

**Archaeological Watching Brief
on land adjacent to
98 Etruria Vale Road
Etruria
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire
NGR SJ 87395 46967**

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Produced by: Richard Cramp BA(Hons), MA, AIfA

On behalf of: Mr John Flynn



Cramp Sutherland Archaeological Services

34 Belgrave Crescent, Woodsmoor, Stockport, SK2 7BA

Mob: 07847 235914

Email: richard@csarc.co.uk

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Non-technical summary

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief conducted in February 2013 by Cramp Sutherland Archaeological Services during the excavation of geotechnical trial pits and ground reduction, in advance of a residential development on vacant land in Etruria, Stoke-on-Trent (NGR SJ 87475 46967).

Between at least 1832 and the mid 20th century the site was occupied by housing. Historical map evidence suggested that these were not simple workers' houses, but rather middle-class residences. The trial pits exposed the walls of several cellars, most of which were lined with glazed ceramic tiles. Some material evidence in the form of decorated floor tiles was uncovered, implying that some of the dwellings may have been of better quality than others on the site.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1** Full planning consent to erect four three-storey town houses on a brownfield site adjacent to number 98 Etruria Vale Road, Etruria in Stoke-on-Trent, was granted by the Local Planning Authority (LPA), Stoke-on-Trent City Council, on 10th January 2013 (ref. SOT/54349).
- 1.2** Due to the archaeological potential of the site, a condition for an archaeological watching brief to monitor groundworks was implemented by the LPA's Planning Archaeologist (PA) (Goodwin 2013). This was in accordance with the Saved Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Strategic Plan Policy *NC14: Sites of archaeological importance* and conformed with statutory government legislation regarding national planning policies.
- 1.3** Cramp Sutherland Archaeological Services (CSARC) was subsequently appointed by the developer, Mr J. Flynn, of Caxton Builders (Midlands) Ltd, to undertake the project.

2.0 Site location & character

- 2.1** The development area (DA) is located in the residential suburb of Etruria, c. 1.15 km south west of the centre of Hanley, one of the six towns that form the city of Stoke-on-Trent (Fig. 1). It is on the east side of Etruria Vale Road (B5046), centred on Ordnance Survey (OS) NGR SJ 87395 46967.
- 2.2** There is no boundary treatment on the south-west side of the DA (Fig. 2). To the north west is the boundary wall of number 98 Etruria Vale Road and to the north east a retaining wall, with residential housing on Warwick Street beyond. To the south east is a low brick boundary wall for the forecourt of a disused car dealership. The Caldon Canal, which is designated as a Conservation Area Corridor, passes c. 85m south west of the DA.
- 2.3** The site is almost square in plan, broadly aligned NW – SE, amounting to c. 675m² of grassed over waste ground (Plate 1). The topography is flat, with a modest slope from NE – SW, lying at an average elevation of 0.96m aOD.

3.0 Geology

- 3.1** The predominant superficial (drift) geology is characterised by glacial till, including sand and gravel outwash. The underlying solid geology (bedrock) is the Etruria Formation, comprising sedimentary mudstone, sandstone and conglomerate clays (British Geological Survey).

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

- 4.1** Etruria was conceived by Josiah Wedgwood in 1766 as a combined pottery and workers' 'village', within a bucolic setting (Greenslade 1963, 166). Although enparished from Hanley in 1847, Etruria lost its rural identity due to urban and industrial encroachment and by 1892 (Kelly, 161) was regarded as a suburb of Hanley.
- 4.2** Yates' map of 1775 shows the Etruria Vale Road existing as a lane linking Etruria and Shelton (Fig. 3), but no other development in the vicinity of the

study site. In Hargreaves' map of 1832 the DA is extant, located c. 600m south east of Etruria village in an area identified as Vale Pleasant (Fig. 4). This map shows sundry buildings situated between two streams, including a range with an open yard on its south-west side. In addition, the map depicts toll-gates across the road, implying that it is a principal thoroughfare. Homer's 1857 plan shows an L-shaped arrangement of buildings (Fig. 5).

- 4.3** The 1879 OS map (Fig. 6) is the first to portray the site in detail. It reveals four or five individual buildings to the south west and two to the north west. It is assumed that the small projection at the eastern end of the latter row of buildings is an ancillary structure. To the rear of the development is an enclosed courtyard with trees and footpaths, accessible from the main road *via* a side lane.
- 4.4** On the 1900 OS map, two buildings previously shown as separate premises seem to have combined to form one L-shaped property (Fig. 7). The adjoining building to the north west has also been extended at its south-west end. Two of the dwellings in the south-west corner also appear to have acquired another yard on their north-east side. A small, three-bay structure in the south-east corner, about 4.0m square, is probably a privy block, with perhaps a wash-house behind. This map also discloses ribbon development along the road immediately to the north west.
- 4.5** There are no major changes to the site on succeeding OS maps between 1924 and 1953. The privies are gone by 1924 (Fig. 8), while the 1938 edition reveals substantial housing development in the vicinity, including the extension of Warwick Street up to the northern corner of the site (Fig. 9). The properties are all gone from the DA by 1969 (not shown).

5.0 Methodology

5.1 Aims & objectives

5.1.1 A watching brief is defined by the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* as a programme of observation and investigation conducted during any work carried out for non-archaeological reasons (IfA 2008).

