



Archaeological watching brief on geotechnical investigations at Church Street, Thorne

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**Archaeological Watching Brief on Geotechnical Investigations at
Church Street, Thorne**

ArcHeritage Campo House, 54 Campo Lane, Sheffield, S1 2EG

Phone: +44 (0)114 2728884
archeritage@yorkat.co.uk

Fax: +44 (0)114 3279793
www.archeritage.co.uk



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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

This report presents the results of a watching brief at land adjacent to Peel Hill Motte, Thorne, South Yorkshire. The watching brief was undertaken on a Geotechnical Survey and is part of an ongoing programme of archaeological works that have been undertaken on the site which is located adjacent to Peel Hill a motte and bailey castle. The earth works of the castle are a Scheduled Monument (SAM 1013451).

The watching brief was required to record any archaeological remains or deposits encountered during the excavation of test pits on the site, prior to the extraction of boreholes, and excavation of two trial pits. Five test pits were excavated in total, two of which were identified by the South Yorkshire Archaeology Service as being located in an area of moderate/high archaeological potential, located at the southern end of the site. The remaining three boreholes were located towards the northern end of the site, in an area considered to be of low archaeological potential. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered in any of the borehole test pits, although the test pit 1 in the southern area of the site did display evidence of demolition and disturbance. Trial pit 1, located on the east edge of the area of moderate to high archaeological potential, exposed remains of a land drain constructed from 18th century bricks.

1 INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief on land adjacent to Peel Hill motte and bailey castle, Thorne, South Yorkshire. The watching brief was required to monitor the excavation of geotechnical test pits and identify and record any archaeological features or deposits that were encountered within the test pits. The watching brief was undertaken in line with a written scheme of investigation agreed with the South Yorkshire Archaeology Service (SYAS). ArcHeritage were commissioned by Dunelm Geotechnical & Environmental Ltd to undertake the fieldwork.

2 LOCATION, GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY

The site covers an area of 0.9 ha, and is located to the northwest of Church Street, Thorne, Doncaster, South Yorkshire (NGR SE 6885 1331). The site comprises an area of undeveloped land in the historic core of Thorne. It is bordered on the east side by Peel Hill motte and bailey castle (SAM 1013451) and on the southwest side by development fronting onto King Street (Figure 1). The majority of the site is an open green space, with an area of roughly-surfaced car parking facing onto Church Street and an enclosed, overgrown space on the site of a former chapel, immediately southwest of Peel Hill.

The superficial geology comprises glaciofluvial sand and gravel deposits of the Devensian period, with Hemingbrough Glaciolacustrine Formation silty clay recorded to the northeast (British Geological Survey 2014). This overlies Sherwood Sandstone of the Permian and Triassic periods. Thorne town centre lies on a ridge of glacial sand and gravel less than 1km wide and c.2km long, within the low lying, formerly wetland, landscape of eastern South Yorkshire. The ridge is key to the development of the town, which would have been an island surrounded by marshes prior to the wide scale drainage of the Humberhead levels in the 17th century. Although somewhat isolated, the island would have been well served by communications along the River Don.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were:

- to monitor the excavation of test pits and record any archaeological remains or features disturbed,
- to identify any deposits associated with the post-medieval remains recorded during previous archaeological investigation at the site (Atkinson 1994, May 2014).
- to provide evidence as to the depth and distribution of archaeological deposits within the site.

3.2 Methodology

The watching brief comprised the monitoring of seven test pits; five access pits excavated in advance of boreholes and two soak-away pits excavated for test purposes. Three of the test pits

were located in an area of moderate/ high archaeological potential, and four which were in an area of low or unknown archaeological potential (Figure 1).

The access pits were 0.4m x 0.4m hand-dug down to a depth of 1.00m below the current ground surface by technicians from Dunelm Geotechnical and Environmental under constant archaeological supervision. All spoil was examined for the presence of artefacts. Following the manual excavation, boreholes were mechanically dug in 1m increments from the base of the test pits.

