives as a rotting stump some 10 yards (around 9.5m) to the east of the excavation.

The historic Ordnance Survey map of 1904 suggested the cross stood around 40ft (12m) directly south of the lower set of steps. This map showed it was approached from the east by a single path that terminated at the stepped base of the cross. An earlier edition of the map from 1884 (3) showed a little more detail, suggesting at that time the cross was surrounded by a path following the regular form of the square base. The map also showed it in relation to a linear bank just to the east, aligned north-south from the upper set of steps on the parallel path to the north; Some of this bank is traceable on site, though it was less pronounced to the south. The large tree illustrated in the 1950 photograph appears to have been planted on its southern termination.



The excavation

Digging commenced at a convenient location measured 12m (40ft) from the lower set of steps on the axial east-east path through the View Garden, where the OS map suggested it had stood. This coincided with a low mound and a series of young self-seeded sycamore suggesting they'd taken advantage of disturbed ground to set roots. Efforts began on what would become the west side of this mound. Removing dark mulchy topsoil the dig quickly came down on a coarse buff coloured gravel surface just 6 inches (150mm) below the surface. Without further features, work moved to explore the east side of the low mound. Digging in this second location was confounded by a large amount of loose rubble stone of various sizes that formed the mound. The stones were local to the area, being variously limestone or Penpole stone. None showed obvious signs of working or of mortar that would otherwise suggest they came from a demolished structure. They were buried in the same dark loose mulchy soil encountered on the surface. This part of the dig was taken down further in an effort to find at what level the rubble finished, this bottoming-out at about 16 inches (400mm) in depth on a clear flat horizon of red/brown hard clay soil, presumed to be the natural.

A clear line separated the rubble-filled area to the west of this part of the dig, and the east side, where another buff gravel surface was encountered at a depth of 5 inches (about 125mm) below the surface. There was a clear edge

formed where the gravel finished before dropping about 11 inches to the red/ brown soil level. The gravel layer was extended eastwards, but no opposing edge was found, so this work abandoned.

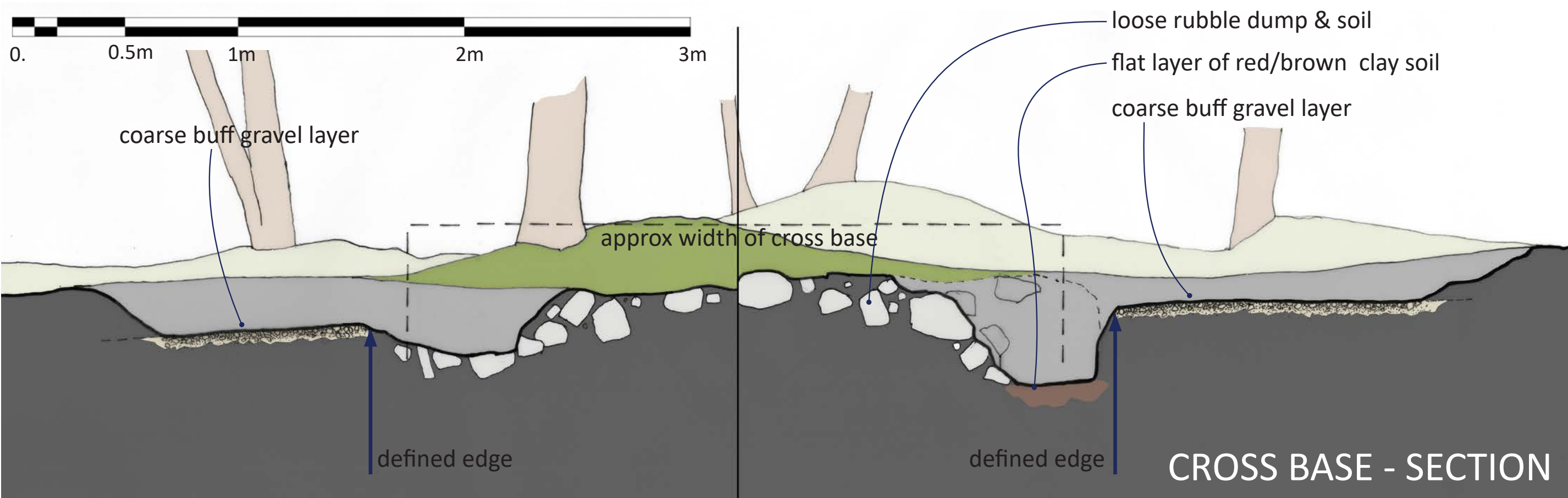
Returning to the far west area of gravel that we'd first uncovered, this was extended eastwards to establish if a similar pronounced edge could be found; This proving to be the case, it was notable that it ran parallel to that opposing it in the eastern side of the mound. More loose rubble stone was encountered to the east of the gravel edge of similar character found elsewhere. Two stones were found in this material that retained traces of a very white mortar adhering to them but very little, and none in the surrounding dark earth.

Interpretation.

We can be confident from the location and alignments that the gravel surfaces are likely to be the garden paths shown in 1884 that once ran around the cross before it was moved, and the space between them was where the cross was removed. The path surfaces survived in a well-preserved state beneath the topsoil, suggesting they were covered by debris before the cross was dismantled; this is supported by the condition shown in the 1950 photograph. The parallel edges to the gravel surfaces demark a central zone of 10ft 9 inches (3280mm) in width, within which a large amount of loose rubble appears to



ABOVE: Bewy's Cross seen in its present location alongside the lilypond.



CROSS BASE - PLAN



The garden building

have been tipped. From its looseness and general consistency, the dark soil mixed in with this rubble may have accumulated after it was dumped. This zone is slightly wider than the projected width of the lowermost step of Bewy's, however, it's postulated that, to dismantle the cross a trench was required to be dug around the base to lift and remove the stones. This would seem necessary judging by the depth the lower step shown to be buried in 1950 compared with its current profile at the lilypond. A trench cut around the base would account for any additional width found in our dig.

Following the dismantling and removal of the cross to its new location at the lilypond in 1951, the hole left appears to have been filled with rubble stone. This stone had no evidence of having be part of the historic cross, or having come from another built structure, and was probably used simply to make the site safe and level.

The red/brown clay layer at the base of the trench is considered the natural subsoil. The clear differentiation between this and the rubble stone dumped on top of it suggest either any foundation to the cross was robbed out when it was moved, or it had no foundation and sat directly on this layer. Taking the dig further to the west, removing more of the rubble area, may have uncovered more evidence, but tree roots prevented easy investigation. Establishing the southern edge of the cross base and path would help to better pinpoint the feature within the garden.

The dig here has identified the location and orientation of the Cross within the View Garden, shown how the paths around it were simply formed around it, and provided answers on how it was left after removal. Finding the exact location has assisted in understanding how it related to other features, particularly the rockery to the east which was encountered as a feature along the path culminating at the cross. It may be that evidence of foundations, dating evidence, or of the features survive beneath the rubble stone pile, but the likelihood is that everything was removed in 1952.