5.1.2 Site procedures were conducted in accordance with the specifications of the project brief (Goodwin 2013) and an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), produced by CSARC (Cramp 2013a). The project adhered to current best archaeological practice and the relevant national codes of conduct, standards and guidance advocated in the *By-laws of the Institute for Archaeologists* (IfA 2012).

5.1.3 Within the limitations of the development, the specified aims and objectives of the project were to:

- monitor the removal of topsoil and overburden,
- inspect exposed sub-soil horizons for archaeological features or deposits,
- establish the presence or absence, extent, depth and character of any archaeological features, deposits or finds,
- examine the spoil heaps for archaeological material,
- mitigate the effect of the development on any existing archaeology, through appropriate preservation by record.

5.2 Method statement

5.2.1 The watching brief was conducted in two phases, on 4th February 2013 and 25th February 2013. During the first phase the attending archaeologist monitored the opening of trial pits with a 360° tracked mini-digger. The second phase comprised ground reduction across the DA using a 180° backhoe excavator. All machine excavation was undertaken with toothless

ditching buckets. The trial pits were backfilled and compacted on completion.

5.2.2 The project was documented through site notes, annotated sketches and *pro-forma* record sheet. The written record was augmented by high-resolution colour digital and 35mm monochrome print photography to record specific stages of the fieldwork.

5.2.3 In this report, the context numbers for individual archaeological features are represented in parentheses, e.g. (100). Stratigraphic units were recorded as sequential context numbers, i.e. 100+ in TP1, 200+ in TP2, and so on.

5.2.4 In accordance with the IfA's *Standard and guidelines for the creation and deposition of archaeological archives* (IfA 2009), CSARC will deposit the archive generated by the project at *The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery*, Bethesda Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent (site code **EVR 13**, accession number **2013.LH.4**).

6.0 Results of the watching brief

6.1 Monitoring of trial pit excavations

6.1.1 During the first phase of the project, four geotechnical trial pits (each measuring c. 2.0m x 4.0m) were excavated in order to investigate ground conditions around the former buildings indicated on the historical OS maps between 1879 and 1938 (Figs. 3-9).

6.1.2 Trial pit 1 (TP1) was located within the footprint of the north-easternmost buildings on the north-west boundary. TP2 and TP3 were over the L-shaped property and portions of the courtyard. TP4 and TP5 were located on the three small buildings on the south-west boundary (Fig. 2). Given the depth of the excavations and the instability of their sides, none of the trenches were entered by the monitoring archaeologist for health and safety reasons.

6.2 Trial Pit 1

6.2.1 Removal of the 0.10m-thick topsoil layer (**100**) revealed two walls forming the corner of a cellar or basement. Wall (**103**) was aligned NW – SE and extended c. 2.30m along the south-west side of the trench. At its south-east end another wall, (**104**), returned to the north east across the width of the trench.

6.2.2 The cellar was filled with loose demolition rubble (**101**), c. 1.50m-thick. It mostly comprised ceramic building material (CBM), including decorated wall and floor tiles, with some fragments bearing geometric patterns (Plate 2). Removing (**101**) revealed that the two walls survived to a height of c. 1.50m. The exposed north-east face of wall (**103**) was painted with white limewash (Plate 3). The north-west face of wall (**104**) was covered with white glazed ceramic tiles.

6.2.3 Underlying (**101**) was a paved cellar floor. This consisted of blue engineering bricks laid flat (**102**), which were visible across the northern end of the trench. Removing (**102**) revealed the floor overlay the yellow clay natural (**105**), which was excavated to an overall depth of c. 2.30m bgl (below ground level).

6.3 Trial Pit 2

6.3.1 Removal of the 0.10m-thick topsoil horizon (**200**) exposed a concrete hardstanding (**201**), presumably the yard surface of the L-shaped property. This could not be broken out and further excavation was not attempted.

6.4 Trial Pit 3

6.4.1 Underlying the 0.10m-thick topsoil (**300**) was a made-ground layer of demolition material (**301**), c. 1.10m thick. This mostly comprised CBM, including coping stones, fragments of a red ceramic drainpipe and iron water pipe. Beneath (**301**) was a c. 1.00m-thick layer of light brown silty clay (**302**). This was interpreted as disturbed natural, which overlay the

clay natural (303), which was encountered at a depth of c. 2.20m bgl. No evidence of walls or yard surface was encountered.

6.5 Trial Pit 4

6.5.1 Removing the 0.30m-thick topsoil (400) revealed a single-skin, red brick wall (402) (Plate 4) dividing the pit longitudinally on a NE – SW alignment. A rough cement surface c. 0.10m thick (401) had been laid either side of the wall, directly on to an underlying layer of compact brick rubble (403), c. 1.50m-thick.

6.5.2 Removal of (403) showed that (402) survived to a height of c. 1.50m and possessed a single step footing laid on the natural clay sub-soil (406). At its north east end, (402) bonded with a single-skin wall (405), running across the width of the trench on a NW – SE alignment. These walls delineated the corners of cellars belonging to two adjoining properties, designated as Cellar 1 on the north west side of cross wall (402) and Cellar 2 to the south east.

6.5.3 Both faces of (402) were dressed with white glazed tiles, which were 0.16m square. The south-west faces of wall (405) had white glazed tiles in Cellar 1 and a mix of white and dark red glazed tiles in Cellar 2 (Plate 5).