The two soak-away pits were larger and were excavated to test the soak-away capacity of the natural deposits on site. These trial pits were excavated with a JCB backactor fitted with a narrow bucket. The dimensions of the trial pits measured 0.4 metres wide by 2.5 metres long. The trial pits were excavated under archaeological supervision to a final depth of 3.5 metres below current ground level.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The background of this site has been extensively discussed in previous reports and the following information is summarised from the 2014 trial trenching report (May 2014). The site is located within Thorne's medieval settlement core, immediately to the south-west of Peel Hill motte and bailey castle (SAM 1013451), approximately 50m to the west of the medieval Church of St. Nicholas and 50m to the northeast of Thorne's medieval marketplace (Magilton 1977, 73).

Relatively little is known about the motte and bailey castle, or its date of construction and demolition. However, it is likely to have been constructed by the earls of Warenne, to whom Thorne was granted in 1066 (Casson 1829, 14). Stone foundations were revealed during the late 18th to early 19th centuries (Casson 1829, 31), indicating that the original timber fortifications had been rebuilt in stone at some point, possibly in the late 12th century by Hamelin Plantagenet who was also responsible for rebuilding Conisbrough Castle (Illingworth 1939, 36-44). John Leland's description of 1534 indicates that the keep was still standing at that date, when it was in use as a 'prison for offenders in the forestes' of Hadfield Chase (Casson 1829, 29). The location of the castle's bailey is unclear, but earthwork evidence and the alignment of South Field Road suggest that it was to the south and east of the castle, probably enclosing the church, which may have originated as a private chapel.

Documentary evidence indicates that a plot named 'Hall Garth' stood to the west of the castle during the later medieval period (Casson 1829). The garth, an enclosed garden or plot, may have extended into the evaluation area. The name 'Peel Hill' was not recorded until the 19th century.

The remains of medieval and early post-medieval burbage plots are evident in the vicinity of the site on the 1825 Thorne, Hatfield and Fishlake enclosure plan although it is not known if plots extended into the development site.

A Quaker meeting house was built to the immediate southwest of Peel Hill possibly in the 18th century. A burial ground associated with this meeting house was recorded on a plan of 1815 (QR 140), with annotations indicating that it was still being used for burials into the 1930s. By 1967, a Pentecostal Church had been constructed over part of the former Quaker burial ground.

The 1843 tithe map showed houses, cottages, shops, gardens and yards within the southeast part of the development site which were cleared during the 1960s. The tithe map showed large plots without buildings over the rest of the site.

South Yorkshire Archaeology Field and Research Unit (SYAFRU) undertook trial trenching and test pitting on the site in 1994 (Atkinson 1994). The trenches identified that superficial geology, comprising sands, gravels and clay, was encountered at depths of between 0.4m and 0.9m below the current ground surface. Pottery sherds of medieval to post-medieval date were recovered from the subsoil, as well as a few sherds of possible prehistoric date. Only one possible archaeological feature was recorded within these trenches, a possible pit which contained no artefacts. The combination of medieval and post-medieval sherds within four of the subsoils suggested a 'relatively high degree of disturbance' (Atkinson 1994) but, based on pottery, two trenches contained probable medieval subsoils, underlying post-medieval to modern made ground. Of the ten test pits excavated within the central part of the site, only two (TP01 and TP07) revealed archaeological features: a small, square pit of probable post-medieval date and a narrow linear feature with a V-shaped base in. The linear feature contained one sherd of medieval pottery: the purpose of the feature was not established, but it was on a similar alignment to the property boundaries fronting onto King Street, and it possibly related to medieval burgage plots.

The archaeological evaluation completed in by ArcHeritage in summer 2014 (May 2014), confirmed that post-medieval archaeological remains survive within the site, mainly concentrated in the southern half of the proposed development area (Figure 2). Graves associated with the 18th to 19th-century Quaker burial ground were observed within the enclosed area underlying the former Pentecostal Chapel and the truncated remains of 18th- to mid-20th-century housing were located at the south of the site, immediately below the car park surfacing. There was also evidence for modern dumping and disturbance across the southern end of the site, as well as features possibly related to tree roots. The results of the evaluation suggest that the northern end of the site has a low potential for archaeological features and deposits, despite its proximity to Peel Hill motte. No features pre-dating the post-medieval period were found during the evaluation, and only one artefact, a probable late medieval pottery sherd, was recovered from a subsoil deposit. This suggests that occupation activity in the medieval period was concentrated on the street frontages, with the majority of the site being part of one or more fields from this period onwards.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Borehole Test Pit 1

