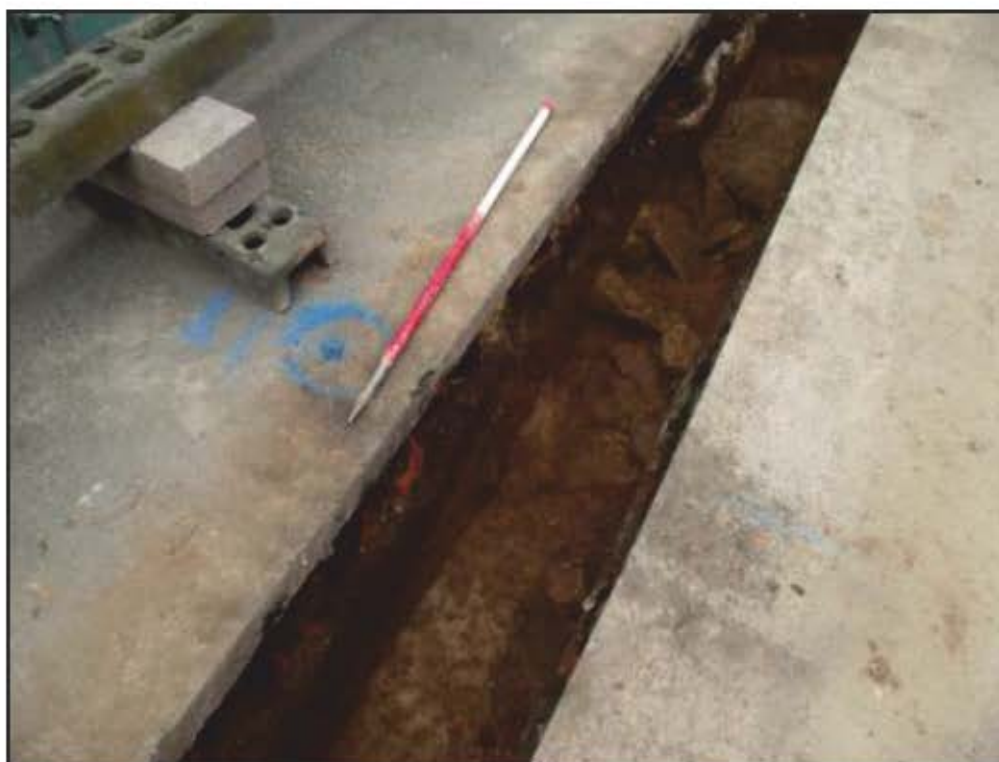


Repton Precinct, New Teaching Block, Repton, Derbyshire

Report On An Archaeological Watching Brief



South-east facing photograph of wall (0010) and pit [0006] in service trench C

For B & K Building Services Ltd

Prepared by P. Flintoft

Report Number: 009/2015

TPA Project Code: RPR

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SUMMARY

- An Archaeological Watching Brief was conducted as part of a development scheme at Repton School. The site is located on a prominent corner of the B5008 in the village of Repton, approximately 1km to the south of the River Trent and is located in the archaeologically significant historic core.
- This identified a series of features which included a single pit and a series of wall foundations which were observed at formation level. Although these remain undated, their size, organisation and general morphology tentatively indicate that they may relate to Saxon though to high medieval building activities.
- The noticeable absence of material culture does not imply a domestic use for the apparent structure. It is possible that the building may have had an agricultural use although a firm interpretation is difficult to establish on account of the small exploratory trench.

Repton Precinct New Teaching Block, Repton

An Archaeological Watching Brief
P. Flintoft

2015

Project Code – RPR

TPA Report No. 009/2015

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. As part of a construction scheme at Repton School, Derbyshire, a teaching block was demolished in order to clear ground space for the erection of a new building. After the demolition, a series of test pits and service trenches were excavated ahead of the measured ground reduction of the main footprint area (Figure 2). All excavation works considered to be intrusive required monitoring by an archaeologist as a consequence of the new development being located in the archaeologically significant historic core.

