

Report on Archaeological Supervision and Recording at Lenton Priory Park, Nottingham.



Prepared For: Nottingham City Council

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Report Number: 055/2018

TPA Project Code: PPL

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Summary

- Trent & Peak Archaeology was commissioned by Nottingham City Council to carry out a program of archaeological supervision and recording on the excavation of three c.0.56m x 0.56m concrete pads for the placement of supporting pillars in advance of erecting an iron railing fence c.12.5m in width.
- A c.12.5m stretch of the former c.19th boundary wall was removed prior to attendance, which had been leaning at a precarious angle caused by adjacent tree root damage.
- No archaeological deposits, layers or features were observed. A possible sandstone foundation was recorded at an approximate depth of c.0.7m across the site. The foundation may contain re-used medieval stone. These were bonded by modern mortar, but provenance is uncertain.
- The sandstone foundation relates to the construction of the c.19th wall, however only the upper c.0.7m was exposed. In other areas of Priory Park, similar walls are known to have been constructed on top of re-used medieval masonry, though this could not be determined with any confidence here.
- Two probable c.19th masonry nails and a well preserved lamb vertebrae were recovered from the area of "pillar 2".
- Supervision of the pillar excavation took place on the 8th March 2018.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are extended to Nottingham City Council for commissioning the work and for facilitating site access. Further thanks are extended to Development Control Archaeologist Scott Lomax (Nottingham City Council) for his advice and guidance during these works.

Archaeological supervision and recording was undertaken in the field by Senior Project Archaeologist Victoria Owen and managed by Tom Hooley (TPA). All illustrations used within this report have been compiled by Norma Oldfield (TPA).

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1 Introduction and Planning Background

- 1.1 Trent & Peak Archaeology (TPA) was commissioned by Nottingham City Council to undertake a program of archaeological supervision and recording on land at Lenton Priory Park, during the replacement of a section of dilapidated former c.19th boundary wall with an iron railing fence supported by three pillars. The site is centred on SK 55250 38795, within the Lenton Priory Archaeological Constraint Area (No: SM 29987, HA 1019675).
- 1.2 The line of the former 19th century wall follows broadly the alignment of the original boundary Priory wall, which would delineate the inner and outer precinct of the Priory.
- 1.3 The work was undertaken in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012) and *CfA Guidelines* (2014a and b), utilising an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (Hooley, 2018).

2 Topography and Geology

- 2.1 The wall functions as the southern boundary of Lenton Priory Park and public garden, which is situated west of Priory Church. The park is bounded by municipal roadways, residential housing, with commercial industry to the south and east.
- 2.2 The underlying bedrock geology within the site is comprised of Lenton Sandstone Formation, a sandstone material formed during the Early Triassic Epoch approximately 246Ma~. Overlying this are superficial deposits of soft alluvial clay, silt, sand and gravel river terrace deposits set down during the Holocene.
(<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

3 Historical and Archaeological Background

Archaeological Background

- 1.1 Despite its importance, relatively little accurate detail is known of the overall plan of a number of parts of the Lenton Priory site. As late as 1845, the *Monasticon Anglicanum* summarised the state of knowledge pertaining to the priory rather well:

'All vestiges of Lenton priory had long disappeared, when, a few years ago, the discovery of a brass plate of the Crucifixion (engraved in the Gentleman's Magazine, vol. lxxvii. p. 281) drew attention to its site: subsequent to which a stone coffin, the bases of some pillars, and a large portion of the foundation walls, which had been uncovered by Mr. Stretton, the then owner, determined it more precisely.'
- 1.2 In 1935-36 H. Green exposed the foundations of the apsidal east end of the choir, as well as a section of the ambulatory to the north and the north side chapel. Later on, in the years 1943-51, Elliot and Berbank either undertook, or reported on, a number of small interventions and observations, which included investigation within the garden at the corner of Priory Street/Old Church Street (1943), the choir north aisle wall/north side of the chapel/arc of the foundations/piers (1945-6), a short section of the inner facing transept (1947), and the north aisle wall (1950). The building of a chapel to the east of the 'chapter house site', in 1951, exposed no remains of the monastic infirmary.