6.5.4 Underlying the demolition material (403), a handful of *in situ* red quarry tiles (404) were probably the remains of a paved floor surface laid on the natural (406). This floor was only observed in Cellar 2, with no sign of a surface in Cellar 1. Excavation continued into the natural to an overall depth of c. 2.10m bgl

6.6 Trial Pit 5

6.6.1 Underlying the 0.25m-thick topsoil (500) was a layer of made ground (501) c. 1.45m thick, primarily composed of brick rubble. Although the location of TP5 fell across a wall and yard surface no evidence of these structures was

encountered. The remains of a probable cellar floor (**502**) were observed at a depth of c. 1.70m bgl. This comprised a few *in situ* blue engineering bricks at the south-west end of the trench laid flat on the clay natural (**503**). Excavation was continued into the natural to a depth of c. 2.10m bgl, which revealed a NW – SE aligned ceramic drain pipe.

6.7 *Monitoring of ground reduction*

6.7.1 The geotechnical results revealed the ground was unsuitable for strip trenching as originally planned and that instead the site would be developed on a raft foundation. For the second phase of the project, between 0.10m-0.20m of topsoil was removed across the site to create a firm platform for a pile driving rig. This depth of ground reduction failed to expose any more of the structures previously revealed by the trial pitting (Plate 6). The stockpiling of spoil at the south-east corner prevented investigation of the suspected ‘privy’ site.

6.7.2 Only on the north-west side of the DA (Fig. 2) was a new feature encountered during this phase, although only the uppermost one or two courses (c. 0.15m) of the horizontally truncated top was visible. It consisted of a double-skin brick wall (**600**) measuring 0.88m NW-SE x 0.23m NE-SW, as exposed. Abutting its south-west side was another double-skin wall (**601**) (0.55m NE-SW x 0.23m NW-SE, as exposed).

6.7.3 Wall (**600**) presumably formed a divide between two cellar spaces and what was visible of the faces on both walls were covered in cream coloured, glazed ceramic tiles adhering to a 0.07m-thick bed of grey mortar (Fig. 2; Plate 7). The cellars had been backfilled with brick rubble (**602**), although some fragments of decorated encaustic floor tile were encountered in the top of the fill.

7.0 Discussion

- 7.1** The historical map evidence indicates that at least some of the properties on the site were extant by 1832 (Fig. 4). It is conceivable that they were originally established as part of a canal settlement, given their proximity to the Etruria Basin. The Trent and Mersey Trunk Canal opened in 1777 and the Caldon Branch Canal in 1779. The basin, located near the juncture of the canals, was in existence by 1802 (Greenslade 1963, 147). There was often a focus of settlement where one canal met another (Ransom 1979, 162).
- 7.2** The 1857 map (Fig. 5) reveals a more familiar L-shaped development, with buildings ranged along its north-western and south-western boundaries with a courtyard between them and a probable privy block in the eastern corner. The watching brief revealed some evidence for cellars relating to the two larger properties on the north-west boundary (encountered within TP1 and during the ground reduction phase), as well as cellars belonging to two of the smaller properties on the south west boundary (encountered within TP4).
- 7.3** The position of the cellars exposed in TP4 implies that the dwellings on the south-west boundary faced the main road, assuming they were placed in the traditionally accepted location beneath the front room. This may, however, only be common to dwellings utilising sub-surface spaces as coal cellars (Yorke 2005, 116). Nonetheless, as well as possibly forming the back wall of the cellars, it is probable that wall (405) represents the internal, lateral division of the house (Fig. 2).
- 7.4** It was uncertain from the historical maps which way the properties along the north-west-facing boundary faced. The presence of another building on their north-west side, added between 1900 and 1924 and left standing in 1969 after the other buildings had been demolished, suggests they overlooked the courtyard. Therefore, in common with the other buildings on the site, it is likely the cellars were located at the front. This suggests that

wall (104) may be the main front elevation of the property, with wall (103) representing a party wall with the adjoining premises (Fig. 2).

- 7.5 No artefacts were recovered during the project. Some decorative floor tiles were encountered in TP1 (101) and context (601), but not retained. These could have been from the entrance halls of the dwellings on the north-west boundary. Nothing similar was recovered in the area of the dwellings in the south-west corner. Some mixed refuse was encountered in the topsoil horizon, all modern (late 20th century).
- 7.6 The reason why most of the exposed cellar walls were lined with glazed ceramic tiles is unknown. Only one wall (103) was observed with the more usual coat of whitewash previously encountered in domestic cellars during archaeological investigations (e.g. Cramp 2013b).
- 7.7 It has not been possible to precisely pin down the properties on the DA. Individual house numbers on Etruria Vale Road are not enumerated in the 1841-71 censuses. The returns from 1881-1911, and the 1907 street directory (Staffs Sentinel, 322), cross-referenced with the map evidence, reveal a continuous sequence of addresses from numbers 1-64 and 98-122. The latter set were allocated to the houses north west of the DA and remain unchanged to this day. Although there is a gap in the run of numbers between 66 and 96 inclusive, three houses, numbered 84, 86 and 88, are intermittently recorded in the censuses between 1881 and 1911.
- 7.8 In the 1911 census these properties are revealed as having four rooms, probably a front parlour and kitchen/scullery downstairs, with two bedrooms above. Given their small size, numbers 84-88 may equate to the dwellings located on the south-west boundary of the DA.
- 7.9 It is unclear why the three properties are absent from the 1891 census and 1907 street directory. They are also missing from all subsequent Kelly's

directories up to 1940. One explanation is that at some point after 1911 they ceased to be dwellings, perhaps utilised instead for commercial purposes, possibly by the Shropshire Union Railways & Canal Company or London & North-Western Railways. By 1907 (Staffs Sentinel, 322) both these companies held the yards located immediately south east of the DA, as indicated on the 1900 and 1924 OS maps (Figs. 7 & 8).

