



Montacute House, Montacute, Somerset

Observations and Recording during Formation of New Wash Pad Area



Report No. 53511/3/1

November 2018

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New Wash Pad Area, November 2018

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Project Report Summary Page

Project Details			
OASIS Reference	terraina1-335139 & terraina1-335140		
Project Title	New Wash Pad Area Watching Brief, Montacute House, Somerset		
Short Description of Project	Terrain Archaeology observed the excavation of two new water tanks for a new wash pad area at Montacute House, Montacute, Somerset. No significant archaeology was revealed.		
Project Dates	Start: 19-11-2018	End: 19-11-2018	
Previous/Future Work	Yes/No		
Project Code	53511		
Monument Type and Period	None		
Significant Finds	None		
Project Location			
County/District/Parish	Somerset/South Somerset/Montacute		
Site Address	Montacute House, Montacute, Somerset, TA15 6XF		
Site Coordinates	ST 4992 1695		
Site Area	12.5 m ²		
Height OD	c. 52 m aOD		
Project Creators			
Organisation	Terrain Archaeology		
Project Brief Originator	Martin Papworth, National Trust Regional Archaeologist,		
Project Design Originator	Terrain Archaeology		
Project Supervisor	Peter Bellamy		
Project Manager	Peter Bellamy		
Sponsor or Funding Body	The National Trust		
Project Archive			
Archive Type	Physical	Digital	Paper
Location/Accession No	No Archive	Terrain Archaeology offices, pending deposition with the National Trust.	Terrain Archaeology offices, pending deposition with the National Trust.
Contents	None	Digital photography	Context sheet, plan, report

Montacute House, Montacute, Somerset

Archaeological Observations and Recording during Formation of a New Wash Pad Area, November 2018

1. Introduction

1.1 Project introduction

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by the National Trust, to undertake a programme of Archaeological Observations and Recording during the installation of two underground tanks as part of the creation of a new wash pad area in the Gardener's Estate Yard at Montacute House, Montacute, Somerset.

The fieldwork was carried out on the 19th November 2018 by Peter Bellamy.

1.2 Brief

No written brief for the works was produced by or on behalf of the National Trust.

1.3 Site Location and Topography

Montacute House (listed Grade I) and its park and gardens (Registered Historic Park and Garden Grade I) lie immediately north and east of the village of Montacute, Somerset, at about 50 m above Ordnance Datum (Figure 1). The area of the site is flat and lies just outside the kitchen garden area of the house, centred on OS grid reference ST 4992 1695.

1.4 Geology

Bedrock geology is mapped as Jurassic Sandstone of the Bridport Sand Formation, with no recorded superficial deposits (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

1.5 Archaeological and Historical Background

The summary below is drawn primarily from Terrain Archaeology's Historic Landscape Assessment of the National Trust Montacute estate (Bellamy et al. 2003).

Small amounts of Middle Iron Age and Roman material have been identified within Montacute Park to the east of Montacute House. These discoveries were sealed beneath a substantial layer of alluvium, and it is possible that more extensive Iron Age and Roman landscapes await detection in the area.

The settlement at Montacute was known as Bishopston before Domesday. Immediately following the Norman Conquest a motte & bailey castle was built on St Michael's Hill. Robert, Count of Mortain (or his son William) established a borough as an addition to the Domesday village at some time between 1086 and c. 1102, and in the 12th century land was given to the abbey of Cluny and a priory was established at the foot of St Michael's Hill.

Montacute prospered during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, mainly as a result of the local cloth industry, but it was in decline by the sixteenth century. The Priory was dissolved in 1539.

The Phelps family settled in Montacute in the late fifteenth century and gradually increased their holdings in the area and purchased the Manor in the early seventeenth century. The Montacute estate remained in the hands of the Phelps family until the first half of the twentieth century. The original Montacute House stood somewhere in the area of the present stable block and was demolished when the present house was constructed by Sir Edward Phelps, probably in the period 1590–1601. At this time the house faced eastwards on to the former Montacute to Ilchester

road. To the west of the house was a void court leading to stables, barns, other outbuildings and ponds. A mill, known as Brook Mill also lay just to the west.