The cross shown on Isaac Taylor's 1772 estate plan of Kings Weston lands.

Documentary evidence

The garden building is the most complex and enigmatic of the structures explored as part of our dig. There is scant documentary evidence for it, the only record of it having existed at all being three consecutive editions of the Ordnance Survey map between 1884 and 1916. By the 1949 edition it had already gone. The map evidence is also confusing in understanding the form and alignment of the building aside that it stood at the east end of an axial path through The View Garden. This path is aligned almost exactly east-west through the garden, and differs by about 50 degrees from the strict geometry of the rest of the walled garden complex. The first Ordnance Survey map illustrates the small rectangular building standing square at the start of the path, whilst later editions show it aligned to the tall Georgian wall behind it and at a pronounced angle to the path. As of yet, no descriptions or other illustrative material have come to light helping to understand the structure.

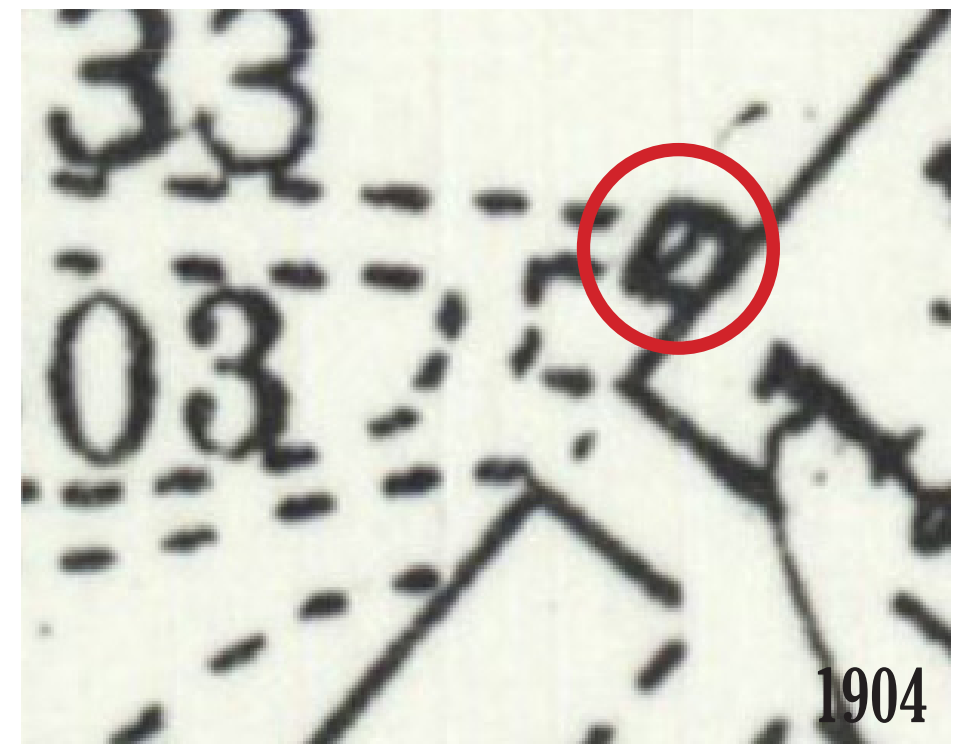
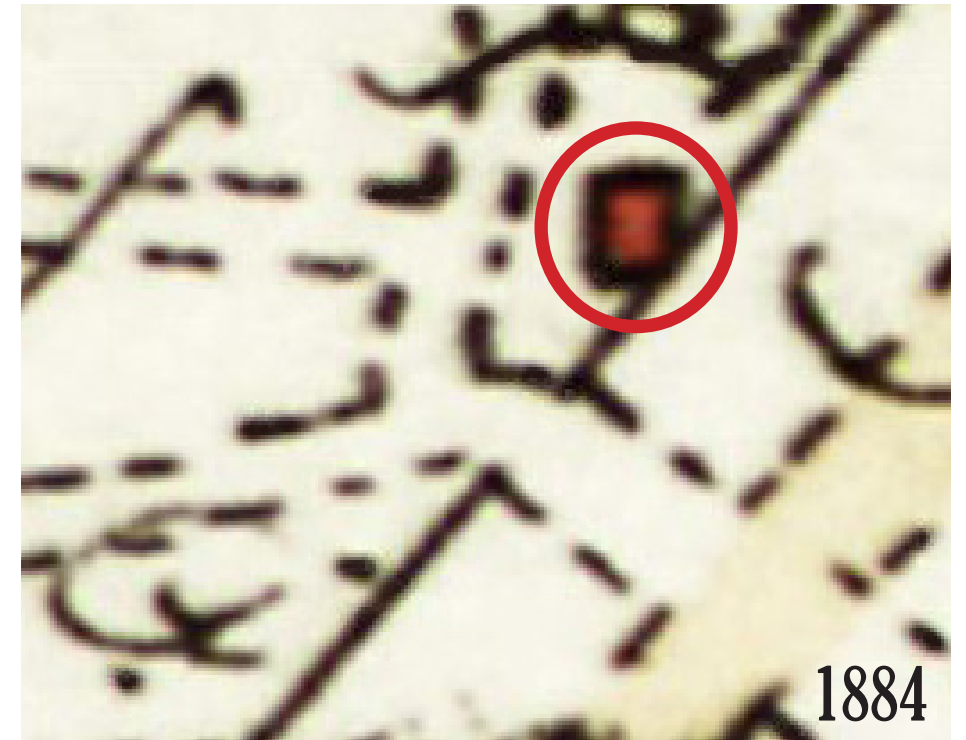
The site remained as a pronounced bank just to the east of the Georgian gate piers, and between two mature yew trees. An idle poke about ahead of December's working party identified the potential for the survival of structures here, and its significance at the head of the axial path through the garden indicated it was of some importance in the garden design.

Excavations

The top surface of ivy and mulchy top soil was stripped of the top of the structure revealing a cement surface marked with the matrix of tiles that once decorated it. The fine dark grey cement layer, about an inch in depth (2.5mm) but of varying thicknesses throughout, had the appearance of 20th Century work, so initial thoughts were that the building was of a later date. The tiles were formerly 6 inch quarry tiles, though all but a single blue/grey quarry tile had been removed. The surface was clearly a floor but no longer lay flat, with heavy subsidence on the east side towards the Georgian wall resulting in a gradient of up to 9 degrees from level.