8.0 Conclusions

- 8.1** Despite the obvious limitations imposed by the nature of the groundworks, the project succeeded in identifying some elements of the structures that had previously occupied the DA. Documentary and cartographic evidence implies that the three buildings in the south-west corner of the DA were two-up, two-down workers' cottages. If these are the properties revealed by the trial pits, the archaeology shows that they were brick-built, with cellars.
- 8.2** The historical map evidence also indicates that the other properties on the site were larger. The trenching revealed that these dwellings also possessed cellars. The limited material evidence, in the form of decorated floor tiles, which were absent around the cottages, may suggest that they were potentially of a higher quality than those on the south-west boundary.
- 8.3** Although heavily impacted by the demolition process, the foundation raft will prevent the archaeology from being further disturbed by the current development and preserve the majority of the site *in situ*. The area in which the privies are believed to be located will also not be disturbed as this will be a garden area.

9.0 Acknowledgements

9.1 Fieldwork was undertaken by Richard Cramp of CSARC. Thanks are extended to Jonathan Goodwin MifA, Stoke-on-Trent Planning Archaeologist; Stoke-on-Trent City Archives; John Flynn, of Caxton Builders (Midlands) Ltd; Tom Achtmantis, of Architect Solutions Ltd; and Moorson Plant Ltd, the groundwork contractor, for their valuable assistance and co-operation.

9.2 Map data is reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of H.M.S.O. © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. License No. 1000551532.

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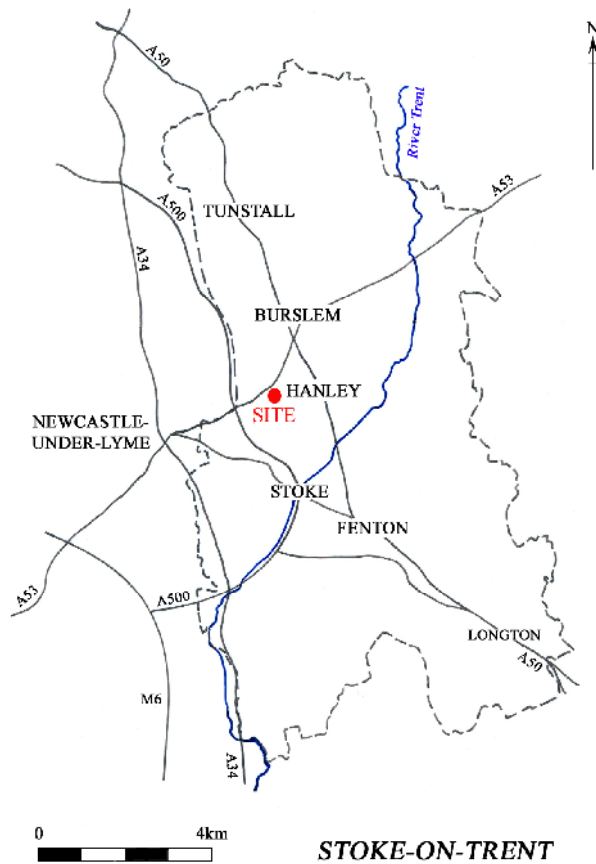
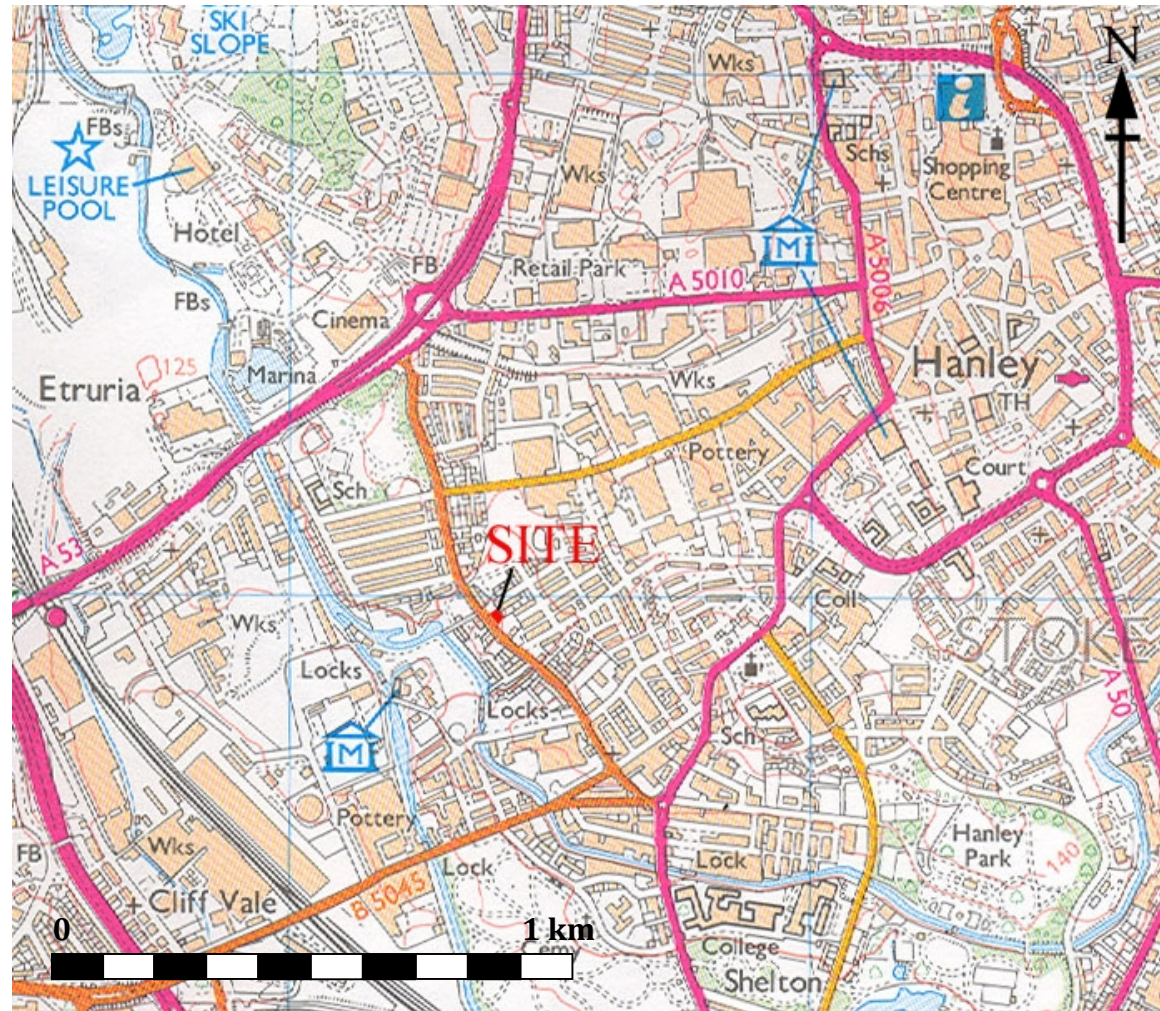


