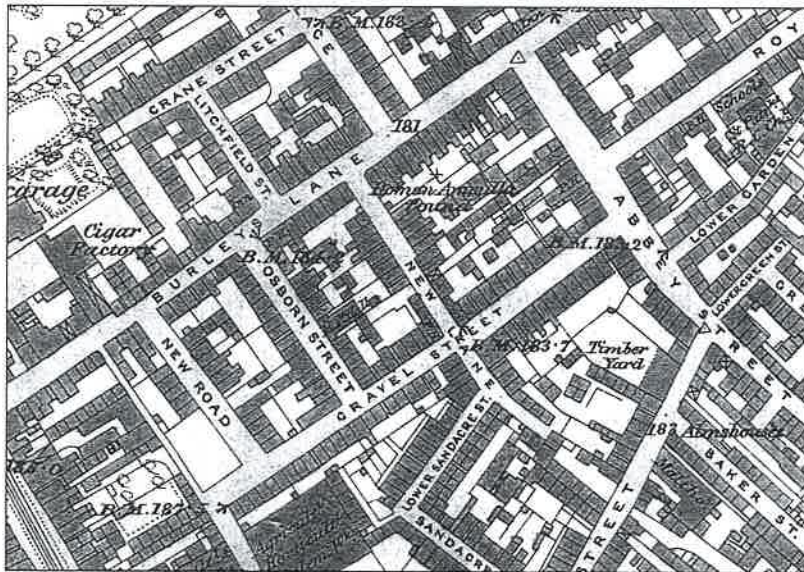


Archaeological Observation at St Margaret's Bus Station, Burleys Way Leicester



Report 0659

November 2006

Archaeological Observation at St Margaret's Bus Station, Burleys Way, Leicester, Leicestershire

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Summary

Archaeological observation at St Margaret's Bus Station, Burleys Way, Leicester, revealed partial remains of a post-medieval building. Ground works did not penetrate below layers of this date.

1. Introduction

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Leicester City Council for alterations to St Margaret's Bus Station, Burleys Way, Leicester (Planning Ref. 20060150). Because the site lies within an area of high archaeological potential, close to known Roman and medieval settlement in the centre of Leicester, it was thought that archaeological deposits might be disturbed during the work. It was therefore a condition of planning permission that the applicant should secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work to be carried out in conjunction with the development.

1.2 A programme of fieldwork, consisting of the archaeological observation of ground reduction in an area to contain a new kiosk, excavation of a trench for drainage and pits for supporting posts, in accordance with a Brief prepared by the Leicester City Planning Archaeologist on behalf of the Planning Authority, was commissioned from the Warwickshire Museum Field Archaeology Projects Group and carried out in May 2006. This report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Leicester City Museums Service under the accession number A18.2006. The Warwickshire Museum site code was LM06.

2. Location

2.1 The site is located at national grid reference SP 463608 in the north of Leicester city centre. The site has been a Bus Station since the late 1930s or early 1940s and the observed groundworks form part of improvements to the current facilities (Fig. 1).

2.2 The underlying geology of the area is river terrace deposits (sand and gravel) (British Geological Survey 2006).

3. Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 The City of Leicester is known to have been occupied since at least the Iron Age. Therefore the depth of previous occupation deposits can be considerable. The earliest evidence for occupation in the vicinity is the discovery of Iron Age pottery 200m to the north (Leicester City Sites and Monuments Record MLC868) to the north of the site (Fig. 1).

3.2 The site is located just outside of the Roman town and *civitas* capital of *Ratae Corieltauvorum*, the eastern defences of which were partially excavated in 1950 (SMR MLC1611). The Fosse Way runs to the east of the site and Roman coins and pottery have been found along the road (SMR MLC1051). To the south of the site a Roman tessellated pavement was reported (SMR MLC87) which may belong to building set back from the Fosse way. There is evidence for Roman occupation to the north and east of the site, in the form of a well (SMR MLC24), a pottery flask (SMR MLC1031) and an ampulla (SMR MLC1026). There is also the possibility that Roman burials exist in the vicinity of the site as the outside of town walls was a favoured location