Further clearance of this surface exposed a second lower one lying beneath the cement floor. This was identifiable by a thick layer lime-based mortar bed of a white/grey colour, mixed with coarse gravel and of about 4 inches in depth (about 100mm). This layer contained black ash or clinker and in areas appeared to be laid directly onto the ground surface. Towards the east of the site it was badly disintegrated with no discernible back edge, but there was a clear western edge, and eastern return back from it in the direction of the Georgian Wall and running on the same geometry as the lost grid of tiles. However, the pronounced western edge was angled at about 40 degrees to the rest of the floor features.

Excavation in front of the western edge of the mortar floor bed revealed a monolithic feature formed of rubble stone and some broken brick mixed with mortar with a high lime content. It was wider than the mortar floor along this side of the building, being about 7ft 4inches in width, with clearly defined ends and a rough exposed surfaces to top and front faces. The structure stepped down in two stages but in such irregular fashion that it presented no obvious

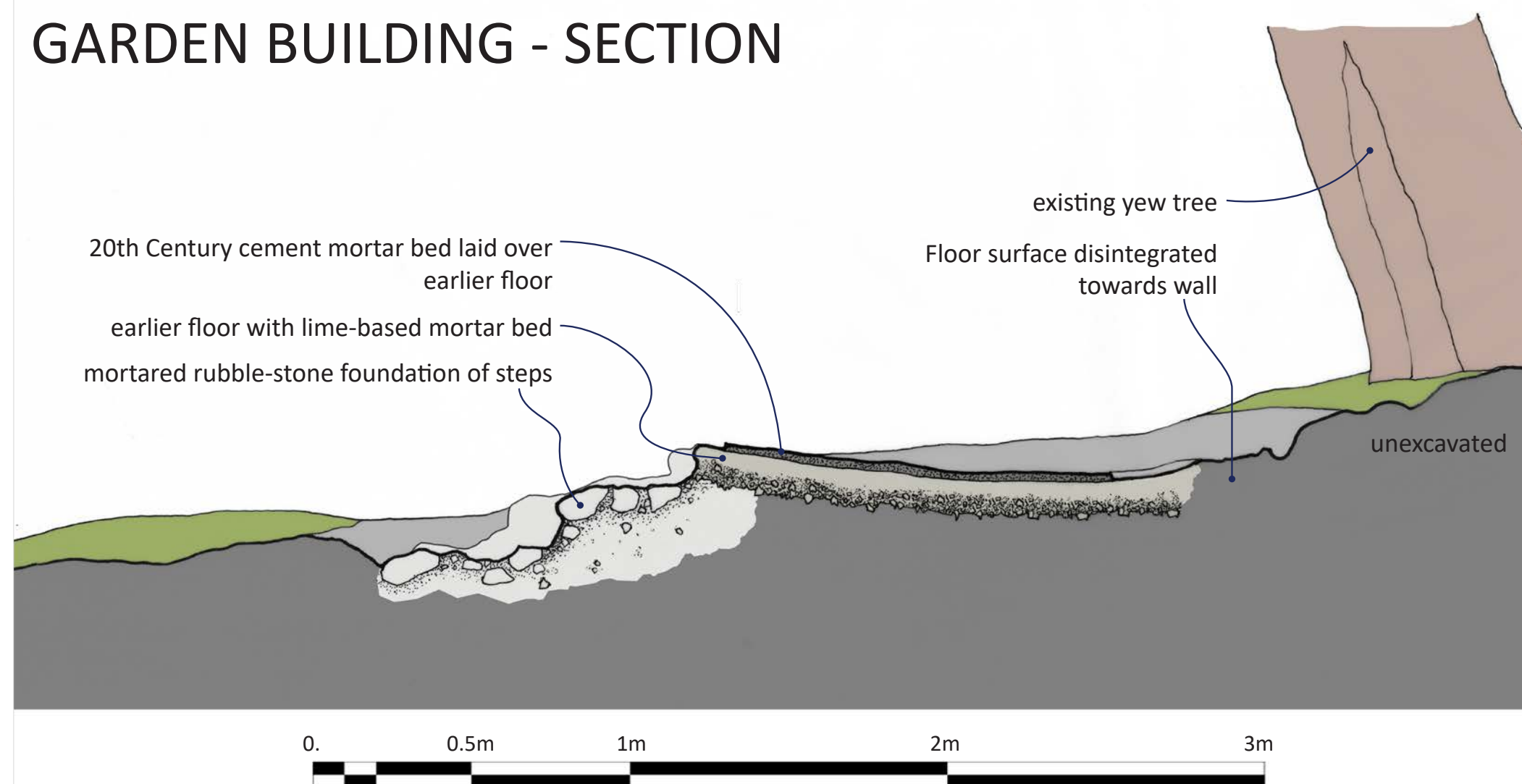


ABOVE: Detail from Ordnance Survey maps showing the garden building, 1884 and 1904