FIG. 1

Site location



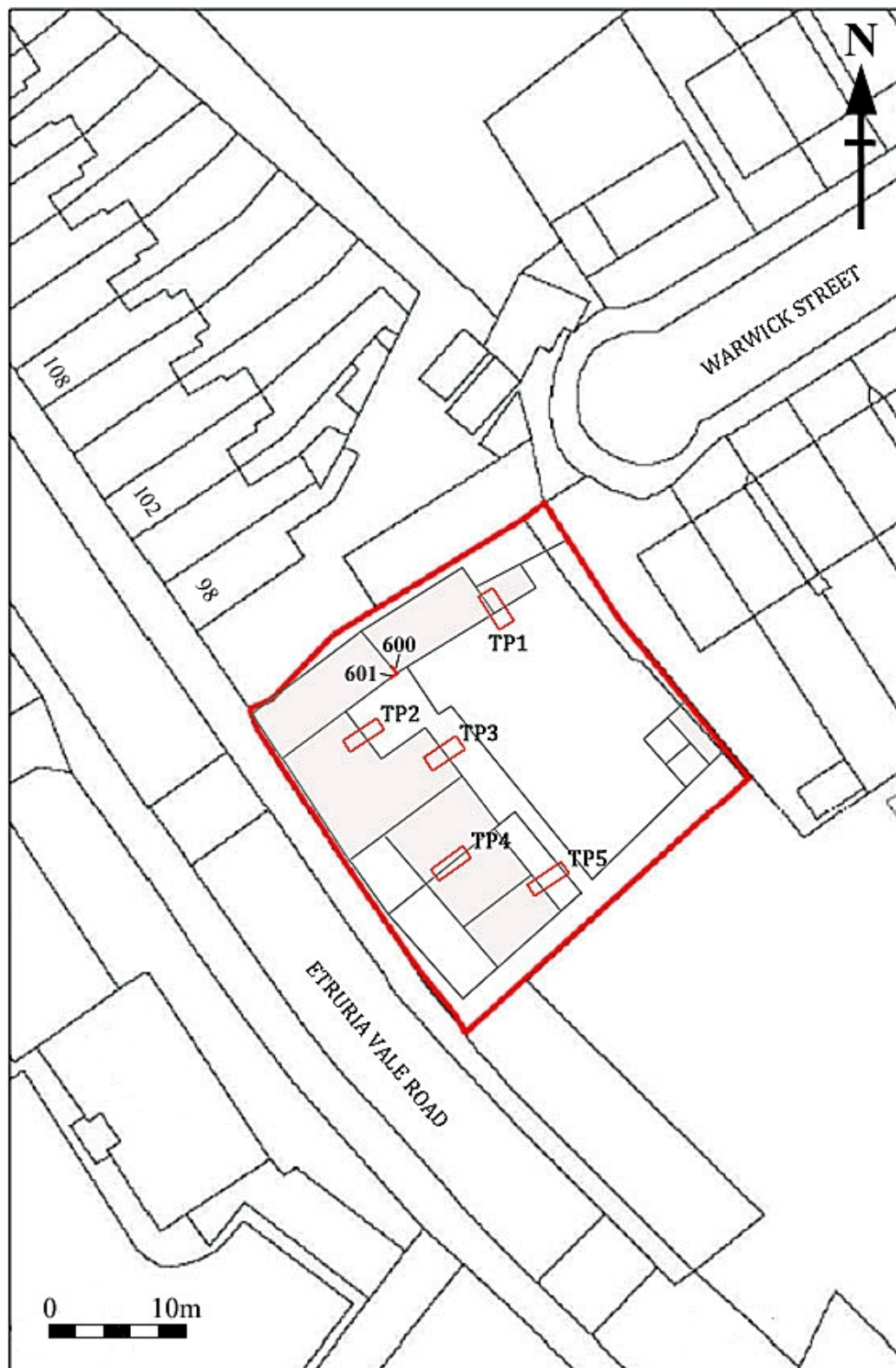


FIG. 2

Site plan, with locations of trial pits outlined in red and superimposed on footprint of site in 1900. The likely location of context 600 is also shown.