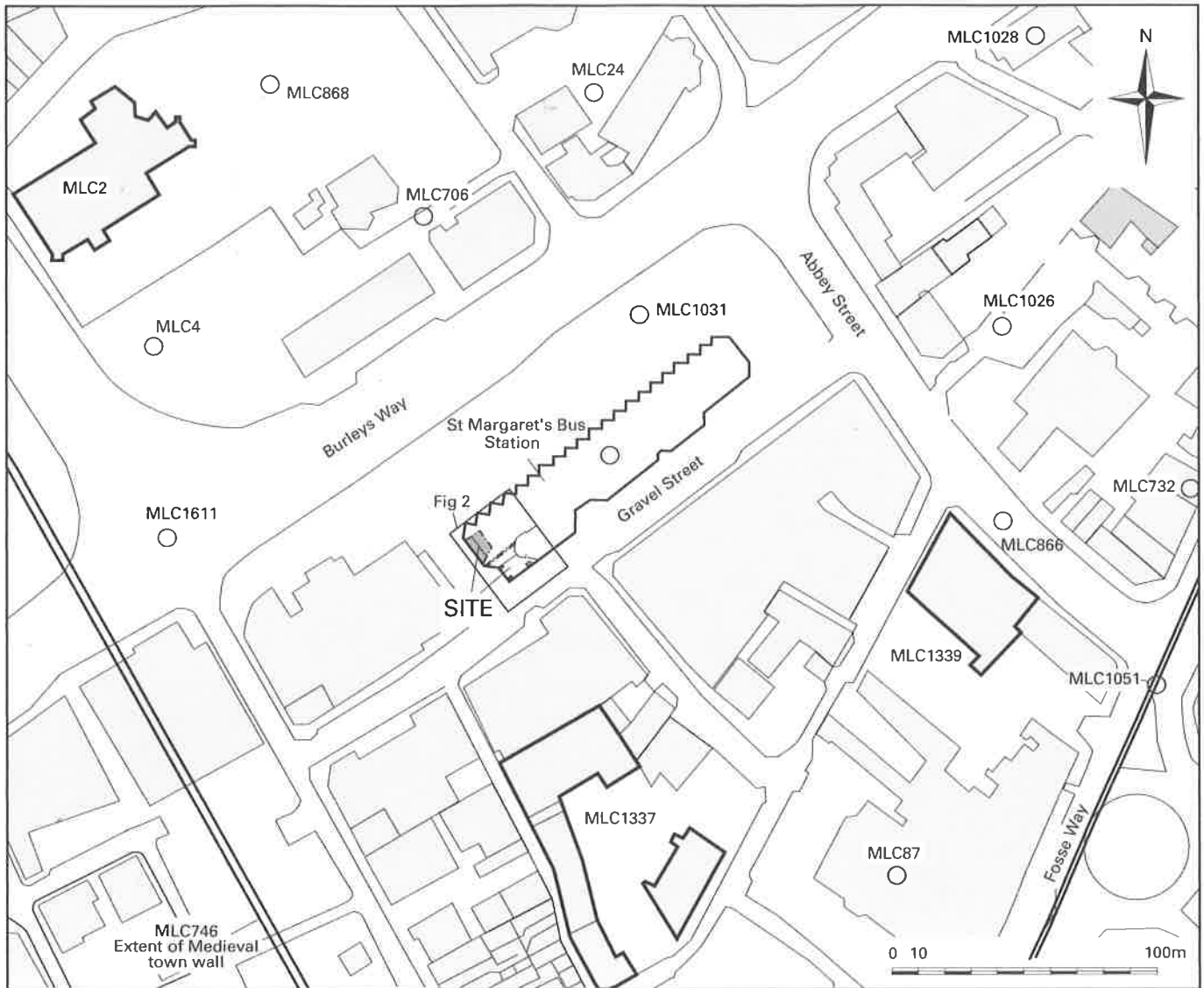


Fig. 1: Site location

for these. A cinerary urn has been found 250m to the north-east (SMR MLC1028) (Fig. 1).

3.3 The eastern wall of medieval Leicester ran to the west of the site (SMR MLC746), however an extra-mural settlement existed around the Church of St Margaret (SMR MLC2) with its associated bishop's palace (SMR MLC4). Two medieval ceramic jugs have been found in the vicinity of the site (SMR MLC706 and SMR MLC732) (Fig. 1).

