

OLD BEDHAMPTON CONSERVATION AREA

1 INTRODUCTION

The Old Bedhampton Conservation Area is divided in two by the Portsmouth to London railway and linked by a fine example of a Victorian brick railway bridge. To the south of the railway the Conservation Area encompasses the Mill House of the former Lower Mill as well as the mill pond and mill race. To the north the Conservation Area is centred on the Church of St Thomas the Apostle and includes the core of the original settlement. Despite the encroachment by substantial development, that has occurred this century, the character of Old Bedhampton and its open undeveloped setting have remained remarkably intact.

2 HISTORY

The earliest reference to Bedhampton is found in ecclesiastical records of 837 which state that the manor and lands were granted by the King to the Cathedral Church of Winchester. Later during this century the village was laid waste by the Danes and was subsequently resettled under the direction of Denewulf, the Bishop of Winchester, early in the 10th Century. Domesday records a community with two mills and a Church. This Saxon Church was replaced in the 12th

Century by a church in the Norman style, a great part of which survives today, although altered during the 14th and 19th Centuries.

During the Middle Ages a great feature of Bedhampton was the hunting park to the north of the present village, which was probably created in the years immediately after the Conquest. It was surrounded by a fence eight miles long but had been disparked by 1632 and was subsequently used for arable cultivation. The change from grazing to arable farming, particularly the growing of corn, during the 18th Century, marked a period of prosperity and expansion and the two

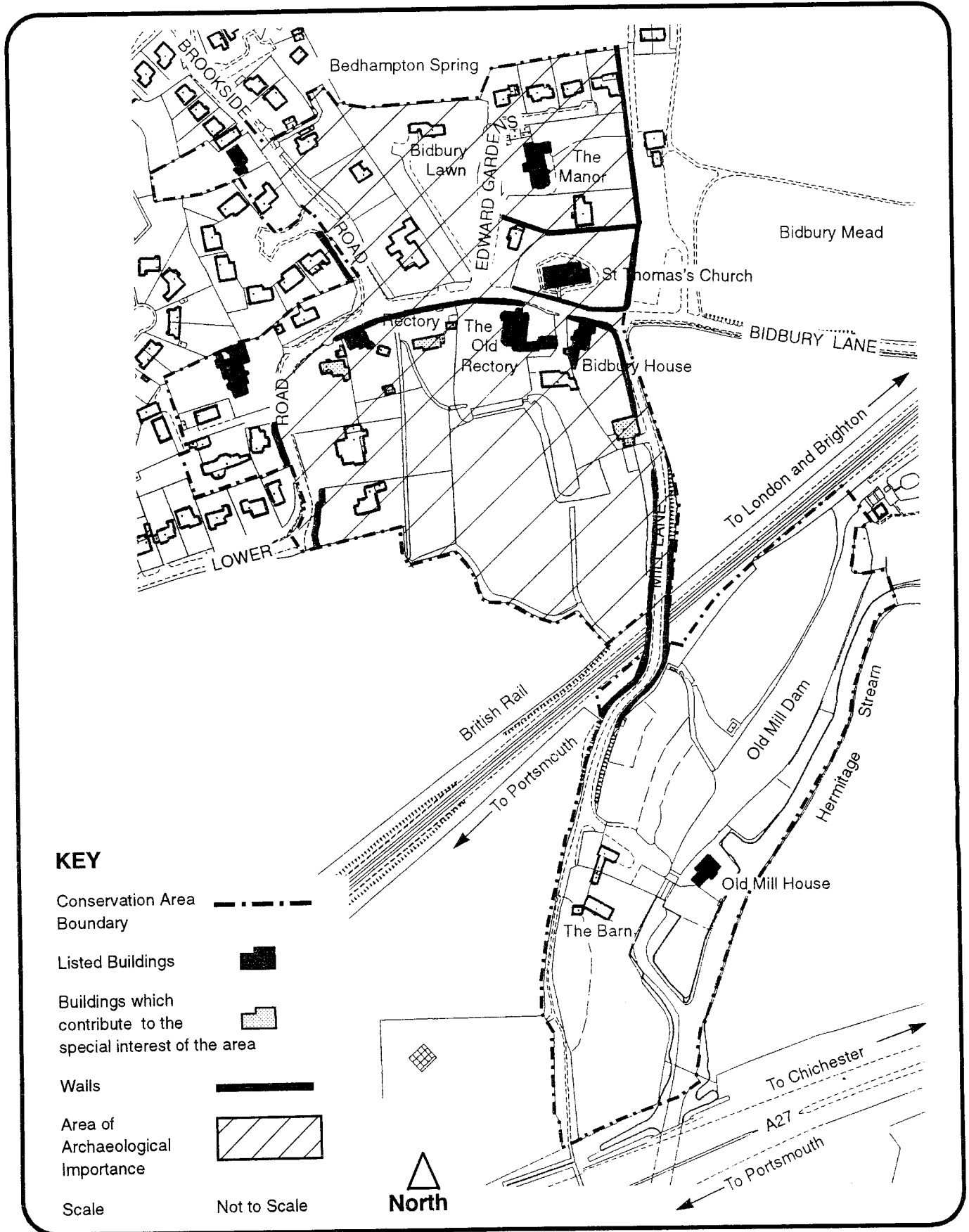
mills, possibly those mentioned in the Domesday Survey, were rebuilt during this period. Today only the Mill House of the Lower Mill remains.