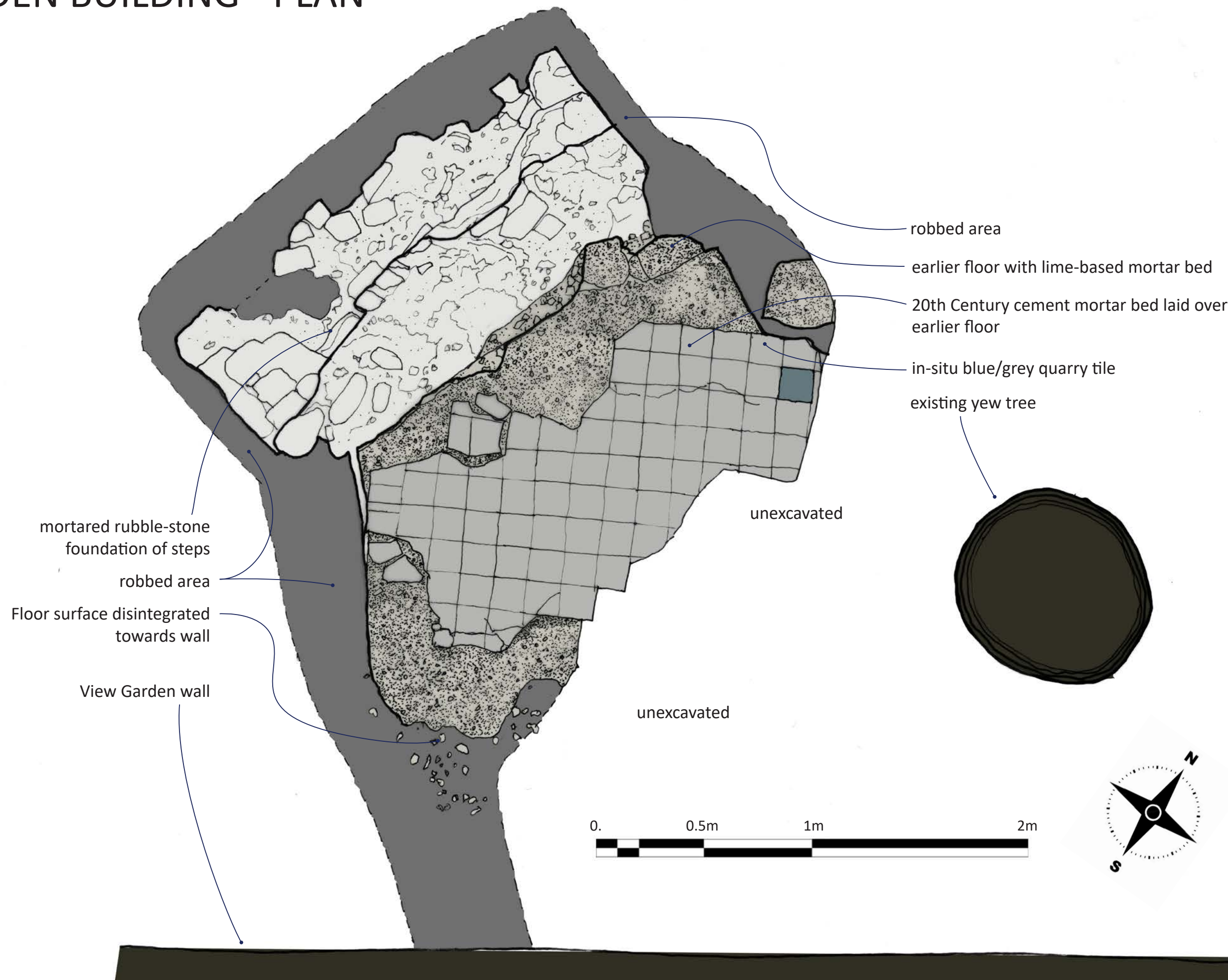


- 1: the freshly excavated remains looking south towards the Georgian wall surrounding the View Garden
- 2: detail of the excavated remains showing the stepped front feature and slumped floor surface behind
- 3: the remains of the garden building seen in context with the georgian wall on the right and yew tree behind.

GARDEN BUILDING - SECTION



GARDEN BUILDING - PLAN



top surface or front of steps. The structure was constructed with no discernible order, with no coursing to the stonework and a lot of mortar binding. Like the floor layers, it had succumbed to subsidence and leaned back slightly towards the east, where it bears its heaviest load on the ground beneath.

Volunteers excavated around this structure and the floors to establish the plan and extents of the building. These excavations were into dark loose mulchy garden soils and uncovered no other features. Noticeable was the lack of building fabric from either demolished or collapsed wall or roof structures. A few small blocks of ashlar limestone were recovered around the site, but not obviously associated with the building. A number of square 6-inch quarry tiles were found, in both blue/grey and terracotta colour. These invariably had the same pattern on their bases as exhibited in the cement layer. However, a loose section of four tiles were found in a damaged state still heavily bonded to the same material and mortar as the lower floor bed.

Interpretation

The excavations identified the base of a garden building closely associated with the axial path through the View Garden. The western monolithic stone and mortar feature formed the base of steps, aligned to the path and leading up from it to a raised floor platform from where an excellent view could be had down the length of the garden. The floor was laid on poor foundations and apparently directly onto the earth mound that ran along the Georgian Garden wall at this point.

Excavations around the edges of both steps and floor platform provided no evidence of side walls or foundations for them, only loose infill not unlike the surrounding garden soils. It's difficult to be exact about the dimensions of the building, but the evidence suggests that it was not rectangular, but a pentagon with unequal sides, or rather, a square with one corner removed. The square was set out to the alignment of the Georgian wall, with the removed corner addressing the steep angle of the axial path. The building would have resolved these odd geometries in a building that could still present a symmetrical façade to respect the formality of the garden. The general plan of the building, with wider steps and odd angles and junctions between them and the floor slabs, would allow for walls of up to 1ft (300mm) thick to enclose the floor are, with a central door, more probably a simple opening, up to 5ft 3inches (1600mm) wide at the top of the steps.

An alternative possibility is a building with a hexagonal form and open loggia of three sides like those in the Rose Garden at Tyntesfield, but the angles and area available for a hexagon plan of regular sides sit uncomfortably with the excavated features and the tree and garden wall nearby. The geometry of the tiled floor and the map evidence supports a simpler rectilinear geometry.

The lack of foundations and roof or wall material poses a puzzle. There are two possible explanations: Firstly, whatever superstructure there was may have been dismantled and taken away in its entirety, maybe for sale or reuse

elsewhere. The very poor condition of the monolithic step base shows that the original stair treads and risers have been removed with considerable effort. These would likely have been of high-quality hard-wearing stone that had monetary value to whoever took them. The dismantling of the steps area extended to the two ends which would surely not have been exposed. Had the walls of the building been of high-quality materials these may also have succumbed to the salvage man, but this would not fully explain why no obvious foundations could be identified during excavation, and there was no evidence of a systematic demolition process.

The other possibility is that the building was fabricated from timber and other organic materials; these would require a less substantial foundation and decay to nothing over time. Many garden buildings of the 18th and 19th Century were built in this way, with some making deliberate use of the rustic character of natural logs, boughs, bark, and thatch for picturesque effect. The slumping of the floor and disintegration of the edges could have begun early in the building's history, without the support that more durable structures could have provided.

The cement floor surface illustrates that efforts were made to repair the building at a time in the late 19th or early 20th Century when Portland cement became more commonplace. From the variation in thickness, the cement looks to have been applied as a levelling screed to compensate for the slumping floor level. Care appears to have been taken in the restoration, with the original floor tiles lifted and re-laid on the new surface. However, most of the subsidence should be attributed to a time following the building falling out of use and its walls and floors vanishing. The nearby yew tree may also have accelerated the disturbance of the structures.

It's difficult to reconcile the found remains with the Ordnance Survey maps. The three versions it appears on show a rectangular building, with the two most recent editions showing the rectangle sat against the Georgian Wall; there is no physical evidence on the wall to support that, and the size, position, and alignment of the excavated remains differs from the maps. It is not impossible that the detail of such a small building with odd angles was incorrectly translated onto the maps.

With its dominant position raised up at the commencement of the axial path this building had a key role in the design of the View Garden. Its generally small size limits likely uses to which it could be put, so the likelihood is that it was a covered garden seat from which the Italian-style gardens could be enjoyed at leisure. It's likely to have continued in use as part of the View Garden, "the gem of the whole garden", until the first quarter of the 20th Century, after which it probably decayed and was abandoned. The removal and salvage of valuable materials is unlikely to have preceded the death of Sybil Napier Miles, who delighted in her gardens and maintained ownership of the area until her death in 1948.



Suggested appearance of the garden building seen against the Georgian Wall



The steps and floor platform may have supported a timber superstructure

The upper and lower steps

Documentary evidence

Both the upper and lower set of steps on the View garden's axial path survived as surface features amongst the undergrowth. Historic maps were the main source of evidence of how they related to the overall garden design and they first appear on the 1884 First edition. The clearest map is dated 1916; this shows the two sets of steps, each with three steps, the easternmost two closer together than the third. As of yet, no photos, descriptions, or illustrations have come to light.