FIG. 3

Extract from Yates's 1775 map, with general site location marked in red.

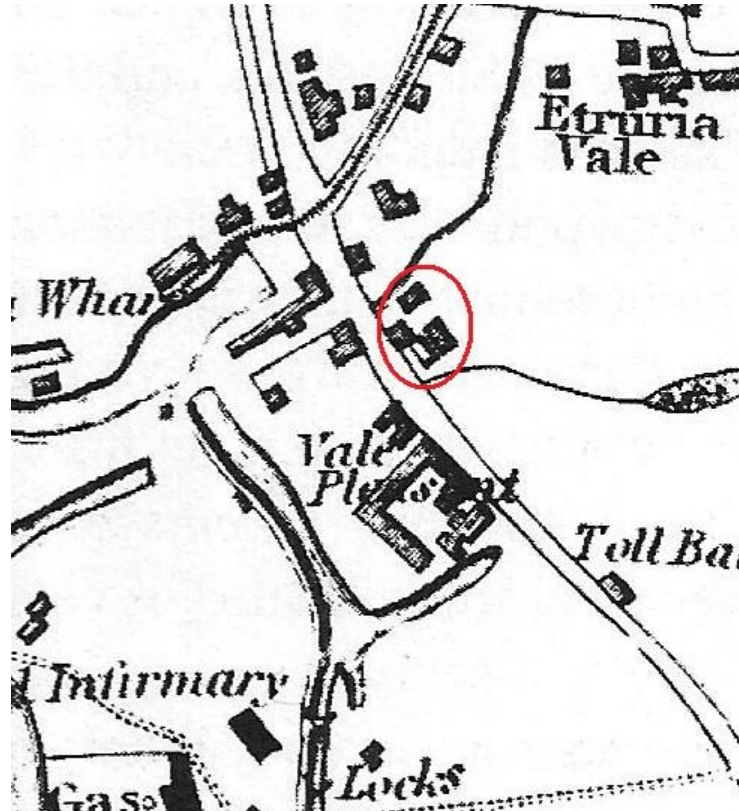


FIG. 4

Extract from Hargreaves 1832 map, with site location marked by red circle.

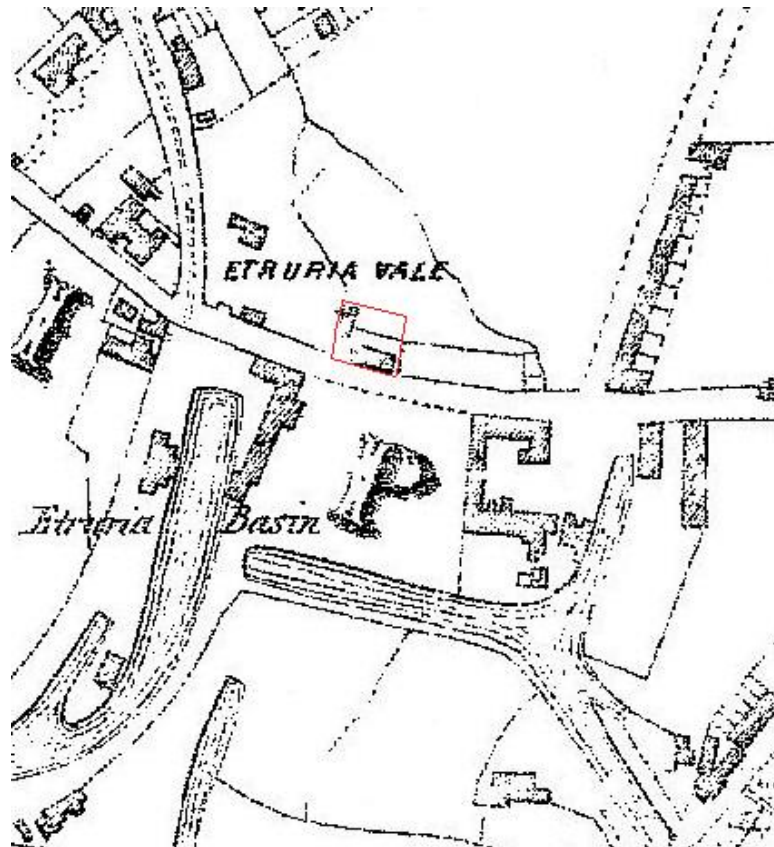


FIG. 5

Extract from Homer's 1857 map, with site outlined in red.