- 1.3 In the late 1970s M. Bishop demonstrated that the apsidal nave of the Conventual Church continues to the east of Old Church Street in the form of Lady Chapels, perhaps similar to those observed at St Pancras, London. One of these chapels included a burial in the wall (Bishop 1977).¹ In January 1984 the observation of a trench to lay replacement water mains at the west limit of Old Church Street, adjacent to the pavement, demonstrated that masonry of the priory survived at less than 0.50m below the present road level (Young 1984). The following month, another service trench excavated immediately to the east (34 inches from the kerb) revealed the remains of 3 human skeletons. Several skulls were also noted, immediately north of the Conventual Church. A plan of the walls revealed in January features was drawn. The burials, of presumed medieval date, were observed and drawn by a planning officer and not an archaeologist and the alignments of the burials should be regarded as speculative. Further human remains were later observed in a Diamond Cable trench on the opposite (east) side of Old Church Street by the police, but near to the previously identified skeletons.
- 1.4 Ever since Stretton's work in the early 1800s, there has been general agreement that the Priory's cloister was probably located on the south side of the Conventual Church. Conjectural plans to this effect were produced by Barnes (1987), Elliott and Berbank (1952) and most recently by Kinsley (2009). A more recent archaeological evaluation carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology at Nazareth House, on the south side of Priory Street, however, failed to find remains of the priory complex on this location. This cast some level of doubt over the reconstructed layout of the cloister of Lenton priory, provided by Barnes, or indeed the priory conventual church layout as provided by Elliot and Berbank.
- 1.5 In 2012-2013, Trent and Peak Archaeology were contracted by Vinci Construction to complete various archaeological works and monitoring in advance of the construction of the NET-2 tram route through Nottingham city centre. This included archaeological excavation areas outside of the scheduled zone and a watching brief on a cable trench through the scheduled area (see also; Davies and Flintoft 2015).

Historical background

- 1.5 With the exception of the snapshot of land ownership provided by the Domesday Book (1086), little is known about the occupation of Lenton in the years preceding the foundation of the priory. At this time Lenton was divided into the ownership of William Peverel, recipient of a large grant of land in Nottingham at the conquest and that directly owned by King William the Conqueror. Part of Peverel's land (two caricates with 2 ploughs and 4 freemen, and 4 smallholders with 2 ploughs and a 1 mill) remained under the jurisdiction of the King's Manor at Newbold. Whilst a further 4 bovates of taxable land (including land for half a plough) held before the conquest by an Anglo-Saxon, Wulnoth (1 plough, 1 villager, 1 smallholder, 1 mill, 10 acres of meadow and 10 acres of underwood), was placed in Williams charge following the conquest and then presumably granted to Peverel. The King directly owed 4 bovates of taxable waste land, which remained under the jurisdiction of his a large manor at Arnold, owned prior to the conquest by King Edward.
- 1.6 The Priory is believed to have been established in AD 1106-7. Although the Domesday entry for Lenton is largely unexceptional, with a partly wooded and river-side (milling) location, it does allow for the suggestion that the grant of land to Cluny may well have been a Royal decree; perhaps providing a use for waste land. It is also of interest that, unusually, the waste land in Lenton is the one land parcel that falls directly under the jurisdiction of pre-conquest royally owned manor; might this land have once been a holding, containing an Anglo-Saxon settlement that had been discontinued sometime before the Conquest?