3.4 A post-medieval jar was found to the east of the site (SMR MLC866). The Roman and medieval defences are known to have been levelled during the post-medieval period. During the 19th century much of the surrounding area contained factories. A shoe factory of this date existed to the east of the site (SMR MLC1339) and a sewing cotton manufacturer to the south (SMR MLC1337) (Fig. 1).

3.5 The 1886 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of Leicester (cover) shows the bus station site as two blocks of terraced houses fronting the streets with outbuildings behind. The site of the bus station is enclosed by Burley's Lane, Gravel Street and Abbey Street. Osborn Street is spanned by the bus station. A photograph from the early-20th century taken along Burleys Way shows a Victorian terrace where the bus station stands today (Leicester Mercury 1998, 20).

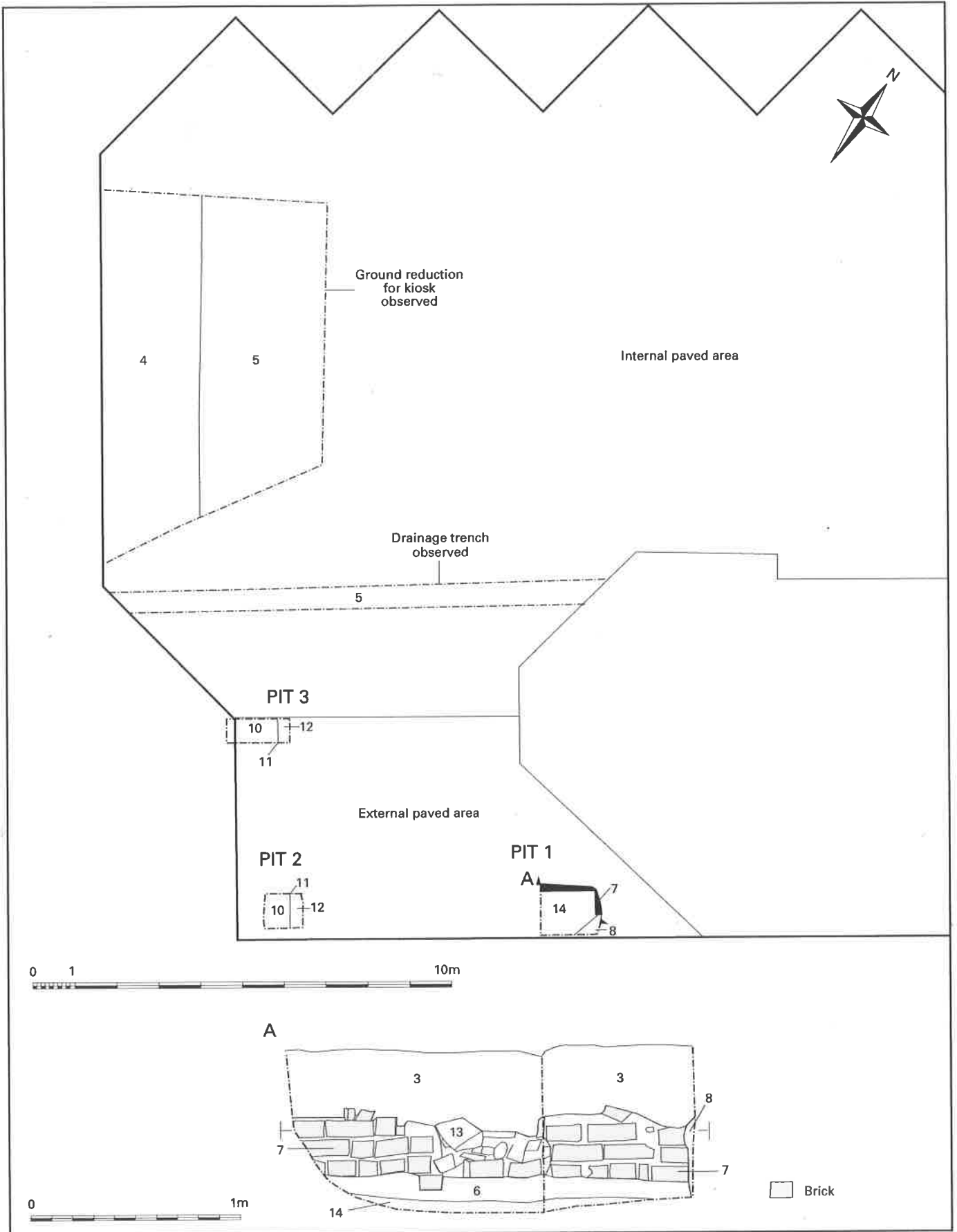


Fig. 2: Areas observed and section drawing

4. Observations

4.1 Ground works were observed at the west end of St Margaret's Bus Station. The entire area was paved with concrete slabs and extended into the adjacent covered area to the south. The paving slabs were removed and the ground reduction, drainage trench and pits were excavated by mechanical means and by hand (Fig. 3). Ground reduction of a 9m x 5m area for the new kiosk reached a depth of 0.5m. The drainage trench was 0.5m wide reaching depths of 0.4m along its 11.5m length. Three pits (Fig. 2) were observed in the covered area. Pits 1 (Fig. 4) and 2 (Fig. 5) were 1m x 1m and pit 3 (Fig. 6) was 0.6m x 1.1m. All three were 0.8m deep.

4.2 The earliest context revealed during excavations on the site was a layer (10, 14) in pits 1-3 of black clayey silt containing small fragments of brick, slate and some pebbles. This layer most likely represents a former garden soil and was found in the pits at a depth of 0.7m.

4.3 In pit 1 was a 0.1m layer of very dark greyish brown clay (6). This was probably used as a base for the construction of wall(s) (7). Two sections of wall were found (7). The bricks used to construct them were handmade, measuring 0.08m (height) and 0.235m (length) dating to the 19th-century. There were three courses mortared together using a yellowish brown sandy mortar. The bond of the bricks was irregular (Figs. 2, 4). The two walls appear to form a right angle and probably belonged to the same structure. However, the junction had been robbed out and the hole filled with rubble (13). In the eastern part of the pit there was a very dark greyish brown silty sand layer (8) containing brick fragments; this could represent material from the demolition of the walls (7).