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The site is located on a prominent corner of the B5008 in the village of Repton, approximately 1km to the south of the River Trent and is located in the archaeologically significant historic core (NGR SK 30500 27000). The development is positioned on the edge of a bluff overlooking the Trent Valley (Figure 1). The bedrock substrate has been recorded as the Bromsgrove Sandstone Formation-Mudstone which was formed 237 to 251 million years ago (www.mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html).
- 2.2. The historic core at Repton comprises nationally significant archaeological resources. Repton School itself includes significant medieval buildings, principally the remains of an Augustinian priory whose foundation dates to 1172 (Pevsner 1979).
- 2.3. Repton formed a Royal centre for the Mercian kingdom and is mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles. Excavations by Martin Biddle famously demonstrated that the church of St Wystan in Repton, (a royal shrine with a crypt used for Mercian burials) formed a gatehouse for a large D-shaped defensive enclosure for the Viking army.
- 2.4. Other Anglo-Saxon settlements in the region include Catholme, and Willington, where a series of sunken floor structures dated to the 6th century, have been recorded (HER 27928).
- 2.5. An excavation in advance of a new science block at the school in 2012 revealed Romano-British boundary ditches, dating to the 2nd to 4th centuries AD and Anglo Saxon cut features which included linear and discrete features (Hurford: 2012). These features are regarded as been pertinent to the outcome of the Watching Brief as the excavation was only 150 metres to the north-west of the current development and the linear features extended beyond the confines of the 2012 excavation. This presents a plausible likelihood that the same features, or features which share some functional homogeneity, could be identified during the monitoring visits. Their exposure would have the potential to help further elucidate the Romano-British and early medieval phases of activity within Repton's historic core, particularly in relation to previous excavations.

3. OBJECTIVES

- 3.1. The objective of the Archaeological Watching Brief was to identify the presence of, and to achieve an appropriate level of *preservation by record* for, any archaeological remains beyond the footprint of the former building which would be affected by any intrusive aspects of the new development. Where practical (within the constraints of the Watching Brief and development), this included an assessment of the overall extent, date and state of preservation of archaeological remains.
- 3.2. Initially this invoked continuous archaeological monitoring of intrusive ground works which had the potential to impact on features and layers of archaeological significance.
- 3.3. All recording would result in 'the preparation of a report and ordered archive', in accordance with the guidelines of the IfA Institute for Archaeologists (*Standard and*

Guidance: for an archaeological watching brief published October 1994, revised September 2001 and October 2008).

4. METHODOLOGY

The Watching Brief followed the requirements as set out in the WSI. A summary of the methodology is included below.

Machining

4.1 Initial stripping of overburden was carried out under archaeological supervision; the client was aware of the archaeological constraint on their operations and dealt with them in an appropriate and sensitive manner.

4.2 The contractor used a toothless ditching bucket so that a clean surface was exposed and the archaeologist could inspect the deposits revealed. There were strictly no trafficking by vehicles on any of the exposed surface until the archaeologist had agreed that there were no archaeological deposits of significance.

Service trenches

4.3 Within Health & Safety constraints, the contractor ensured access to service and/or foundation trenches to permit the examination/cleaning and recording of sections. Time was allowed for detailed examination of the trenches before backfilling occurred. Where excavation and cleaning was required it proved to be a rapid process and no delay to the construction programme was caused.

Spoil-heaps

4.4 Where practical and safe to do so, spoil heaps were regularly examined for archaeological material. This included the use of a metal-detector.

Recording

4.5 As part of the Watching Brief all of the archaeological features and deposits were recorded as were the location and extent of the monitored areas of excavation, their depth, and the deposits exposed, both by scale drawing (section and/or plan where applicable) and photograph (monochrome prints/digital).

Project staff

4.6 The watching brief was managed by Paul Johnson / Gareth Davies, the attending archaeologist was: Paul Flintoft (Project Officer)/Thomas Hooley (Project Supervisor).

5. RESULTS

5.1. The first monitoring visit commenced on the 28th of April 2014. The site had undergone initial preparations prior to this. The previous building had been demolished and the concrete slab for the footprint of the proposed building had been removed. In advance of the measured reduction of the main internal area for the new building, several test pits were excavated to locate non-operational services. Once the redundant utility network was identified, a series of trenches were excavated to install new services. These were all monitored by an archaeologist for significant archaeological features or deposits.