- 1.7 Like many of the monastic houses, Lenton Priory was gradually abandoned by the monks in the years following the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530's, although there is some documentary evidence indicating that the market site flourished for some time after.
- 1.8 Approximate locations of the outer and inner precinct have been suggested through the combined use of documentary evidence and extant architectural elements (the Chapel of St Anthony, the proposed north wall of the nave and the single pier from the apse of the conventual church).
- 1.9 Medieval and post-medieval texts suggest that an annual eight-day fair was held within the outer precinct of the prior. The fair is reported as containing booths with penthouses used by merchants and their families to both sell goods from and to lodge in. A 17th century rental survey mentions the conversion of some of the booths into cottages (Barnes 1987). Beyond these fragmentary reports, very little was known about the precinct and the fair site prior to recent archaeological investigations. The most informative guide to the priory site layout reconstructed from historical documentation is that produced by Barnes (1987), and one of the most reliable speculative models was formulated by Elliott and Burbank (1952).

4 Aims and Objectives

- 4.1 The main objective of the watching brief was to identify the presence of any archaeological remains likely to be affected by intrusive aspects of the development.
- 4.2 Where practical (within the constraints of the watching brief and development), this would aim to establish the overall extent, date and state of preservation of any archaeological remains affected by the development.
- 4.3 The project also aimed to identify any features of geoarchaeological significance, including identifying the potential for palaeoenvironmental data.
- 4.5 The research agenda for the monitoring of the pillar/concrete pad excavations were based on priorities set out in the East Midlands Heritage regional research agenda (Knight *et al* 2012), which included the following areas of research interest:

6.1.7 Early Mediaeval: *Can we identify social/political boundaries (E.g. surviving linear earthworks and natural barriers) and /or estates?*

7.5.2 High Mediaeval: *Can we discern significant differences in the planning, economy and landscape of the different monastic orders?*

7.1.4 High Mediaeval: *Can we shed further light upon the commercial roles of aires, markets, ports and other trading centres?*

5 Methodology

- 5.1 All fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance* (2014b) and the *Code of Conduct* (2014a). The work followed the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (Hooley 2018), and was carried out by a suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist selected from Trent and Peak's supervisory staff.
- 5.2 Three small boxed trenches (labelled "pillars") measuring c.0.56m x 0.56m were located and excavated at equidistant points along a c.12.5m stretch of demolished c.19th wall.
- 5.3 No machine excavation took place within the grounds of Lenton Priory Park. All box trenches for the placement of concrete padding (supporting the iron railing fence) were hand dug by suitably qualified contractors under archaeological supervision. Removal of the remaining wall foundations was undertaken by hand with limited use of power tools.
- 5.4 Below-ground stratigraphy was recorded, photographed and interpreted, even where no archaeological finds or features were present, in accordance with ClfA *guidelines* (2014).
- 5.5 Plans of all contexts including features were drawn on drafting film (permatrace) in pencil at a scale of 1:20/1:50, and show: context numbers, all colour and textural changes, levels expressed as O.D. values, sufficient details to locate the subject in relation to OS 1:2500 mapping.
- 5.6 Sections show the same information, but levelling information is given in the form of a datum line with O.D/arbitrary value. The locations of all sections are shown on plan.
- 5.7 All excavations were recorded at an appropriate scale by photography. Site photography was undertaken with the use of a high resolution DSLR camera.

6 Results

- 6.1 No archaeological deposits or artefacts were encountered during the excavation of three boxed trenches for the placement of concrete pads prior to the instalment of an iron railing fence.
- 6.2 Geological substratum was not observed.

Stone Foundation [0104].
- 6.3 A possible sandstone foundation surface [0104] was observed at the base of each "pillar" area at an approximate depth of c.0.7m. The edges of this extended out of the margin of excavation, which inhibited investigation. The presence of modern mortar suggests a tentative interpretation as modern, utilising reclaimed medieval masonry, which functioned as part of the construction of the c.19th wall. This sandstone foundation was not removed as part of these works, and the feature is preserved *in-situ*.