Some of the stonework of the steps was visible on the surface in the view garden, including fragments of the decorative limestone edging. Before 2011 there were complete pennant stone steps in place on the lower set of steps, but at this date they were found to have been cut using angle grinders and removed, though some sections remained. A couple of fragments of one step remained at the lower steps, providing invaluable evidence of the size of each stone.

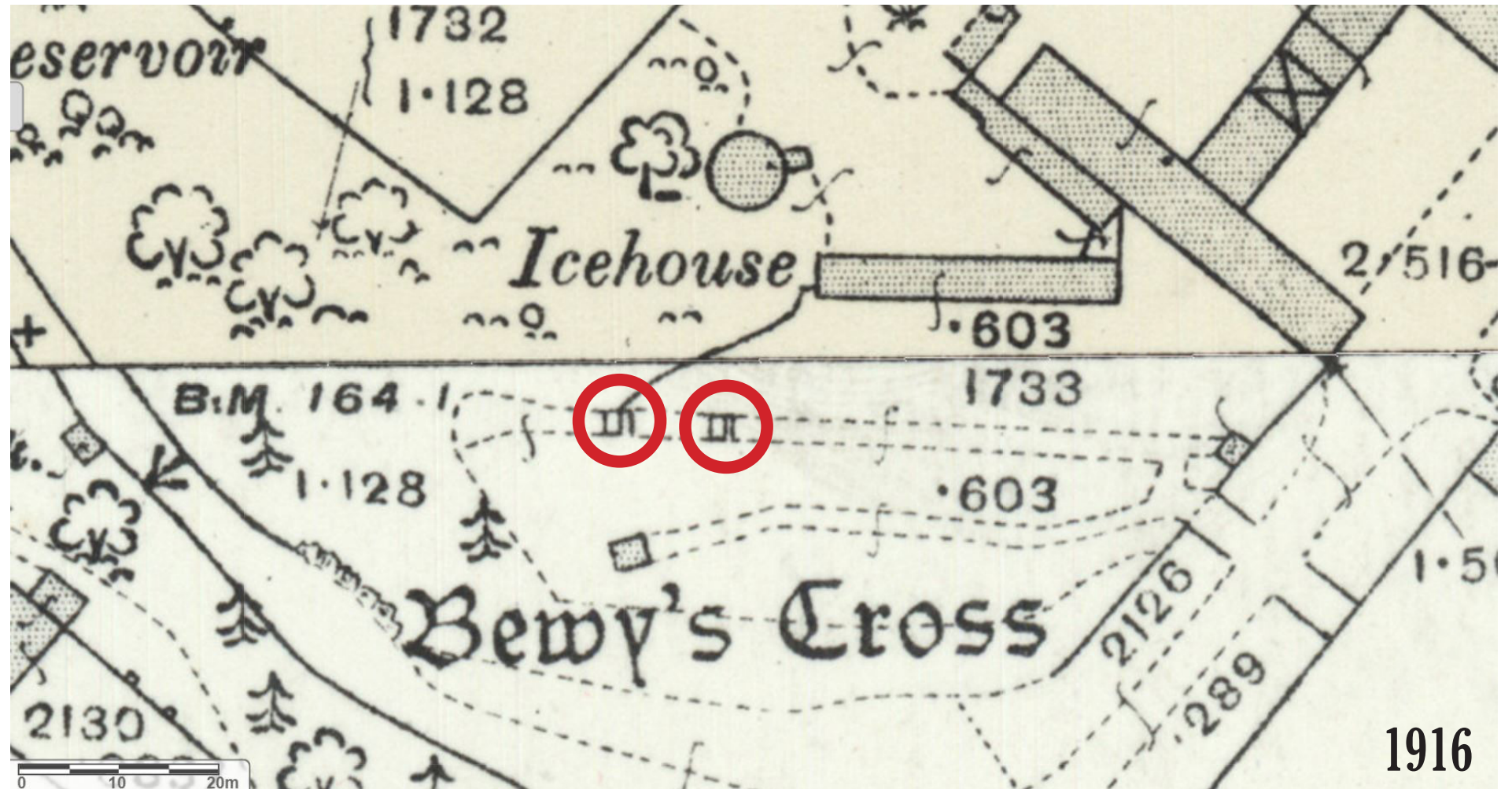
Excavation.

The Upper steps

The upper, or easternmost, set of steps survived in the best state or repair, with edging along the north side, limestone blocks, and a corner piece of edging still in-situ on the south side all visible before work. These stones were all finely cut limestone, probably Bath stone. The large blocks stood either side of the top of the steps at their east end and measured 2ft 10in square and 5 inches in depth. They were plain and regular with no modelled or ornamental decorations. The exposed upper surface of each block was flat, with no evidence of an upper structure, and no differential weathering to suggest that a base of an urn or statue stood permanently in this location. The southern block was complete but the upper surface of the opposing one had suffered frost damage and a damaged section was recovered nearby and returned for the survey.

Excavations in the area showed that there were two other square slabs of smaller size set at angles to the north and south of the main blocks. These measured 1ft 11 inches square and 3 inches thick. These were both in damaged condition, but there was no evidence of having had any sort of permanent superstructure above them.

The main run of edging stones were sited along the north side of the dig area and running in the alignment in which they were intended. These stones had suffered damage and disturbance by tree roots, particularly at their east end. In partnership with a matching corner piece terminating against the south block of stone and still in-situ, these were useful in establishing the overall length and width of the steps structures. The ornamental stones were simply decorated with cyma-reversa mouldings along their length, a moulding of symmetrical profile with a convex curved top surface that then dished out into a concave base. The stones varied in length, depth, and design, each made as a specific component to fit with the geometry of the steps. The whole of the southern side had been robbed out with one section lying on its side near the



Stonework of the upper steps seen on the surface before excavation



Stonework of the upper steps seen on the surface before excavation



1. The upper steps from the west. The decorative stone edging remains largely complete on the left. Upper and lower gravel surfaces can be seen separated by the steps foundations.