After a period of difficulty and neglect, the estate was improved in the mid-late eighteenth century by Edward Phelps (1725-97). Among other works in 1785-7, the house was remodelled to face west rather than east by forming a new west front using material from the recently demolished Clifton Maybank House and the construction of a new West Drive. This entailed the demolition of Brook Mill and its millponds to form a new serpentine drive up to the Montacute road.

Another major period of improvement of the house and grounds took place between 1845-1860 supervised by William and Ellen Phelps. A new longer straight West Drive was created sometime before 1853 to join a new re-routed road through Montacute constructed in 1851-3. A new stable block (the present-day stables) was constructed to the south of the old stables. The service block south of the house was lowered and remodelled in 1853 to form what is now known as the Laundry Courtyard.

Until the late eighteenth century the area of the observations lay in the rear part of a garden associated with a house on South Street. By 1838 it was in an area of orchard and pasture. The kitchen garden walls were probably constructed in the mid nineteenth century as part of William and Ellen Phelps changes and improvements to the grounds between 1845-1860. In 1971 the disused kitchen garden was turned into a car park, and in 1984, in order to meet increasing visitor numbers, an overflow car park was created in the second kitchen garden. This necessitated the demolition of several greenhouses, the building of a wall at the south and the breaching of a wall at the north to connect with the main car park (Fretwell 1988).

1.6 Previous Archaeological fieldwork

There have been a number of archaeological watching briefs carried out within Montacute Park. In 1992, Wessex Archaeology monitored a new water pipeline from Odcombe to Ilchester, which crossed the eastern side of the park. A number of archaeological discoveries were made, including evidence for Iron Age settlement (Wessex Archaeology 1992, Crockett 1996). In 2002-3 Terrain Archaeology monitored the excavation of a new water main trench along the south side of the Lime Avenue. Numerous field drains were encountered, together with two culverts and the backfill of a former pond (Bellamy & Best 2003).

Close to the house itself, four small trenches were excavated by Martin Papworth and National Trust volunteers in 2000, immediately outside the East Court and a number of possible former garden features were encountered (Papworth, unpublished excavation note, cited in Bellamy *et al.* 2003). Terrain Archaeology maintained a watching brief during the relaying of the paving of the East Terrace in 1999 (Bellamy 1999).

In 2013 Terrain Archaeology observed the groundworks for new drainage in the Laundry Courtyard and the laying of a new fibre-optic cable duct across the West Drive, which revealed deposits probably associated with the 1853 alterations of the Service Block and extensive post-medieval levelling deposits, perhaps associated with the forming of the court behind the house in the early 17th century. Compact stone rubble deposits which probably formed part of the 18th and 19th century West and South Drives were also observed (Trevarthen 2013).

In 2003, the National Trust Montacute estate was the subject of an extensive Historic Landscape Assessment (Bellamy *et al.* 2003)

1.7 Aims and Objectives

The principal aim of the archaeological programme was to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site. The programme of works will also aim to place the archaeological results within the local, regional and national context, as appropriate, and advance understanding of the archaeology of the site and its surroundings.

Its objectives were:

- To investigate and record all the *in situ* archaeological deposits and features revealed during the programme of works to an appropriate archaeological standard.
- To record recovered artefacts and other materials to an appropriate standard.
- To present the results in a report to the appropriate standard.

1.8 Groundworks

Two water tanks for the new wash area were installed below ground immediately outside the kitchen garden walls in two separate trenches 5.8 m by 1.4 m by 1.6 m deep and 2.7 m by 1.6 m and 1.8 m deep. The other groundworks comprise the formation of drainage channels around the concrete pad of the existing compost area inside the kitchen garden and the formation of a new concrete pad for the new wash area.

1.9 Methods

All archaeological works were carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Regulations for professional conduct* and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (CIfA 2014a-b).

The excavation of the trench was observed by a suitably qualified archaeologist. All features and deposits were recorded using components of Terrain Archaeology's system of complementary written, drawn and photographic records, regardless of their perceived date and archaeological significance. A photographic record of the works was maintained in digital format, which includes aspects of their setting, conduct and technical detail.

1.10 Archive and Dissemination

1.10.1 Paper Archive

The project archive, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and appropriate background documentation, has been compiled in a stable, cross-referenced and fully indexed archive in accordance with current guidelines (Brown 2011; CIfA 2014c) and the requirements of the receiving museum. It is currently stored by Terrain Archaeology under the project code 53511. In due course, the archive will be accessioned for long-term curation and storage by the National Trust.