Test Pit 1 (Plate 1) was located in the middle of the tarmac car parking area at the south end of the site; within the area identified as being of moderate/high archaeological potential. The borehole test pit measured 0.4m by 0.4m, and was excavated to a depth of 1m below current ground level. The excavated stratigraphic sequence comprised a 0.05m thick tarmac surface [101] on top of a 0.05m layer of limestone hardcore bedding [102]. This modern material was found to overlay a deposit of coarse brick rubble made ground [103] measuring 0.35 in thickness. The made ground sealed a deposit of natural mid-brown silty clay [104].

No features of archaeological significance were impacted upon during the excavation of test pit 1.

5.2 Borehole Test Pit 2

Test Pit 2 was located 10 metres north west of the trackway, on the south west edge of the area identified as being of low archaeological potential, and approximately twenty metres northwest of the former Quaker burial ground. The excavated pit measured 0.4m by 0.4m, and was hand-excavated to a depth of 1m below current ground level. The excavated stratigraphical sequence comprised a dark brown sandy silt topsoil [201] which measured 0.7m in depth. The depth of soil suggests it has not formed *in situ* but has been deposited probably during landscaping of the ground surface. The topsoil was found to overlay a homogenous deposit of mid-brown clay natural [202].

No features of archaeological significance were impacted upon during the excavation of Test Pit 2

5.3 Borehole Test Pit 3

Test Pit 3 was located in the west corner of the site, within the area identified as being of moderate/high archaeological potential. The excavated pit measured 0.4m by 0.4m, and was hand-excavated to a depth of 1m below current ground level. The excavated stratigraphical sequence comprised a dark brown sandy silt topsoil [301] which measured 0.45m in depth. The topsoil was found to overlay a homogenous deposit of mid-brown sandy clay natural [302].

No features of archaeological significance were impacted upon during the excavation of Test Pit 3.

5.4 Borehole Test Pit 4

Test Pit 4 was located towards the northeast end of the site, within the area identified as being of low archaeological potential, approximately twenty metres north east of Test Pit 2. The excavated pit measured 0.4m by 0.4m, and was hand-excavated to a depth of 1m below current ground level. As with Test Pit 2, the excavated stratigraphic sequence comprised a dark brown sandy silt topsoil [401] which measured 0.7m in depth. Again the depth of soil suggests that was deposited at some point in the past. A single large cobblestone was found at a depth of 0.65m below ground level, at the interface between the topsoil and underlying yellow sandy clay natural [402].

No features of archaeological significance were impacted upon during the excavation of Test Pit 4.

5.5 Borehole Test Pit 5

Test Pit 5 was located towards the northern site boundary, well within the area identified as being of low archaeological potential. The excavated pit measured 0.4m by 0.4m, and was hand-excavated to a depth of 1m below current ground level. The excavated stratigraphic sequence comprised the usual dark brown sandy silt topsoil [501] to a depth of 0.65m similar to that in Test Pits 2 and 4. This overlay a deposit of homogenous sandy clay natural [502], which was observed to contain small fragments of weathered mudstone inclusions at a frequency of approximately 1%.

No features of archaeological significance were impacted upon during the excavation of Test Pit 5.

5.6 Trial Pit 6

Trial Pit 6 was located on the northeast edge of the area identified as being of moderate/high archaeological potential, and 12.5m northwest of the north west end of the car park.