5.2 The observations from Test Pit 1, excavated in the south-east corner of the development area, revealed the sequence of deposits and sediments to a depth which exposed the Bromsgrove Sandstone Formation (Figure 3 & Plate 2). The first context identified was a layer of black indurated tarmac, (0001) measuring 110mm in thickness. This extended around the footprint of the now demolished building. A course of modern red bricks, (0002), 220mm in depth were revealed beneath the tarmac. These were bonded by a light grey un-degraded mortar. Beneath the modern bricks was (0003), a very clean mid

brown soft clayey silt with very occasional inclusions of charcoal measuring 480mm in depth. No laminae or subtle variations in character or sorting of the sediment was identified which tentatively suggests a rapid, single event of deposition. The inclusions of charcoal hint at the possibility that (0003) is the result of anthropogenic agency rather than 'natural' accretion. The excavation of this test pit ceased at the base of (0003) as the Bromsgrove Foundation bedrock was reached. This context has been recorded elsewhere on the site as (0015).

- 5.3 A 15m long drainage trench, service trench A, was excavated on a north-north-easterly orientation towards the south-eastern corner of the development area. The deposits identified in the trench were the same as the ones in Test Pit 1.
- 5.4 Service Trench C, a 40m long x 0.5m wide and 0.7m deep trench was excavated along the western extent of the development site from the 29th of April and continued for almost three weeks. The excavation was undertaken with the use of a mini-digger and was cleaned by hand for inspection by the archaeologist in attendance. The trench, which was intended for the insertion of a gas main, revealed several archaeological features which were of potential significance. These include features possibly relating to disturbed structure which remains undated. A stratigraphic report of the discoveries is detailed below.
- 5.5 The more superficial contexts encountered in the Service Trench C correspond to Test Pit 1, with contexts (0001)-(0003) occurring in similar depths and consistencies (table 1). Beneath context (0003) however was (0016), a dark grey soft silty clay measuring 80mm in thickness. This was sealing walls, (0010), (0017), (0023) and pit (0006) (Figure 3 & Plate 3).
- 5.6 Wall foundations (0010) and (0017) were contained within cuts [0008] and [0011] respectively (Figure 3). The sandstone walls were at right angles to each other, with (0010) extending south-westerly and (0017) progressing north-easterly. For the most part, only a single course appeared to remain and whilst an undisturbed 2.1m width of (0010) existed, only a 1.5m width of wall (0017) remained due to later disturbance. Portions of the wall were regarded as been in reasonable condition with faced fragments of masonry extending up to the limit of the cut without interruption. Higher levels of disturbance were identified towards the centre of the wall and in places were represented by very few fragments of masonry. Each of the walls had an associated interstitial packing. Context (0009) the fill within wall (0010), was recorded as a light brown silt, (0018), the fill within (0017), as a light brown clayey silt. The relationship between these two walls could not be identified as they extend beyond the trench. The similarity of the features does strongly suggest that they are contemporary and the return of the wall exists just beyond the eastern extent of the trench.
- 5.7 A partially exposed feature, [0014], was identified which extended from under the eastern baulk. This was filled with (0013), a mixed white greyish red clay. An understanding of the shape of the feature could not be gleaned on account of it being cut by [0012]; an easterly oriented relict water service trench. This was filled with (0019), a mixed whitish grey silty clay. As the formation level was reached and no further intrusive impact was expected to occur, the features were not excavated beyond this depth.
- 5.8 A third wall, (0023), was observed in the service trench but was very badly disturbed. The wall was also identified in the main part of the excavation during the measured ground reduction where it was found to be in much better condition than that detected in the trench (Figure 4). The portion of the wall which was discovered in the main part of the excavation extended east-north-easterly and displayed a 90° turn to the north-north-west. Wall (0023) was constructed out of sandstone blocks, the same material as walls (0010) and (0017) and was contained within cut [0024]. These foundations were

identified at formation level and were left in-situ. No further intrusive works which threatened the integrity of the surviving wall were undertaken and the wall will survive beneath the new teaching block.