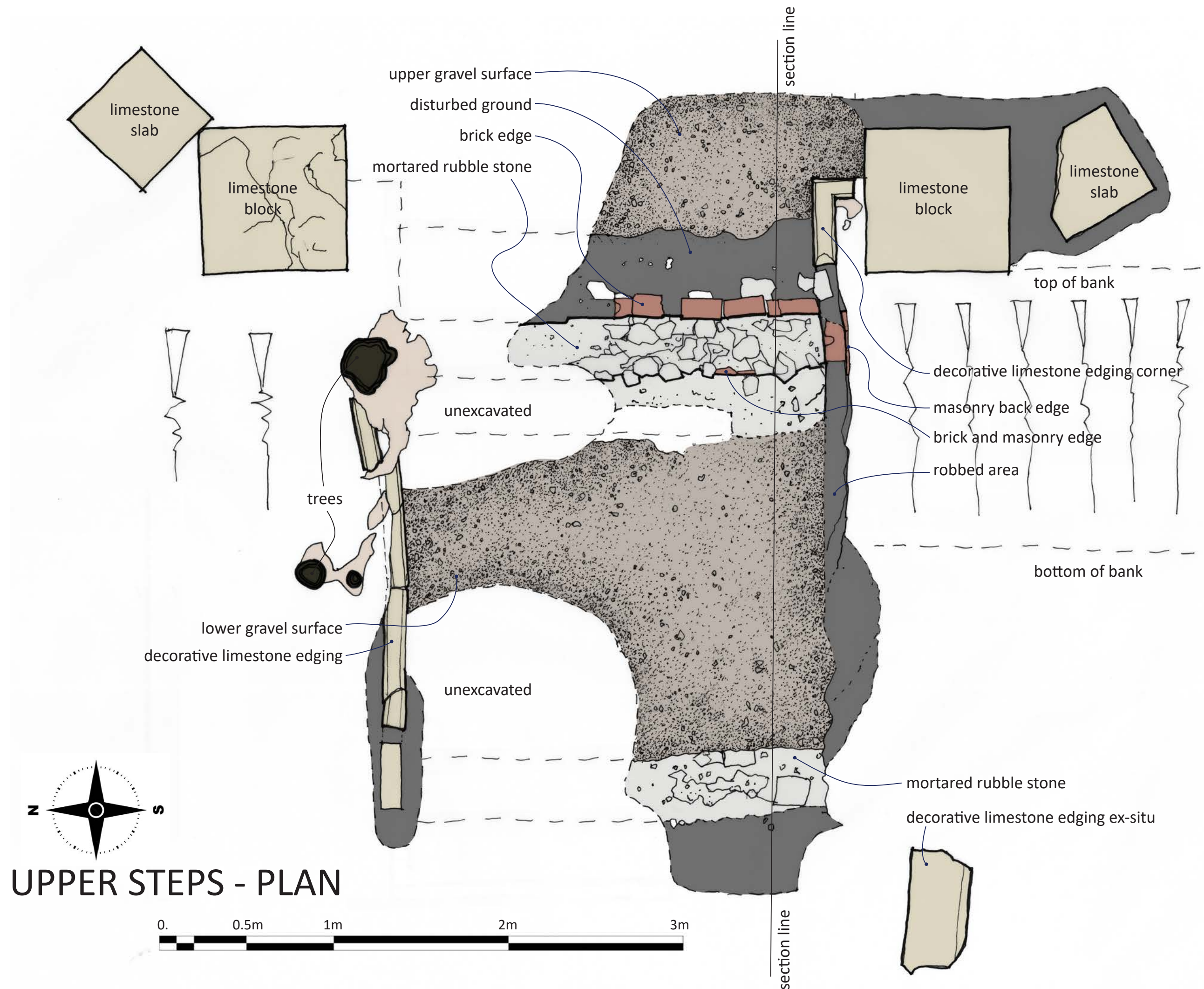
2. Detail of the steps foundation showing the step platforms edged in masonry and brick. A sharp line demarks the forward edge of the upper gravel surface. The ashlar limestone blocks are clearly visible, with the corner of the decorative edging seen in-situ against the larger one.



3. A view directly east up the axial path. The foundation of the single last step is seen in the foreground, fronted by unexcavated dark soil, with the gravel surface beyond it. This view graphically demonstrates the difference in height between upper and lower gravel surfaces.



4. Detail of the end of the decorative edging along the north side of the steps, showing the curving profile and socket for the connecting plug into the next block.



area. Where some stones had been removed they revealed a rough mortared brick and stone backfill within the embanked area, supporting the side and base of the edging stone and preventing the bank behind them from pushing them inward.

Excavations revealed two clear surfaces of finished gravel of a pinkish buff colour. The upper surface stopped abruptly with a section of disturbed ground between its western edge and a line of bricks marking the foundation of the uppermost step. The lower gravel surface (about 457mm) was uncovered about 1ft 6 inches below the upper. This was excavated to the whole width of the path between the stone edging, and tracked westward to establish its extents in relation to the edging on the north side. The lower gravel area extended between two areas of rubble stone and mortar foundations. The mortar was of a high lime content and generally white in colour with a few ashy inclusions.

A substantial rubble stone, brick and mortared structure separated the upper and lower gravel surfaces. This stepped down in two discernible platforms that sloped irregularly to the west. The top edge of the structure was delineated with a line of bricks arranged lengthways across the steps area. These were roughly laid and poor quality brick. The top surface of the bricks was about 5 inches (152mm) below the level of the upper gravel surface, separated from it by an area of disturbed dark earth.

The lower steps.

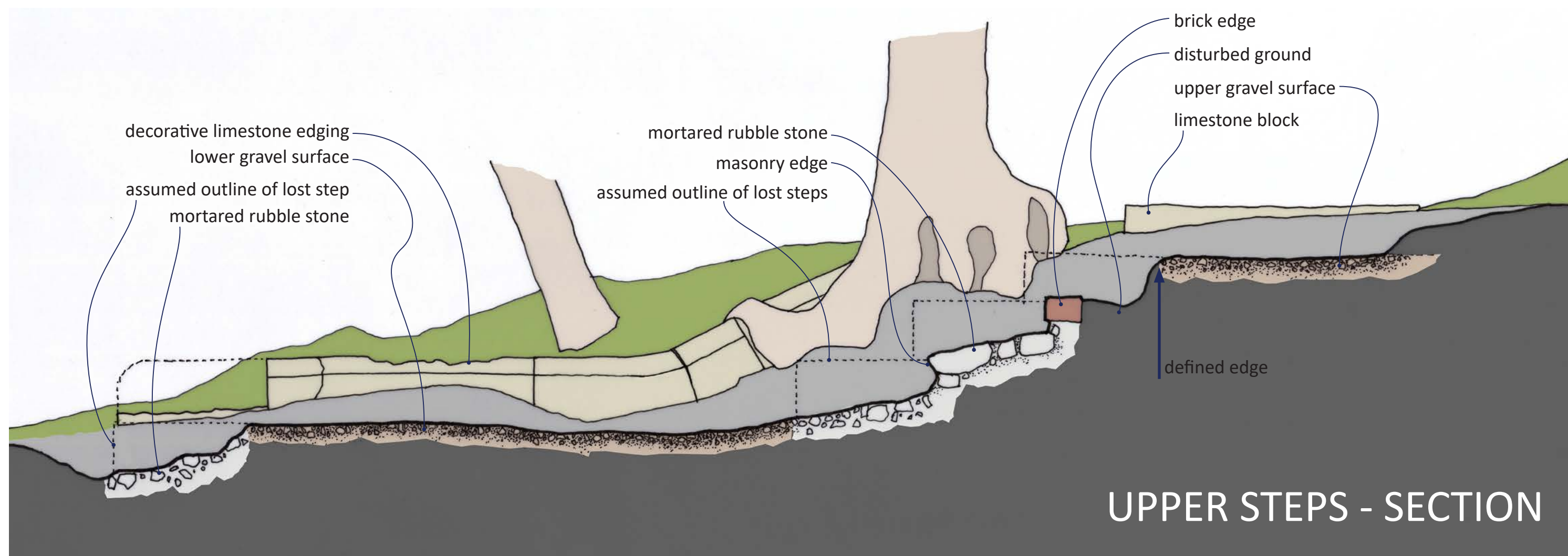
The lower steps were found to be in very poor condition, with a large tree growing up through the upper section, and significant damage done by the recent robbery of the stone steps themselves. One of the upper stone blocks remained in situ, whilst its partner of the north side was dislodged. One of the diagonally aligned stone slabs adjacent to these blocks remained in the area, whilst the other was not found. The front edge of an upper gravel surface was identified abutting a roughly mortared masonry plane running north-south on the same alignment as the west edge of the undisturbed limestone block on the south side. This stone-built feature was absent from the upper set of steps to the east.