Wall [0102]
- 6.4 The base of wall structure [0102], constructed on top of [0104], formed the remaining below ground c.19th wall foundations. This consisted of 8 courses of semi-irregular Monks (Yorkshire) bond brickwork secured with modern very light pinkish white mortar. Below ground remnants of the wall were removed as part of this phase of work (plate 6).
- 6.5 Backfill for the construction cut of the c.19th wall [0102] was noted as (0103), which comprised loose dark greyish black silty sand, with frequent ceramic rubble inclusions. Two c.19th probable masonry nails with adhered timber and one well preserved fragment of lamb

vertebrae were recovered from “pillar 2” (figure 2). These were interpreted as waste material deposited during backfill. The construction cut for the wall was not observed in section, indicating a much wider trench for the building of the wall.

- 6.6 All “pillar” areas were sealed by a layer of mid brownish grey upper subsoil and loamy topsoil to a combined depth of 0.3m.

7 Discussion and Conclusions

- 7.1 No archaeological deposits or artefacts were recovered during this phase of archaeological supervision.
- 7.2 Excavation revealed the below ground remains of the c.19th boundary wall which was removed during this course of work. A possible sandstone foundation [0104] beneath this was recorded, but not fully investigated. It is possible that this foundation may reflect re-use of medieval masonry. True provenance is uncertain, but the presence of modern bonding material would favour c.19th date of construction.
- 7.3 Previous trial trenching during the Lenton Priory Project (Davies and Flintoft 2015) located similar structural deposits, (though unbonded) of worked medieval masonry are known, serving as support or foundations for later brick built wall features. It is probable that remnants of the priory were re-used continuously as structural or garden features throughout the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries, which originally functioned to demarcate the earlier Outer Precinct. As the sandstone foundations are preserved *in-situ*, it is possible that future work may be able to locate and characterise the feature.