1.10.2 Report

A copy of this report will be lodged with the National Trust Sites and Monuments Record and with Somerset Historic Environment Record (HER). The HER is a publicly funded and accessible resource, and deposition of the report will place it, and the project results, in the public domain.

A digital summary of the archive will be placed with the OASIS project (www.oasis.ac.uk) under the reference code *terraina1-335139* and *terraina1-335140*. A digital copy of this report will be uploaded for inclusion in the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) online 'grey literature' library.

2. Results

2.1 Introduction

The excavation of the pits for the new water tanks was observed (Trenches 1 and 2) (Plates 1–5). No significant archaeology was observed in the pits, so it was decided not to observe the remaining groundworks, which were unlikely to penetrate to depths greater than 0.3 m and consequently were unlikely to disturb anything other than modern deposits. The context descriptions are listed in Appendix 1.

2.2 Natural Deposits

Natural yellow brown clay and stone over grey clay and stone (106, 205) were encountered at a depth of 0.8 m below ground level (Plates 2–5).

2.3 Soils

The natural clay and stone was sealed by a 0.15 m thick layer of dark yellowish-brown clay (105, 204) which graded into a 0.2 m thick mid brown clay soil layer (104, 203), which forms a subsoil beneath the 0.2 m thick dark brown silty clay topsoil (103, 202). In Trench 1 there was an additional intermittent thin very dark brown humic topsoil layer (102) at the western end. The topsoil was sealed beneath the modern metalled surfaces (Plates 2–5).

2.4 Surfaces

A brick surface (101, 201) formed from mainly reused bricks set on edge (with some tabular stone) was found overlying the topsoil in both Trenches 1 and 2. This was sealed beneath the present crushed stone gravel surface (100, 200).

The eastern end of Trench 1 impinged on the metalled track into the yard area to the south of the site. This consisted of a layer of stone rubble (110) over a layer of crushed stone (109), which was overlapped by the gravel surface 100.

3. Finds

3.1 Finds Assemblage

No finds were collected from the observations.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

4.1 Discussion

The observations of the installation of the two new tanks revealed no significant archaeological information. There was no evidence for any buried archaeological features or finds. The brick surface beneath the current metalled surface is modern in date.

4.2 Conclusions

No significant archaeology was revealed during this project.