In 1847 the construction of the railway separated the two mills from the village. The fine arched red brick railway bridge in Mill Lane was built at this time to serve the Lower Mill. Incremental building during the 19th Century and early part of 20th Century had little impact on the appearance of Bedhampton. Moreover despite substantial residential development during the 1930's which continued in the postwar period, the early character of Bedhampton has remained largely unchanged.



Speed's Map 1611

Old Bedhampton Conservation Area Plan No 1



3 LITERARY AND HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Mill House has an important literary association with John Keats, the poet. Keats visited the house on a number of occasions and completed one of his best known poems 'The Eve of St Agnes' here. It was also the place where Keats spent his last night in England before leaving for Italy and his subsequent death from consumption in Rome at the age of 25. A stone plaque built into the rear of the house commemorates these facts and states: "In this house in 1819 John Keats finished his poem 'The Eve of St. Agnes' and here in 1820 he spent his last night in England."

The Elms, which is the most distinctive building in the Conservation Area, has an association with the Duke of Wellington. The owner of this house in the early part of the 19th Century was Sir Theophilus Lee, a friend of the Duke, who is reputed to have built an extension to the property, now known as the Waterloo Room, to entertain the Duke whom he had invited as a guest.

4 THE BUILDINGS OF BEDHAMPTON

The general character of the built environment within the Conservation Area is of detached properties set within substantial landscaped gardens. A number of these buildings are included on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest (see Plan 1) and they form the nucleus of that part of the Conservation Area to the north of the railway line. Although there is variety in the design of these buildings they are constructed from materials typical of those found on vernacular buildings in Hampshire.

The principal building is the Church of St Thomas the Apostle sited on slightly raised ground within its Churchyard which contains some fine tombstones and ancient yew trees. The Church which dates from Saxon times was rebuilt during the Norman Period with alterations and additions in the 14th and 19th Centuries. It has flint and stone rubble walls with stone dressings and a large tiled roof.

The Elms is the most distinctive building in the Conservation Area, prominently sited on the bend of Lower Road and the focal point of views westwards along this road. Dating from the 17th Century, or possibly earlier, it was gothicized in the 18th Century. The building is stuccoed with a tile and slate roof and a castellated parapet. A tower feature separates the principal structure from the later addition of the Waterloo Room. Venetian windows are a feature of the eastern elevation which are characterised by an ogee shape to the head of the central light.

The Old Rectory and Bidbury House are more typical examples of the 18th Century in brick and tile, the Old Rectory having a fine stable block in flint with yellow brick dressings and a tile roof, which is listed in its own right.

Manor Cottage, The Mill House and Spring Lawn date from the late 18th early 19th Century. They are constructed of brick and tile with the typical Hampshire chequerwork pattern in red and blue bricks (although Spring Lawn and the Mill House are now painted).