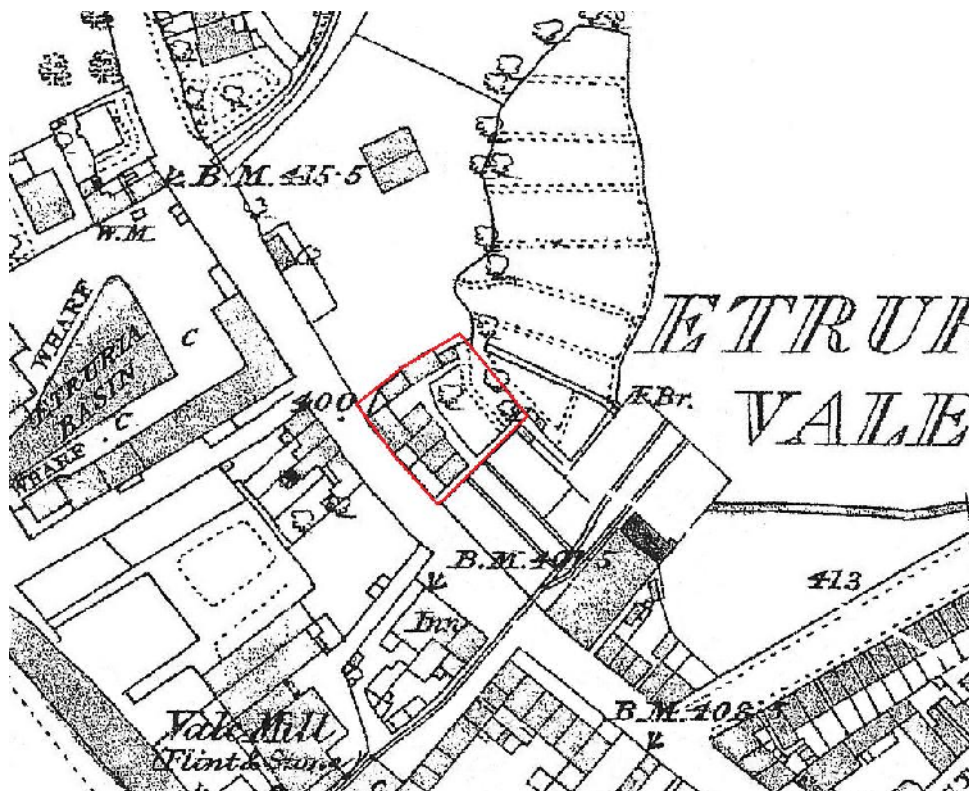


FIG. 6

Extract from 1879 OS map, with site outlined in red.

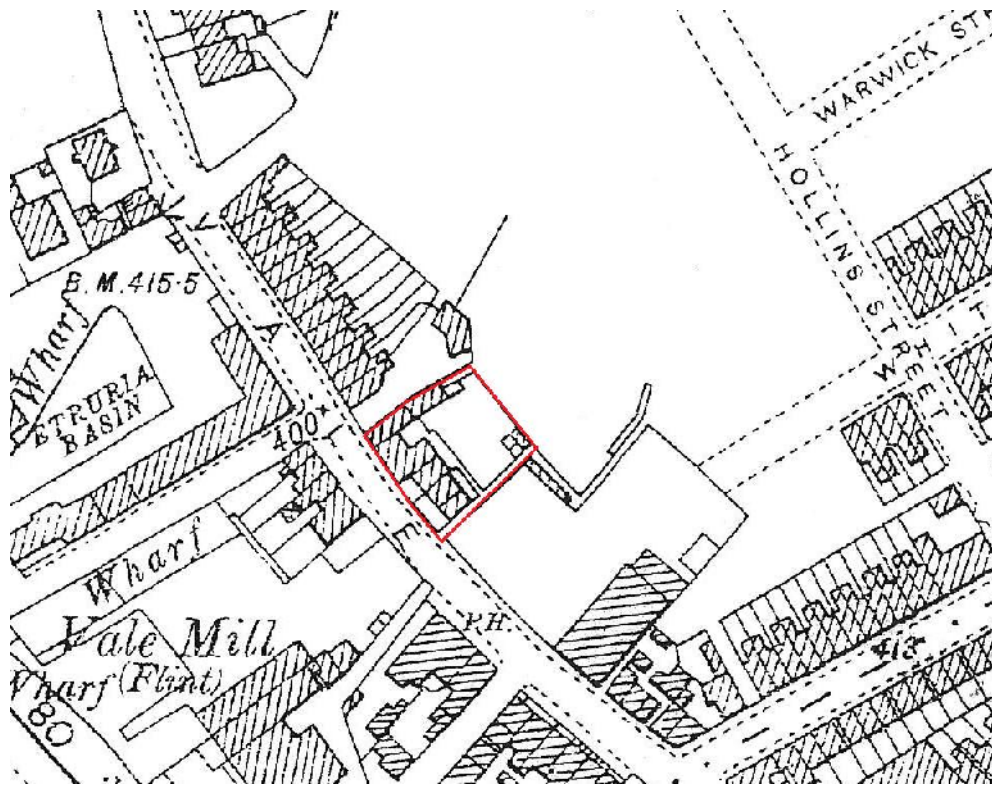


FIG. 7

Extract from 1900 OS map, with site outlined in red.