Decorative stone edging of the same design survived on the surface on the north side, and was excavated on the south side. These stones survived in a damaged condition with sections lying loose on the surface. These included a corner section from the top of the steps, and a section defining the upper angle of the edging as an abrupt 27 degrees slant. On the south side, the excavated stone at the lower level showed that the change in angle here was accomplished in a shallow curve.

The area west of the lower steps was found to be more heavily buried than in other areas, and the time constraints meant that the lower gravel surface wasn't

reached. The extension of the path westwards towards the viewing area was found to have mixed material, stones, earth and clinker, that suggest a dumping of material. Either side of the path alignment here there were slightly raised banks which appear similar in character to the uncovered rockery area in the east end of the gardens, with larger stones arranged with apparent deliberate intent.

The lower steps were the only location where portions of the original slabs of stone from the steps were found. One section of grey pennant stone with a flat top surface was broken on the north side of the area, immediately adjoining one of the sections of decorative edging. This appeared to still be in-situ, but incomplete. A larger section of pennant stone survived on the south side, but in a heavily disturbed state, with recent use of angle-grinders to cut through it. The dimensions of the block were 6 inches (150mm) in height and 1ft 3 ¾ inches (400mm) in depth. The upper surface was flat and smooth, with a slightly rougher strip along its back edge about 3 ¾ inches (95mm) wide. From its location the stone is likely to have formed the middle of three steps, but was found dislodged and lying on its back edge. The front edge of the block was regular, with no decorative nosing or details.





1. The remaining stone edging on the northern side of the lower steps. A fragment of the step itself lies in-situ
2. The edging on the south of the steps showing the graceful curve where it levels out at the bottom. The largest section of remaining step lies upright on the left.
3. A reconstruction of the steps to their original scale and appearance.

Interpretation.

For the similarity on design and detail the two sets of steps are considered together. The Ordnance survey maps suggest the two sets were identical and the setting out with a lower step set further west from the upper ones was supported by the excavation. However, the upper set of steps was found to be formed of three steps rather than the two shown on the maps. The steps themselves appear to have been formed from single monolithic sections of pennant stone stretching the full width of the path; This was measured to be about 8ft 2 inches, but account should be made that the disturbed condition of both sets might mask a designed width of 8ft.

Each step was overlapped by the one above it, as suggested by the rough strip on the back of the surviving pennant section. They were laid on a rough foundation formed of rubble stone with a good deal of mortar infill. The upper set of steps had a brick edge offering a flat base for the steps sat upon it, and a back edge for the step below. This may have been repeated on other steps,

but has since been lost. The step blocks have been deliberately removed, most recently from the lower set in about 2011, but fragmentary survival help significantly in understanding the overall design.

The upper set of steps was accompanied by a clear bank running north-south across the site. This would have required re-grading from the natural slope by excavating the western down-slope side, and building up to a level surface on the east. This may correspond with “digging the ground near the Cross” that Pooley recalls as a recent event in 1868 when “workmen came upon the foundations of a chapel”. This would match the assumed mid-19th Century date assumed for the axial path and establishment of the View Garden as an Italianate feature.

The decorative stone edging also appears to have succumbed to salvage. Only the sections with odd angles or with clear damage survive, whilst any regular



long sections look to have been taken. One section of edging lies on the surface of the upper set of steps, removed from its location, but broken, perhaps damaged during removal and discarded. The termination of the decorative edging against the upper stone blocks suggests it was localised to the steps and didn't continue the length of the axial path. Where their ends were exposed square socket holes had been cut to receive square plugs of slate, used to align and fix the stones together and set in place using mortar.

Noticeable was the difference in colour between the gravel surfaces of the axial path, pink/buff, and those found around the cross base, buff. Whether these formal and informally designed paths were further demarked in character by the deliberate use of contrasting coloured gravels is a possibility.

The function of the limestone blocks and their satellite slabs is our final consideration. As found, with a smooth and level top surface, there were no indications that any of these blocks ever had any structure built upon them; Nor were any of the blocks of adequate depth to support anything of any scale or weight. Had they been the bases for garden urns or statues a degree of differential weathering would have been expected, highlighting the outline of any permanent feature stood upon them. The proximity of the Georgian glasshouse in the View Garden, the knowledge that the Miles Family took great pride in growing exotic plants, and the notion that the View Garden was set out as an Italianate garden, all suggest that these blocks could have formed seasonal platforms for the display of tender potted plants or citrus trees.