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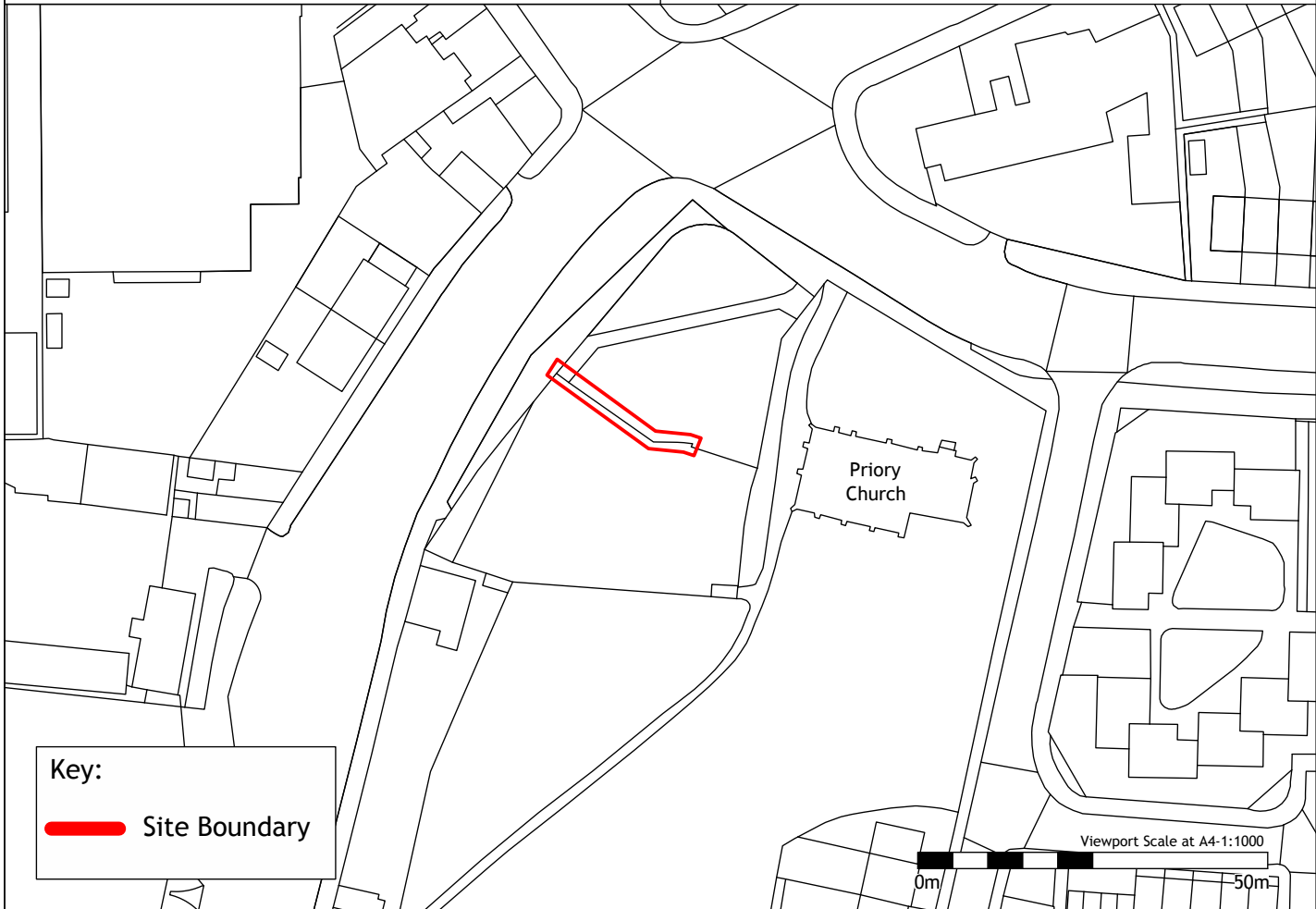
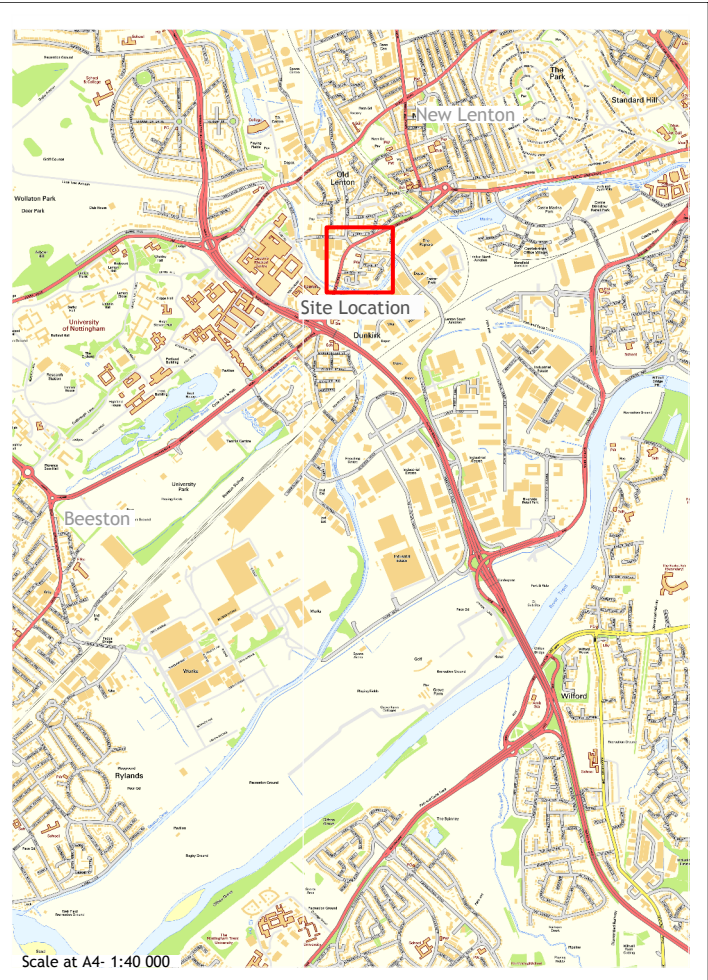
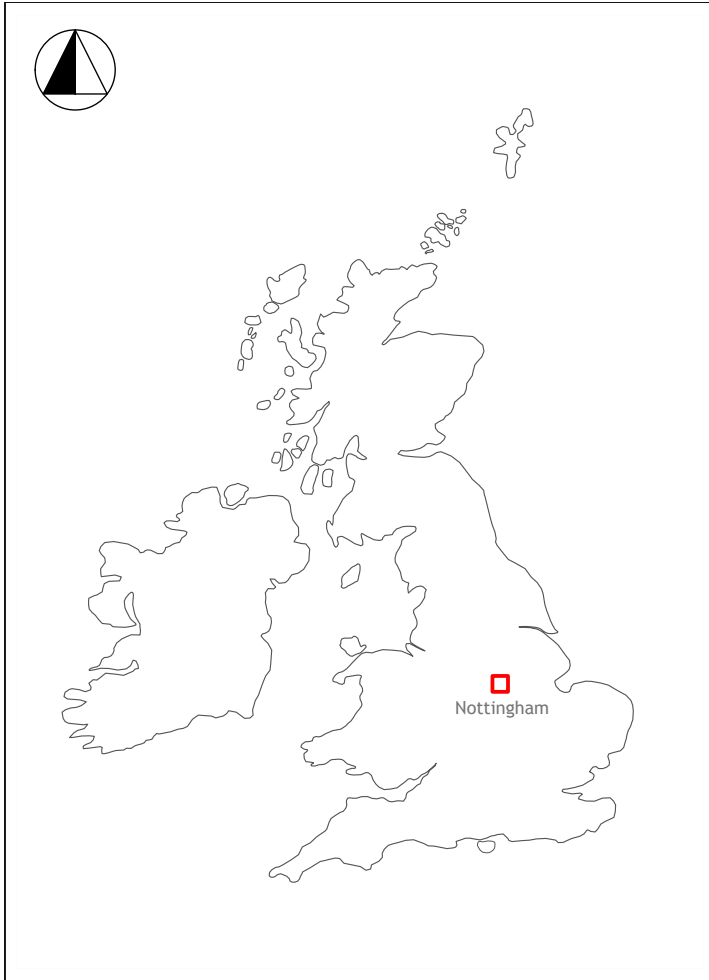
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