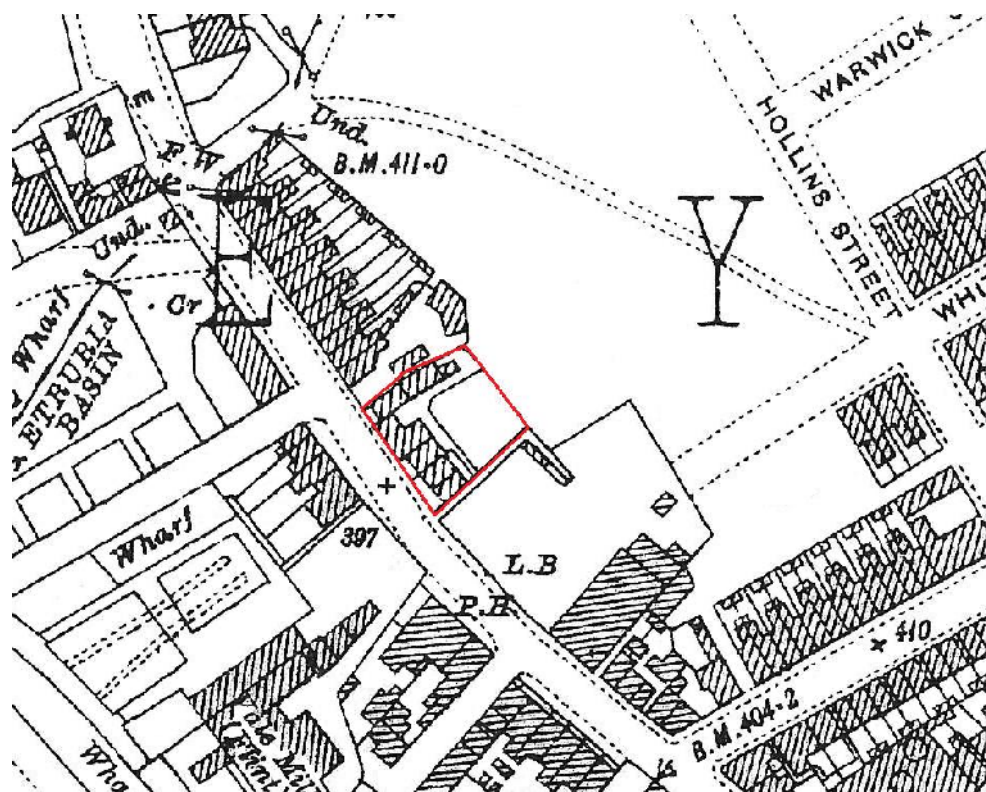


FIG. 8

Extract from 1924 OS map, with site outlined in red.

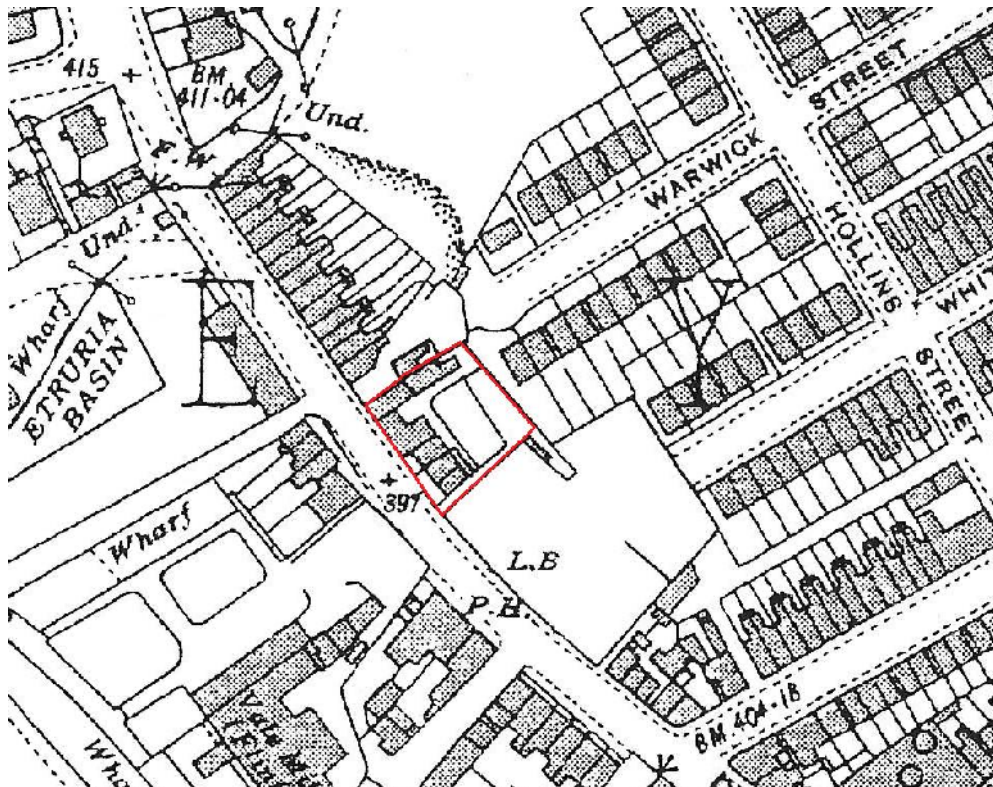


FIG. 9

Extract from 1938 OS map, with site outlined in red.



PLATE 1

Panoramic general working shot of the site during ground reduction, looking south east, with Etruria Vale Road to the right and the boundary wall of number 98 on the left.



PLATE 2

Examples of wall and floor tiles recovered from TP1.



PLATE 3

TP 1 looking north west, with wall (103) bearing traces of whitewash, upper right, and wall (104) toward the centre.



PLATE 4

TP4 looking north east, showing surface (401) either side of wall (402) (scale: 0.50m).



PLATE 5

TP4 under excavation, looking north east, showing tiled wall (405).



PLATE 6

Working shot of ground reduction, looking north east.



PLATE 7

Brickwork (600) looking north. Note white wall tiles (scale: 0.50m).