- 5.9 The partial extent of a roughly circular feature 850mm by 150mm extended from the eastern limit of the trench was identified just to the south of wall (0010). On balance, the feature has been interpreted as a pit on account of its shape and the fact that no other parts of it could be seen extending into the main area of the development suggesting that it terminates under the undisturbed soil baulk. The fill of the pit, (0007), was a soft dark grey silty clay. Not enough of the feature was exposed to lend itself to an interpretation and it was not excavated as the formation level for the gas main was reached. All of these features were sealed by (0016).
- 5.10 An easterly aligned service trench towards the northern limit of the site, Service Trench A, was excavated on the 7th of May. The sequence of deposits was (0001), (0002), (0003) as was observed in other trenches and Test Pit 1. Context (0026) was revealed beneath (0003) which was described as a firm light brown clay. Nothing of archaeological importance was observed.
- 5.11 Service Trench B extended around the northern and western limit of the proposed building. The trench measured 0.6m in width and 0.7m deep. Contexts (0001), (0002), (0003) and (0004) were also identified in this trench.
- 5.12 The main area was reduced in measured spits under the constant monitoring of an archaeologist. With the exception of wall (0023), which is discussed above, nothing of archaeological significance was observed.
- 5.13 Two roughly faced stones and compacted stones, believed to represent a wall, (0020) were identified in Test Pit 2 approximately 0.7m below the modern ground surface (Plate 5). Beyond the limit of the foundation pit, the wall was not exposed in plan. The wall appeared to be very heavily disturbed.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1 The soil and sediment layers which were identified in the service trenches, test pits and the measured ground reduction of the main area revealed similar depositional processes throughout. Layer (0003) was recorded as a moderately thick sediment which may represent deliberately deposited material intended to 'build up' or level the ground.
- 6.2 The structural features which were identified in Service Trench C and the open area were of particular interest. Wall foundations (0010) and (0017) were roughly at right angles to each other and it is proposed that these are actually the same structure and the confirmation of this exists just beyond the eastern limit of the trench. No evidence of this particular wall was observed beyond the trench on the main area with the return of the wall possibly being located within the undisturbed linear baulk in-between the trench and the open area.
- 6.3 The wall which was observed in the main area, (0024) was much more fragmented than (0010)/(0017). There was a distinct east-south-east orientation to the structure with a less distinct turn to the south-west-south. The spatial arrangement of wall (0024) and (0010)/(0017) (possibly running parallel and at broadly similar heights) suggests that they may be related. Wall (0024) could possibly be an outer structure with wall (0010)/(0017) being located in the centre. Alternatively they could represent different phases of a structure.
- 6.4 A reliable date for any of the structural features could unfortunately not be determined. Feature [0012], which cut (0017), was the cut of an iron water pipe which was heavily

corroded and is likely to be Victorian or later. No brick, or any building materials which bared a pre-industrial provenance, were identified which suggest a post-medieval date at the latest.

- 6.5 Located just the south of wall (0010), pit [0006], which may have been contemporary with both features, was sealed by the same deposit, (0003). Despite that fact that the features are very close to each other, no physical relationship could be observed definitively.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The structural remains and the single discrete feature identified in Service Trench C and the open area did not provide any secure dating evidence. Beyond the clear evidence that they predate the post medieval period, little more can be inferred with confidence. However, the relatively large size of the walls is compelling and analogous Saxon and medieval structural remains in the immediate vicinity indicate a 7th to 15th century construction.
- 7.2 The noticeable absence of material culture from within the cut of the wall foundation wall does not imply a domestic use. The structure may have had an agricultural use although a firm interpretation is difficult to establish on account of the small exploratory trench.

Acknowledgments

Trent & Peak Archaeology would like to thank John Dawson, site manager for B & K building services and Ricky Cam from Franklin Ellis Architects.

8. Bibliography

Hurford, M. 2012. Repton School, Repton Derbyshire, Interim Report on Archaeological Excavations. Unpublished

Pevsner, N. 1979. (Revs Williamson, E). The buildings of Derbyshire. Penguin.

www.mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html

Appendix 1 Context Register

Context	Location of observation	Description
(0001)	Service Trench A, B, C, D, Test Pit 1	Layer of Tarmac
(0002)	Service Trench A, B, C, D, Test Pit 1	Laid brick surface
(0003)	Service Trench A, B, C, D, Test Pit 1 and Test Pit 2.	Mid brown soft homogenous clayey silt. Occasional inclusions of charcoal
(0004)	Service Trench B, C, D, Test Pit 1	Bromsgrove foundation sandstone
(0005)		Layer of brownish yellow silty sand
[0006]	Service Trench D	Cut of pit
(0007)	Service Trench D	Dark grey silty clay. Fill of [0006]
[0008]	Service Trench D	East-north-easterly oriented cut for wall (0010)
(0009)	Service Trench D	Compact light brown silt. Fill of [0008]
(0010)	Service Trench D	East-north-east oriented wall
[0011]	Service Trench D	North-westerly oriented cut for wall
[0012]	Service Trench D	Modern cut for now relict drain
(0013)	Service Trench D	Mixed white greyish red clay
[0014]	Service Trench D	Cut of modern feature
(0015)	Service Trench D	Bromsgrove foundation sandstone (same as (0004))
(0016)	Service Trench D	Dark grey silty clay
(0017)	Service Trench D	North-westerly oriented wall
(0018)	Service Trench D	Light brown clayey silt. Fill of [0011]
(0019)	Service Trench D	Mixed Fill of [0012]
(0020)	Test Pit 2	Wall in Test Pit 2
(0021)	N/A	VOID
(0022)	N/A	VOID
(0023)	Main Area	East-south-easterly oriented wall
(0024)	Main Area	East-south-easterly oriented cut for wall (0023)