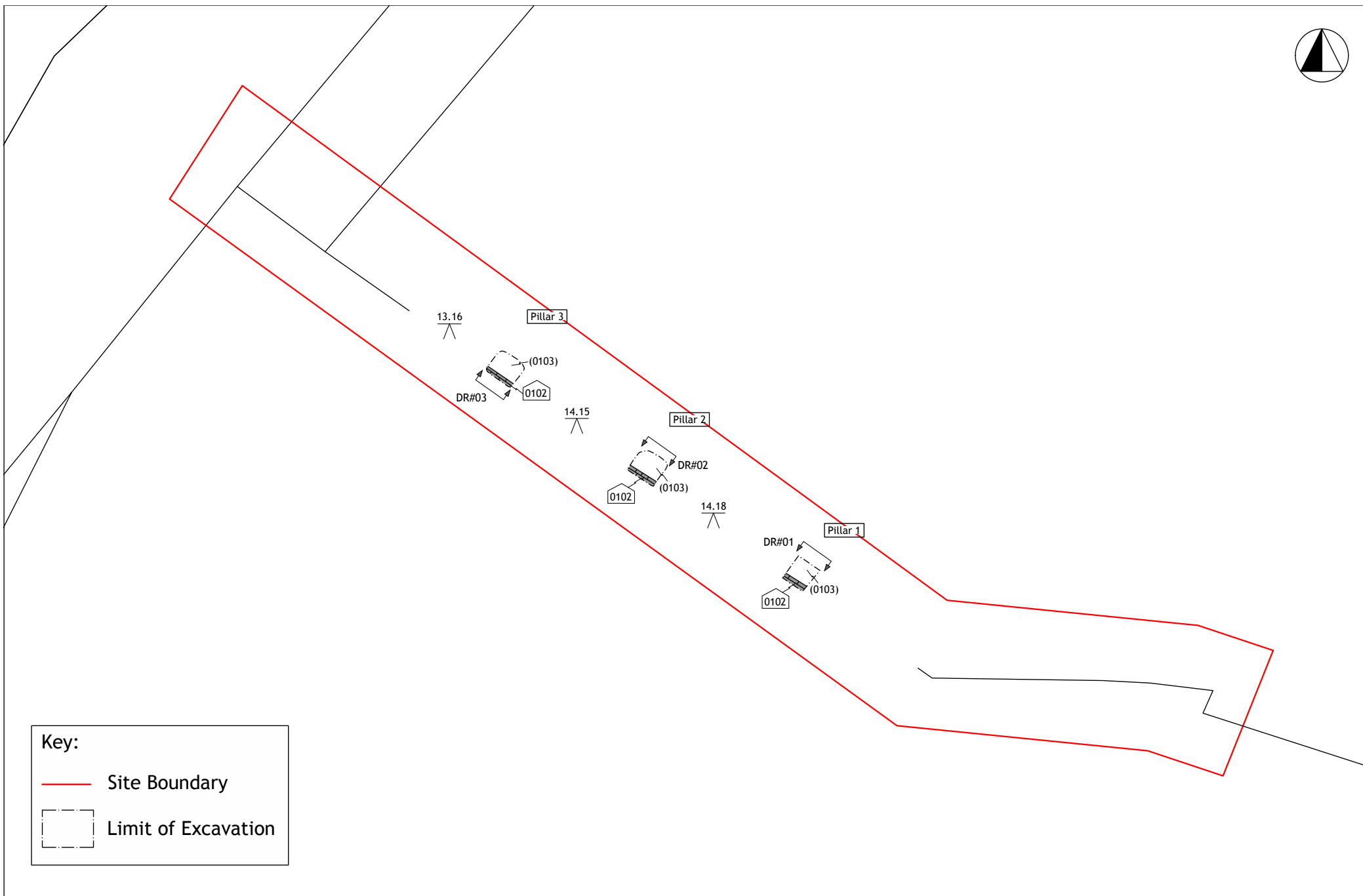
British geological Survey 2017. *Geology of Britain Viewer*. Accessible at:
<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html?>. [Accessed 05/02/2018].