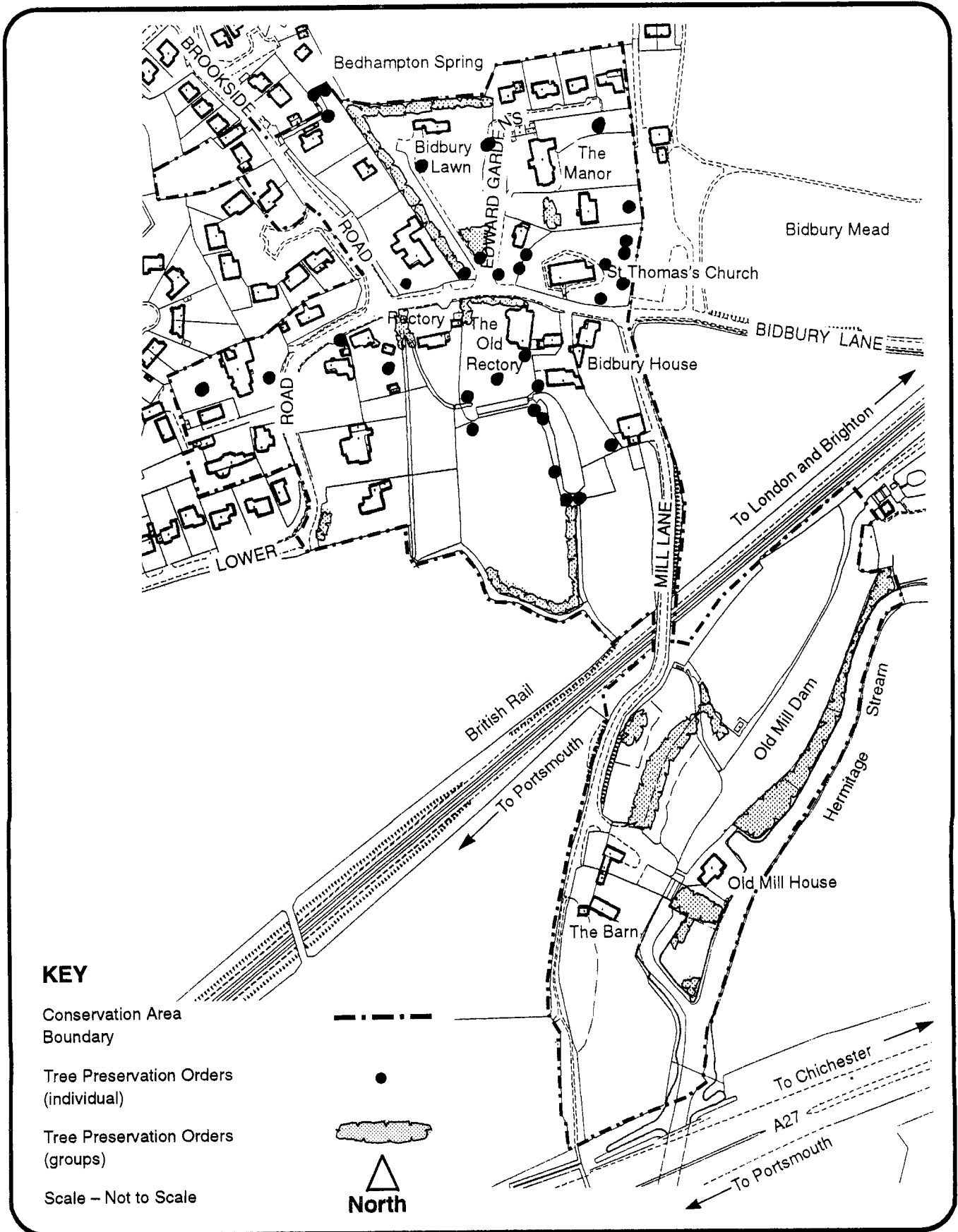
The 16th Century timber framed Manor House was altered in the early 19th Century when two red brick wings were added and the west elevation re-modelled. The earlier timber frame is still exposed on the east elevation facing the garden.

Although of more recent construction the designs of 2 Lower Road and The Rectory are reflective of the older traditional building types within Old Bedhampton. However the two bungalows in Lower Road are less compatible with the design of buildings generally to be found within the Conservation Area.

'The Elms' is the most distinctive building in the Conservation Area



Old Bedhampton Conservation Area Plan No 2



5 RURAL CHARACTER

Although surrounded by urban and suburban development a number of factors contribute to the rural character which the Conservation Area still retains:

a) Development Pattern

Early maps show the old village to have a dispersed settlement pattern and to consist principally of detached buildings set within substantial plots. There was a cluster of houses along Brookside Road, near the Church, and a group of inns, shops and houses along Bedhampton Road, separated from the Church by Bidbury Mead. Pre and postwar development has enveloped that part of the village on Bedhampton Road, while the older part of the village, even where development has occurred, has largely retained its identity.

b) Trees

Their significance within the area is reflected by the substantial number of individual trees and groups of trees which are the subject of Tree Preservation Orders. (See Plan 2.) They contribute to the character of Old Bedhampton in a number of ways:

- The spacious nature of the property curtilages is complemented by substantial tree and shrub planting which provides a natural foil to the buildings and contributes significantly to the appearance of the street scene.
- Where they are densely planted behind walls they soften the appearance of this boundary treatment.
- Some individual trees because of their siting and size are significant features in their own

right. For example the pine in the garden of The Elms; the holm oaks in the grounds of Bidbury House adjacent to Mill Lane and in Brookside Road; and the sycamore at the entrance to Edward Gardens.

- They contribute significantly to the appearance of the Conservation Area in views from outside its boundaries. Such views are obtained from Bidbury Mead Recreation Ground; the Havant Bypass across the fields of Kingscroft Farm, Lower Road, Bedhampton Hill and Broadmarsh.

c) Setting

An important aspect of the character of the Conservation Area is the relationship of the old village with the surrounding countryside and open spaces. Despite substantial pre- and postwar housing development particularly to the north and west of Old Bedhampton the village still

enjoys by and large an open undeveloped setting. To the north of the railway line Bidbury Mead Recreation Ground and a field belonging to the Portsmouth Water Company adjoin the eastern boundary of the Conservation Area while to the west the land is in horticultural use.