5. References

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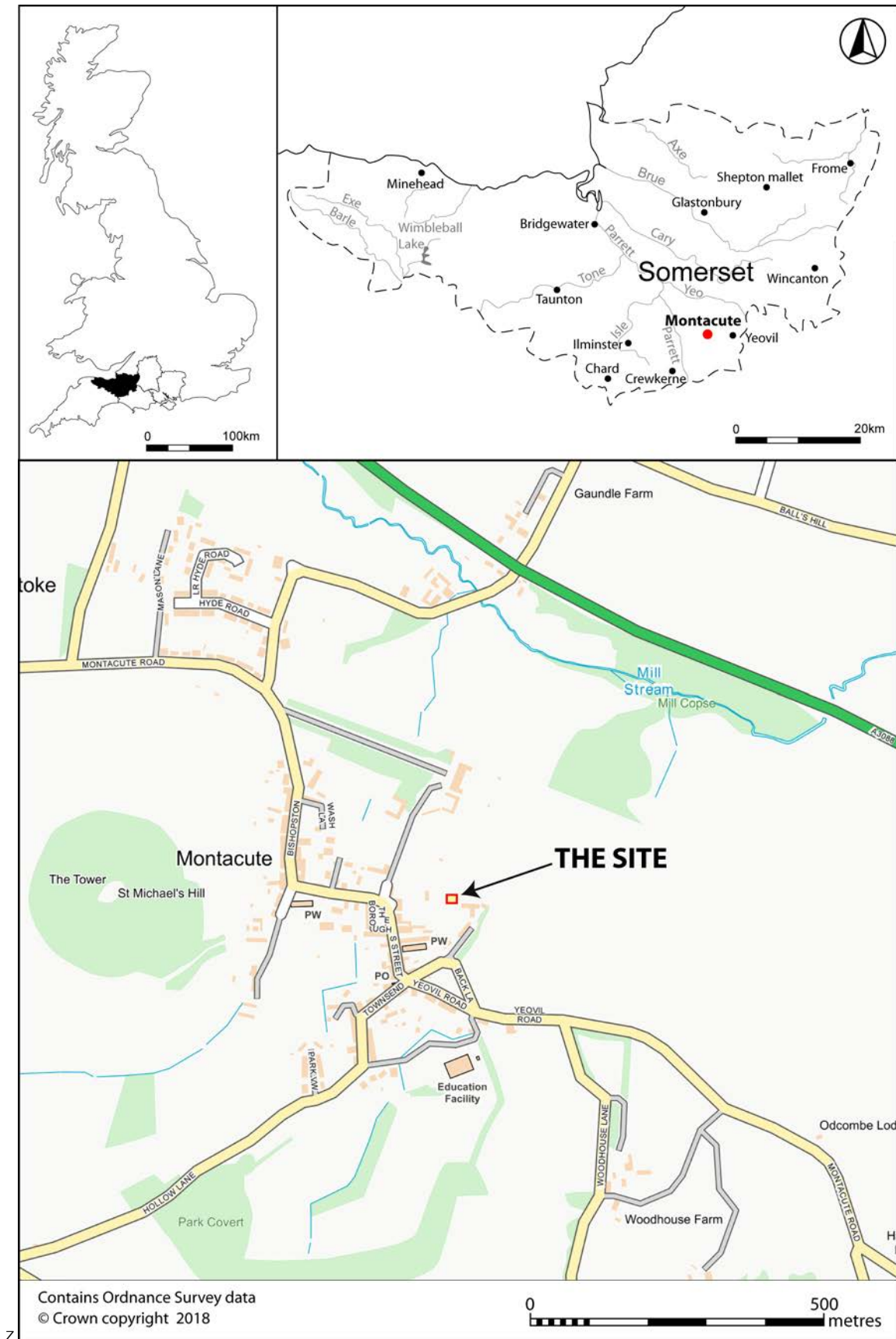


Figure 1 Location map.