Appendix 1: Context Register

Context	Feature	Description	Date
0100	Layer	Topsoil	Modern
0101	Layer	Subsoil	Modern
0102	Structure	c.19 th brick wall foundation	Modern
0103	Fill	Backfill of construction cut for wall [01002]- cut not observed.	Modern
0104	Structure	Possible sandstone base of c.19 th wall	Undated

Appendix 2: Figures

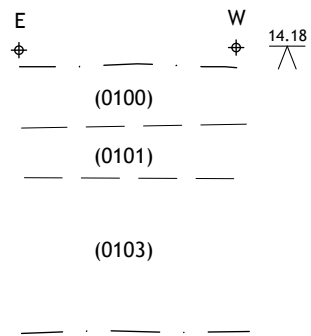




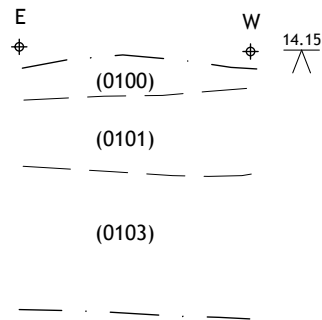
Key:

- Site Boundary
- - - Limit of Excavation

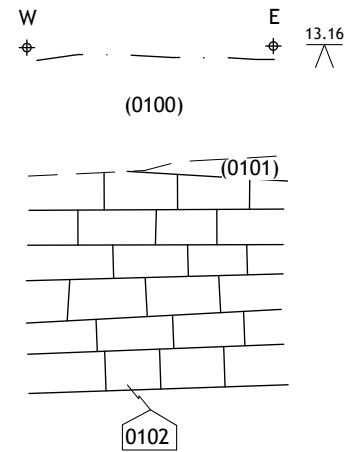
DR#01
South Facing Section of Pillar 1



DR#02
South Facing Section of Pillar 2



DR#03
North Facing Section of Pillar 3



Appendix 3: Plates



Plate 1: Site overview; Lenton Priory Church, looking north-west



Plate 2: Area of excavation, looking south-east



Plate 3: Areas demarcated for excavation (in yellow) for concrete pads, looking south-east. Scale= 1m x 1m.