4.4 Other contexts representing demolition layers were encountered in the rest of the site. In pits 2 and 3 the garden soil layer 10 was overlain by a very dark greyish brown silty sand layer containing frequent brick fragments (9). This layer was 0.2m deep and is probably the same as layer 8. In the area of the kiosk and the drainage trench the demolition layer found (5) was also a very dark greyish brown silty sand layer with frequent brick fragments. Alongside the wall of the bus station at the south-western end was a layer of concrete (4) which was probably part of an earlier phase of the bus station.

4.5 Cutting through layer 9 in pits 2 and 3 was a modern sewage trench (11). The remains of a disused ceramic pipe were found in the greyish brown silty sand fill of the trench (12). Covering the whole site was a 0.3m layer of aggregates (3) above which was a 0.1m layer of building sand (2). Overlying the sand was a concrete slab and blue brick surface (1).

5. Conclusions

5.1 The ground works penetrated only as far as post-medieval deposits. Two walls were revealed, probably from a 19th-century building demolished to build the bus station in the early 20th-century. All finds were modern in date and none were retained.

Acknowledgements

The Warwickshire Museum would like to thank Colin Wood for commissioning the work on behalf of Leicester City Council, the City Planning Archaeologist for preparing the brief and Rekha Shah of Leicester City Council Development Control Group for providing details of the planning history of the site. The proposal was

prepared by Cathy Coutts and work on site was carried out by the Caroline Rann. This report was written by Caroline Rann with illustrations by Candy Stevens. It was checked by Nicholas Palmer.

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Ordnance Survey 1886 *First Edition 1:2500 map*, Leicestershire Sheet 31.10

Appendix A: List of Contexts

Context No. Description

1	Concrete slab and blue brick surface
2	Building sand make-up layer
3	Aggregates make-up layer
4	Concrete
5	Layer
6	Clay bedding layer
7	Wall(s)
8	Layer
9	Layer
10	Old garden soil layer
11	Modern sewerage trench cut
12	Fill of 11
13	Rubble layer
14	Old garden soil layer



Fig. 3: Site with kiosk area in foreground, facing south



Fig. 4: Pit 1, facing north



Fig. 5: Pit 2, facing west



Fig. 6: Pit 3, facing west

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