This was the only test pit that contained an archaeological feature. A crudely built land drain was identified at a depth of 0.8m below current ground level. The land drain comprised a rough U-shaped ditch [604] cut into the clay natural [605], into which a double row of hand-made red bricks has been placed to form a simple gutter (two examples of the bricks were collected). The gutter was then backfilled with brick rubble [603] and occasional large sherds of an unglazed coarse earthenware fabric, most likely waste tiles as opposed to pottery. The nature of the construction materials suggests a tentative 18th century date for land drain, although the structure could equally have been built in the 19th century from re-used materials. The land drain [603/604] was found to be sealed beneath a homogenous deposit of dark brown sandy silt [602], which was possibly an earlier soil horizon. One small sherd of hand-painted whiteware was recovered from context [602], which probably dates to the late 18th-early 19th century. Context [602] was sealed by an overlying soil sequence comprising a subsoil [601] and topsoil [600]. The presence of the buried horizon [602] below soil [600/601] indicates that landscaping may have been undertaken in the past at a date post the drains construction as no cut was seen for the drain in the overlying layer (602).

Excavation in the test pit continued down to a depth of 3.5m through the natural clay [605].

5.7 Trial Pit 7

Trial Pit 2 was located in the waste ground between the pedestrian access path and the Quaker burial ground, within the area identified as being of low archaeological potential. The excavated sequence comprised a comparatively thin topsoil [701] of 0.1-0.2m, suggesting recent landscaping activity, possibly relating to the removal of the fruit trees which previously covered the site. The underlying deposit comprised a mid yellow-brown clay natural [702] with occasional inclusions of fluvial cobblestones randomly distributed within the clay.

No features of archaeological significance were impacted upon during the excavation of Trial Pit 2.

6 DISCUSSION

The aims of the watching brief were to monitor the excavation of borehole test pits and trial pits, and to record any archaeological remains encountered. During the watching brief no archaeological features were encountered in any of the test pits, with the exception of a solitary land drain exposed during the excavation of trial pit 1.

The watching brief identified that the stratigraphic sequence across the site varied. Topsoil depth was shown to increase towards the northeast end of site, and the composition of the underlying natural clays was found to vary. The car park area was shown to be constructed upon a compacted layer of coarse demolition rubble. The bedrock geology was not encountered in any of the test pits.

7 CONCLUSION

The results of this watching brief support the current understanding of the site and do not alter the currently established levels of archaeological potential. As has been demonstrated by previous phases of archaeological investigation, there are identifiable structures within the area of medium/high potential with a clear post-medieval provenance.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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PLATES



Plate 1: Borehole Test Pit 1, viewed facing southwest. 50cm scale.



Plate 2: Borehole test pit 2, viewed facing north. 1m scale.



Plate 3: Borehole Test Pit 3, viewed facing north. 1m scale.



Plate 4: Borehole Test Pit 4, viewed facing North. 1m scale.



Plate 5: Borehole Test Pit 5, viewed facing west. 1m scale.



Plate 6: Land Drain (603) in Trial Pit 6, viewed facing southeast. 50cm scale.



Plate 7: Trial Pit 7, viewed facing north. 1m scale.