Plate 4: P1: Post-excitation photo, south facing section. Scale 1m.



Plate 5: P2: Oblique post-excitation photo. Partial demolition of c.19th wall foundations for excavation of pillar hole, looking south-east. Scale 1m



Plate 6: P3: Mid-excitation; c.19th brick wall foundations prior to removal, looking south south-east. Scale 1m.

Appendix 4: Index of Archive and Arrangements for Deposition

<i>Field Records</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Number</i>
Watching brief record sheets	Record of visit and work carried out	1
Context register	Register of context numbers and descriptions	1
Context sheets	Record of features and deposits	4
Photo record sheet	Record of photographs taken	1
Digital photographs	All views	22
Site drawings	Plan of site	4
<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 of the watching brief.	1
<i>Find</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Number</i>
Artefact	Animal bone, metal (not to be deposited)	3

The site archive is currently held at the offices of Trent & Peak Archaeology, Unit 1, Holly Lane, Chilwell, Nottingham, NG9 4AB. It will be deposited with Nottinghamshire Museums, Arts and Records Service within 6 months of the completion of the report.

Appendix 5: OASIS Data Collection Form

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

[List of Projects](#) | [Manage Projects](#) | [Search Projects](#) | [New project](#) | [Change your details](#) | [HER coverage](#) | [Change country](#) | [Log out](#)

Printable version

OASIS ID: trentpea1-312556

Project details

Project name	Lenton Priory Park
Short description of the project	Trent and Peak Archaeology was commissioned by Nottingham City Council to carry out a program of archaeological supervision and recording on the excavation of three c.0.56m x 0.56m concrete pads for the placement of supporting pillars in advance of erecting an iron railing fence c.12.5m in width. A c.12.5m stretch of the former c.19th boundary wall was removed prior to attendance, which had been leaning at a precarious angle caused by adjacent tree root damage. No archaeological deposits, layers or features were observed. A possible sandstone foundation was recorded at an approximate depth of c.0.7m across the site. These were bonded by modern mortar, and provenance is uncertain. It is possible that these reflect reuse of priory stone for the construction of the c.19th wall, however only the surface was exposed. Two probable c.19th masonry nails and a well preserved lamb vertebrae were recovered from
Project dates	Start: 08-03-2018 End: 08-03-2018
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	PPL - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI)
Current Land use	Other 4 - Churchyard
Monument type	CISTERCIAN PRIORY Medieval
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	""Recorded Observation"", ""Watching Brief""
Prompt	Scheduled Monument Consent

Project location

Country	England
Site location	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE NOTTINGHAM NOTTINGHAM Lenton Priory Parl
Postcode	NG7 2NW
Study area	12.5 Square metres
Site coordinates	SK 455260 338807 52.900116419099 -1.323116419238 52 54 00 N 001 19 23 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 50m Max: 50m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Trent and Peak Archaeology
Project brief	Nottingham City Council

originator
 Project design originator Tom Hooley
 Project director/manager Tom Hooley
 Project supervisor Victoria Owen
 Name of sponsor/funding body Nottingham City Council

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No
 Digital Archive recipient Trent and Peak Archaeology
 Digital Contents "none"
 Digital Media available "Database","Survey","Text"
 Paper Archive recipient Trent and Peak Archaeology
 Paper Contents "none"
 Paper Media available "Context sheet","Correspondence","Drawing","Matrices","Photograph","Plan","Report","Section","Unpublished Text"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
 Title Report on Archaeological Supervision and Recording at Lenton Priory Park, Nottingham.
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OASIS:

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