South of the railway line the open fields of Kingscroft Farm, adjoining the Hermitage Stream, provide the setting to the east of this part of the Conservation Area. To the west, Mill Lane and the public footpath are bounded by horticultural land and a field used for grazing.

d) Highway Treatment

The informal nature of the roads in Old Bedhampton, characterised by their serpentine alignment and changes in level is reflected in their detailed design. Grass verges are a feature of Lower Road and Mill Lane which generally have a natural junction with the road without kerbs. In Lower Road the footpath follows an informal alignment within the grass verge. Bidbury Lane and Edward Gardens have a footpath on one side of the road only, while Mill Lane has no footpath and with its narrow carriageway and grass verges retains its character as a country lane.



Some individual trees, because of their siting and size are significant features in their own right

e) *The Brook*

A unique feature of the Conservation Area is the brook which runs along the eastern side of Brookside Road. This water course is clearly marked on early maps and although it has since been canalised it nevertheless still contributes to the rural charm of Old Bedhampton.

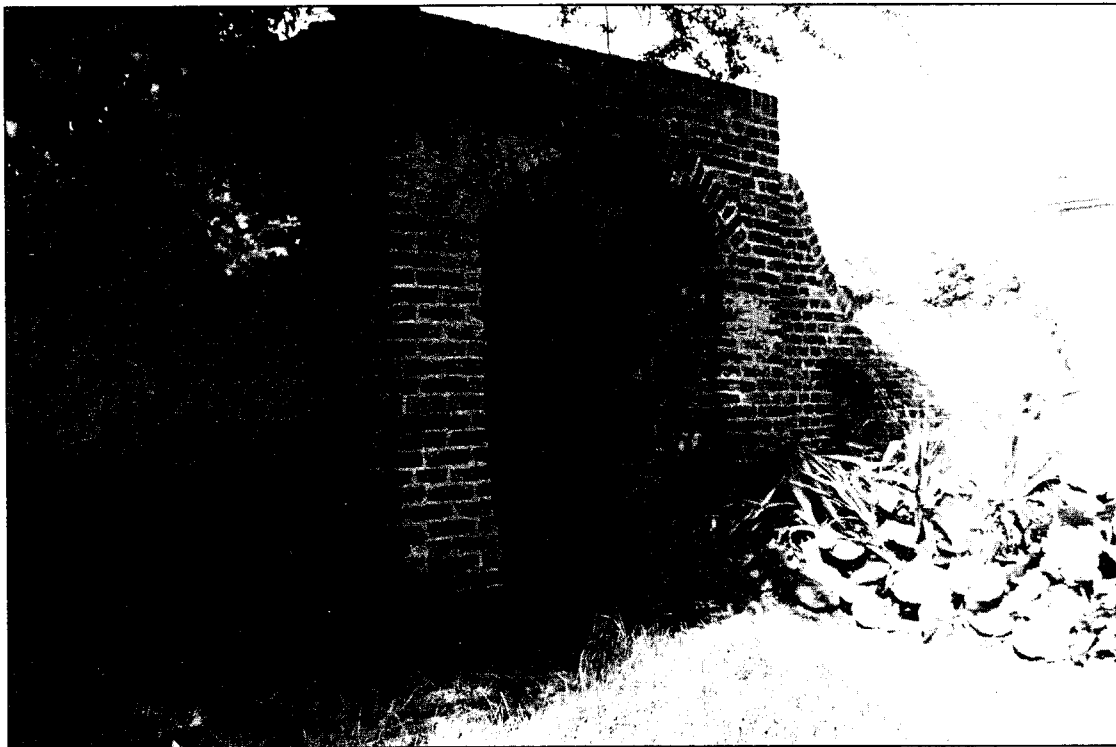
6 BOUNDARY TREATMENT

Walls have been a traditional means of demarcating boundaries within the

Conservation Area, (see Plan 1). Indeed the remaining boundary wall to The Manor which dates from the 16th Century is included in the List of Buildings of Special Architectural and Historic Interest. Although the church has a flint wall, brick is the predominant material of most other walls within the Conservation Area. Hedges are also found to provide a strong boundary treatment adjacent to the brook and in Lower Road. The fence on the northern side of Lower Road is out of character with other boundary treatments in the Conservation Area although its impact is ameliorated by the shrub planting behind.

7 ARCHAEOLOGY

The proximity of the Roman road between Chichester and Wickham, which runs to the north of the Conservation Area, and the long history of occupation of the settlement clearly points to Bedhampton as an area with archaeological potential. On the basis of the significance of the area the County Archaeologist has identified the majority of the Conservation Area, to the north of the railway, as an area of archaeological importance and is consulted on any development which will cause ground disturbance. (See Plan 1.)



*The boundary wall to The Manor
dates from the 16th Century*