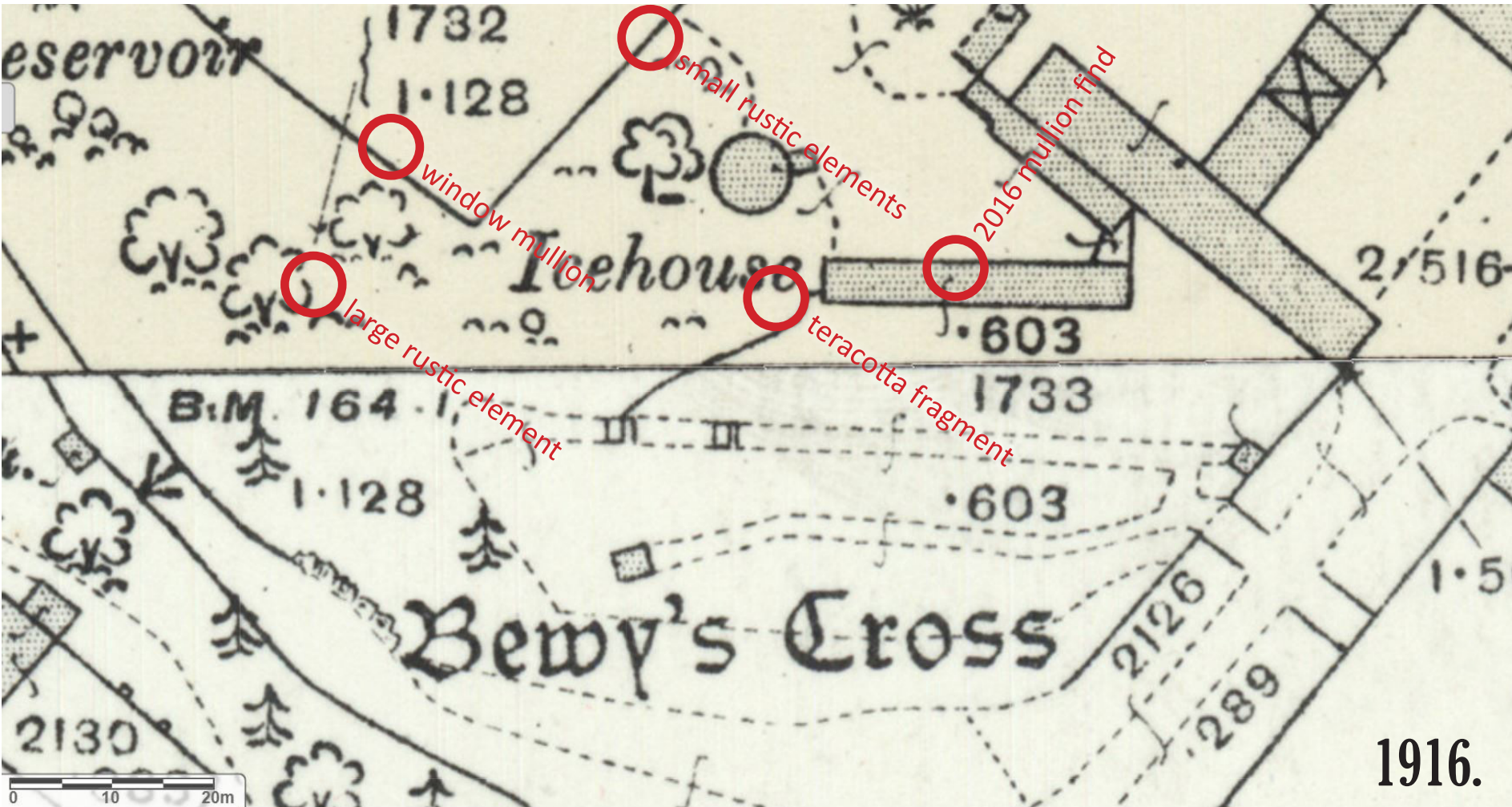
RIGHT: A reconstruction of how the view along the axial path towards the garden seat might have looked.

Other View Garden finds

Working in the View Garden over the last few months gave the opportunity to explore it in more detail than previously. Volunteers came across a number of surface finds worth recording.

Several sections of a feature have been recovered from the north-western side of the site (1&2), in areas outside the centre of the garden area. The material is peculiar, having the character of brick clay to the outside, but with a core of clay or a bubbled vitreous material internally. The exterior faces of the three fragments so far recovered exhibit an inferentially wrought design, with bulbous features and striations scratched in a rough grain down surfaces. The blocks are all very irregular in form, some clearly broken fragments, but the largest of them (3), measuring about 11 ¾ inches in height, appears to have a finished top and bottom surface. It appears to be part of a segmental structure built up from various elements.

The elements so far found appear to be fragments of a rustic tree-type structure, with the clay intend to replicate gnarled and twisting wood. It's difficult to find parallels for this sort of feature in other historic gardens, though smaller pottery tree trunks, often referred to as strawberry planters, were frequently used for the showcasing of ferns or other plants. The fragments would suggest



a much larger feature of similar rustic character that may have stood in the View garden. The Georgian glasshouse might have been the most likely location for this built structure in the View Garden, though an outside location, possibly one elsewhere in the walled gardens or park, can't be discounted. The fragmentary condition and scattered location of the finds suggest it was deliberately damaged and discarded, whether systematically or through decay and vandalism.

An unusual fragment of terracotta was found on the surface of a pile of broken and discarded plant pot fragments close to the eastern end of the former glasshouse site. It was heavily moulded with a regular diaper pattern of stylised foliate rosettes, with spiralling banding with a regular studded pattern twisted around it (1). The fragment was heavily damaged to the sides and back, but the decorative surface clearly indicated it was from a cylindrical feature of about 7 1/3 inches (190mm) in diameter (2). The block had a finished and level top and bottom surface, measuring 8 1/2 inches (215mm) in height.

This is the only such fragment we've found, and it's impossible to suggest how it arrived in the View Garden, or from where. It's most likely part of a terracotta column or pillar of an ornamental structure, where the spiralling and repeated design would have run up its height. Alternatives are that it was part of a chimneypot or planter, though the thickness of the fragment suggests a more architectural use. Further finds of similar fabric would help establish a location, though none has yet come to light after further searches.

Back in 2016 we encountered a fragment of carved limestone window mullion reused in the wall of the Georgian glasshouse in the View Garden. This was supplemented in 2020 by a portion of stone of the same profile acquired as part of a collection amassed from "a boundary wall on the west side of Kingsweston Hill" where they had been discovered in 1967. We now have a third piece of window mullion to add to this collection.

The latest was discovered a short distance to the north-west of the view garden, where the remains of a boundary wall lead downhill in the direction of Lawrence Weston (3). The stone was on the surface to the northern side of this wall amongst other fallen stonework. It's a section 15 inches (380mm) in length, with a flat regular surface to one end and broken at the other. It has ovolo mouldings on the front side, with that on the reverse broken away. Left and right sides have cut rebates along its length intended to receive glazing (4). There was evidence of a fine white mortar adhering to some areas, unlike the darker mortar of the wall from which it came. Unlike the other mullion fragments, it has mouldings of marginally different dimensions suggesting perhaps a slightly different source though potentially the same building. Stylistically, ovolo moulded mullions could date from anywhere from the 16th Century to the early 1700's and were again popular in the Victorian era as historical styles came back en-vogue. An assured pre-1772 date can be ascribed to at least the one example found in reused in the glasshouse, and the wall in which the latest was found also dates to about this time.



With two fragments now confidently located around the View Garden greater weight might be given to our suggestion in 2016 that the source may be one of the three buildings formerly in this area and demolished to make way for the walled garden complex in the 1760s. The finds also imply that the 1967 discovery of historic stones may also have been associated with one of the walls in the same area.