Table 1: Context register

Appendix 2 Archive Statement

Contact has been made with Derby Museums and Art Galleries, and the following accession number issued for this site: DBYMU:2013:13168. An archive index is provided below:

<i>Field Records</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Number</i>
Context Sheet	Record of each intervention	26
Registers	Registers	2
A3 Drafting Film	Scale plans and Sections	5
Photographs	All views	36 x BW and Colour (digi)
<i>Documents</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Number</i>
Written scheme of investigation	Statement of the aims, objectives and methodology for the project.	1
Health & Safety	Safe working statement & risk assessment	1
Report to client	Report of findings.	1

Table 2: Archive index

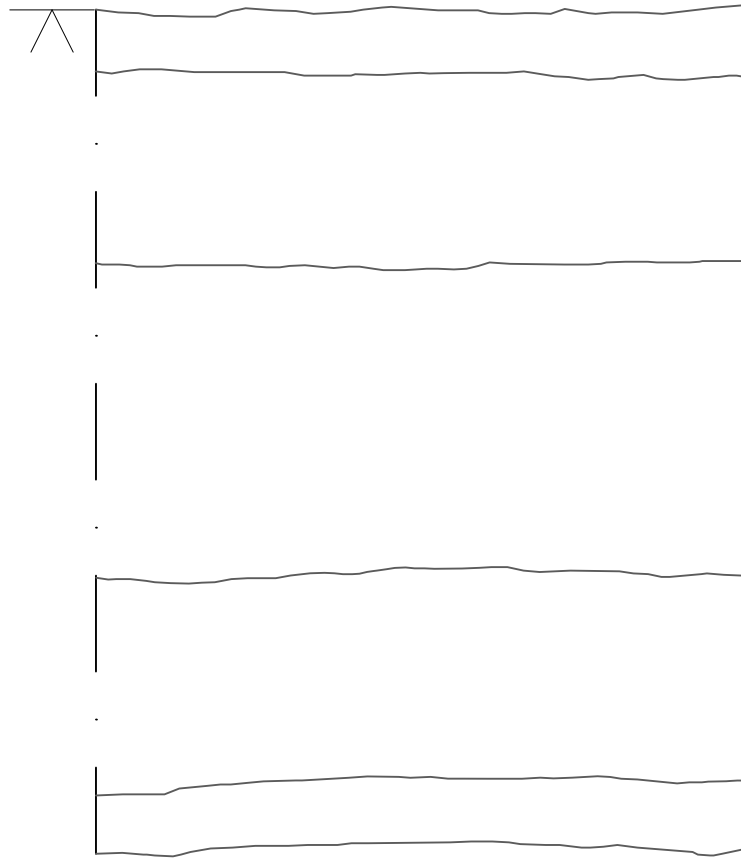
The archive is temporarily stored at the TPA office at Unit 1, Holly Lane, Chilwell, Nottingham, NG9 4AB. The archive has been granted permission to be deposited at Derby Museum and is expected to be custody of archiving services by the 31st of May 2015. An OASIS form (OASIS ID trentpea1-206871) detailing the project has been registered and will be concluded upon the museum's receipt of the archive.

Appendix 3 Figures









Appendix 4 Excavation Plates



Plate 1. West facing photograph of Test Pit 1



Plate 2. East facing photograph of Wall (0018) and features [0014] [0012]



Plate 3. South-west facing photograph of Pit (0006) and wall (0010)



Plate 4. Vertical photograph demonstrating pit (0006)



Plate 5. East facing photograph of western section of Test Pit 2



Plate 6. South facing photograph of the main area reduction



Plate 7. South facing photograph of the main area reduction



Plate 8. East facing photograph of wall [0024]



Plate 9. North-west facing photograph of wall [0024]