FIGURES

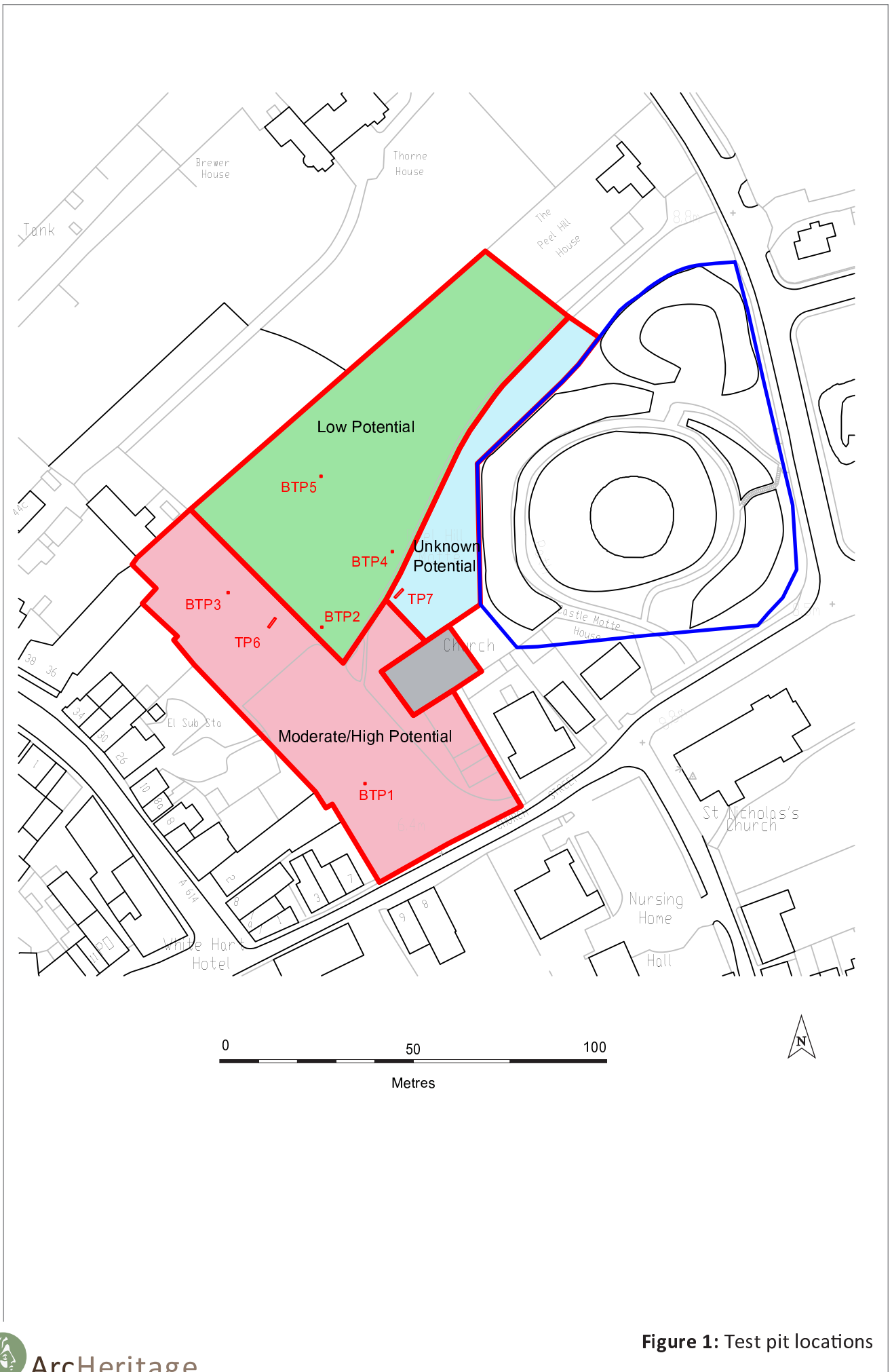


Figure 1: Test pit locations

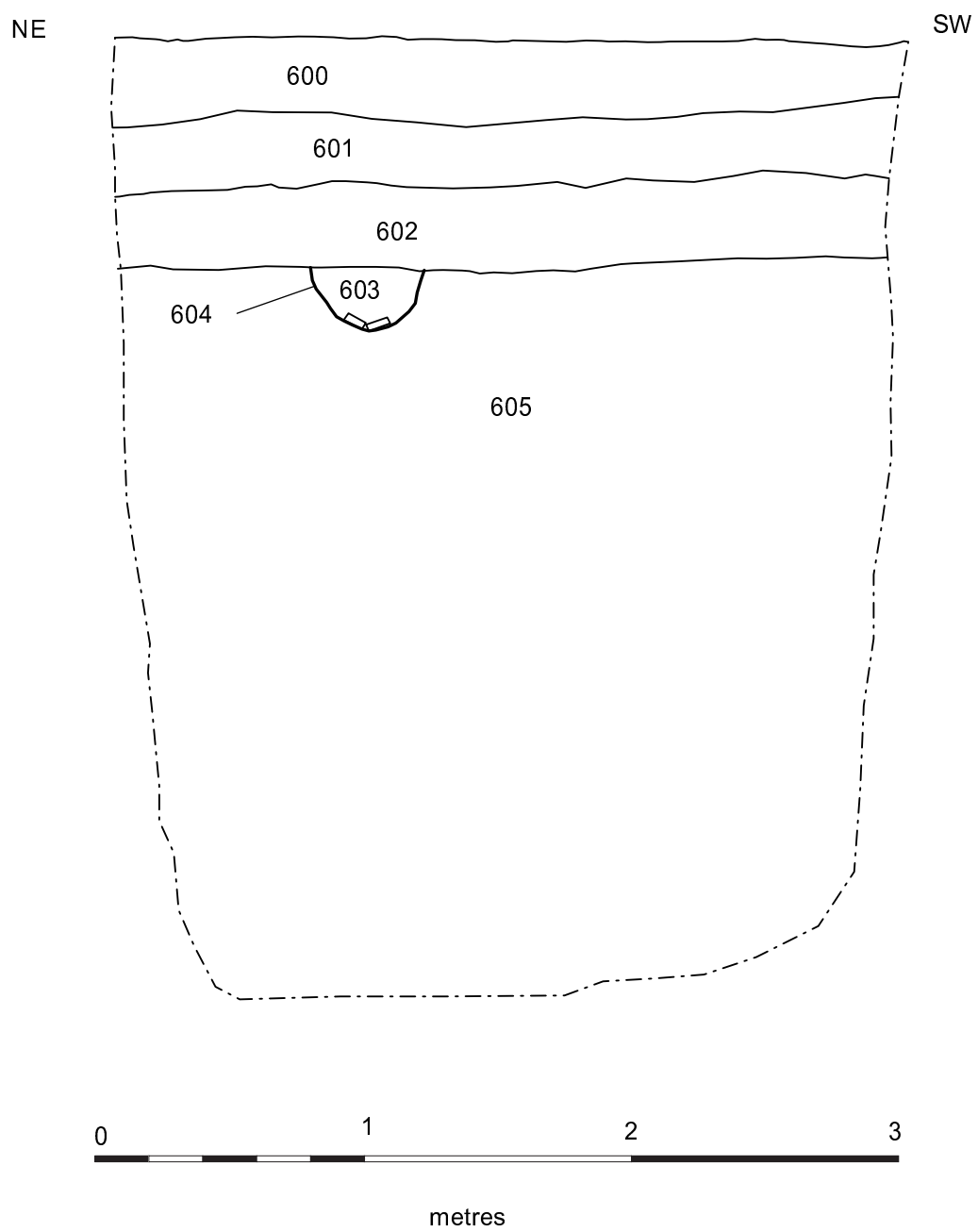


Figure 2: Test pit 6 section

APPENDIX 1: INDEX TO ARCHIVE

Item	Number of items
Context register	1
Context sheets	20
Photographic register	1
Drawing register	1
Original drawings	2
Digital photographs	23
Written Scheme of Investigation	1
Report	1

Table 1: List of archive contents

APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT LIST

Test pit	Context no.	Description
BTP1	101	Tarmac
BTP1	102	Hardcore
BTP1	103	Made ground coarse brick rubble
BTP1	104	Brown silty clay natural
BTP2	201	Dark brown sandy silt topsoil
BTP2	202	Brown clay natural
BTP3	301	Dark brown sandy silt topsoil
BTP3	302	Brown sandy clay natural
BTP4	401	Brown sandy silt topsoil
BTP4	402	Yellow brown sandy clay natural
BTP5	501	Brown sandy silt topsoil
BTP5	502	Sandy clay natural
TP6	600	Dark brown sandy silt topsoil
TP6	601	Dark brown sandy silt
TP6	602	Dark brown sandy silt
TP6	603	Land drain brick rubble fill
TP6	604	Land Drain cut U shaped
TP6	605	Natural clay
TP7	701	Thin topsoil
TP7	702	Yellow brown clay natural

Table 2: List of contexts

APPENDIX 3: FINDS LIST

Test pit	Context No.	Material	No.	Description	Date
TP6	603	CBM	2	handmade red bricks	
TP6	602	Pottery	1	sherd of hand-painted whiteware	late C18th – early C19th



ArcHeritage



ArcHeritage
54 Campo Lane
Sheffield
S1 2EG

T: 0114 2728884
F: 0114 3279793

www.archeritage.co.uk