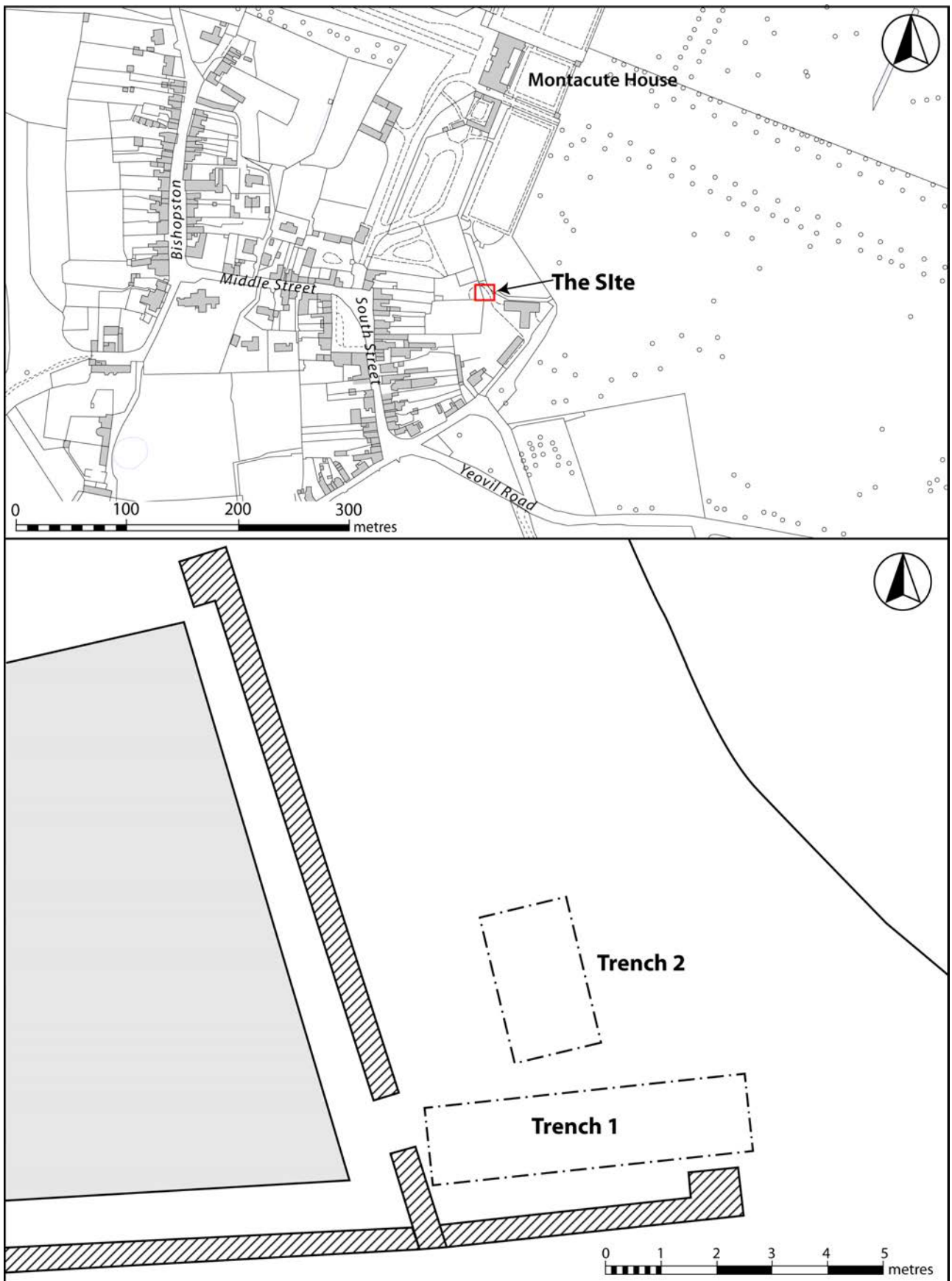


Figure 2: Location Plan of trenches.



Plate 1: General View of site looking south during excavation of Trench 1.



Plate 2: Trench 1 after excavation, viewed from east.



Plate 3: Trench 3 after excavation, viewed from west. 2m scale.



Plate 4: Trench 2 after excavation, looking north.



Plate 5: Trench 2 during excavation (breaking up the stone in base of trench), looking south-east. 2m scale.

Appendix 1: Context Summary

Trench 1

Length: 5.8 m; Width 1.4 m; depth 1.6 m.

Context	Description and Interpretation	Depth (m) below ground level
100	Gravel Surface: Crushed stone laid on a geotextile membrane.	0.00 – 0.15m
101	Brick Surface: Rough brick and stone surface constructed from reused bricks, set on edge, with some tabular stone also.	0.05 – 0.20m
102	Topsoil: Very dark brown humic clay found mainly in western part of trench.	0.20 – 0.30m
103	Topsoil: Dark brown silty clay with occasional small stone	0.20 – 0.40m
104	Subsoil: Mid brown silty clay with moderate small stone, especially near top of layer.	0.40 – 0.65m
105	Subsoil: Dark yellowish-brown silty clay with moderate small stone.	0.65 – 0.80m
106	Natural: Yellow brown clay and stone becoming grey at base of trench.	0.80 – 1.6m+
107	Base of Wall Pier: Concrete base overlying 105.	0.60 – 0.70m
108	Backfill over footing for Wall Pier Mixed brown/yellow-brown clay with frequent stone rubble.	0.20 – 0.60m
109	Track Surface: Crushed stone, below 100.	0.15 – 0.40m
110	Sub-base for Track: Dark brown clay with frequent stone, including large stone rubble.	0.40 – 0.65 m

Trench 2

Length: 2.7 m; Width 1.6 m; depth 1.8 m.

Context	Description and Interpretation	Depth (m) below ground level
200	Gravel Surface: Crushed stone laid on a geotextile membrane.	0.00 – 0.15m
201	Brick Surface: Rough brick and stone surface constructed from reused bricks, set on edge, with some tabular stone also.	0.05 – 0.20m
202	Topsoil: Dark brown silty clay with occasional small stone	0.20 – 0.45m
203	Subsoil: Mid brown silty clay with moderate small stone, especially near top of layer.	0.45 – 0.65m
204	Subsoil: Dark yellowish-brown silty clay with moderate small stone.	0.65 – 0.80m
205	Natural: Yellow brown clay and stone becoming grey with solid stone below 1.6m depth.	0.80 – 1.8m+