

# Shakespeare Street, Nottingham

## Results of an Archaeological Watching Brief

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Produced for: NCMN

Prepared by: Abigail Ford

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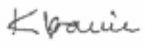
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## Summary

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- Trent & Peak Archaeology (TPA) was commissioned by NMCN to undertake an archaeological watching brief at a site between Nottingham Trent University's Bonington and Dryden Buildings (NGR SK 569 404). The groundworks comprised the construction of a detention shaft.
- The potential for the site to contain evidence of previously unrecorded cave systems and/or 19<sup>th</sup> century archaeology was identified due to the presence of archaeological features and heritage assets within the immediate area. Two watching briefs were previously carried out 90m south of the site at the corner of Chaucer Steer and Goldsmith Street, however these did not discover any archaeological features.
- For the excavation and installation of the detention shaft, concrete ring sections 1m high with an internal diameter of 12.5m and a thickness of 0.35m, were pushed into the ground using a crane and hammer. A tracked excavator was lowered into the rings to remove material in 1m spits in a circular strip using a ditching bucket.
- Excavation revealed a stratigraphy primarily of made ground and levelling layers that are consistent with borehole surveys conducted at the site during 2018. This is in keeping with the known modern development of the area.
- An intact 19<sup>th</sup> century brick culvert was recorded during excavation; additionally, a 19<sup>th</sup> century brick floor surface was recorded in section. No additional archaeological features, deposits or structures were present. As such, there was limited potential for addressing relevant topics in the EMHERF research agenda (Knight and Allen 2012).

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# 1 Introduction

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- 1.1 Trent & Peak Archaeology (TPA) was commissioned by NMCN to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks at a site between Nottingham Trent University's Bonington and Dryden Buildings (NGR SK 569 404). The mitigation works were undertaken during August and September 2019 and comprised archaeological monitoring during the construction of a detention shaft.
- 1.2 For the excavation and installation of the detention shaft, concrete ring sections 1m high with an internal diameter of 12.5m and a thickness of 0.35m, were pushed into the ground using a crane and hammer. A tracked excavator was lowered into the rings to remove material in 1m spits in a circular strip using a ditching bucket.
- 1.3 The watching brief described herein was conducted in line with the methodology prescribed in the WSI (Ford 2019).

## 2 Site Background

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### 2.1 Location, Geology and Topography

- 2.1.1 The site is located within the northern portion of Nottingham City Centre (Figure 1), within the confines of the Nottingham Trent University city campus. An area of student housing is located to the north of the site, on Dundas Close, and the site is located between the Dryden Building to the east and the Bonington Building to the west.
- 2.1.2 The British Geological Survey maps the underlying geology of the site as the Chester Sandstone Formation (Triassic Period). No overlying superficial deposits are recorded (British Geological Survey 2019).
- 2.1.3 The site is situated on an area of high ground on which the entire northern part of Nottingham City centre is located. The ground slopes southwards towards the central and southern parts of the city and the River Trent, which is approximately 2km south of the site.
- 2.1.4 Previous archaeological investigations within the vicinity of the site have recorded the eroded sandstone bedrock at a very shallow depth in this area of the city. These events included a watching brief at the Concert Hall in 1980 (approximately 320m south of the site, ENU244), and a watching brief at North Sherwood Street in the 1990s (approximately 80m north-east of the site, ENU524). Recent work by TPA approximately 300m east of the site at 12-14 St Marks Street revealed natural sand at 0.3m below ground level (Dicken & Owen 2018); St Marks Street and Shakespeare Street are located at a similar elevation AOD.
- 2.1.5 A borehole sunk by the client in 2018 close to the site revealed that layers of sandstone are present between 17.58m and c.8m below ground level. Above these are layers of gravelly sand and slightly gravelly clay, then c.3m of made ground below the modern tarmac ground surface (Figure 2).

### 2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 2.2.1 A comprehensive Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (DBA) was previously produced by TPA for the construction of the Dryden Building (Reeves 2018, 2019). The archaeological and historical background is summarised here.

## Prehistoric to Roman

- 2.2.2 There are no recorded prehistoric or Roman monuments or findspots within the site or immediate area. Evidence for prehistoric and Romano-British activity within the historic core of Nottingham more generally is limited. The prehistoric activity is limited to a few findspots in proximity with the River Trent. Fragments of Iron Age pottery were recovered during excavations at Halifax Place in the Lace Market (Lomax 2013, 41). Despite this scant evidence, prehistoric occupation within the city of Nottingham is generally believed to have occurred at various times throughout the prehistoric period (Bishop 1998a, 1; Lomax 2013, 41). The Trent Valley, including its gravel terraces, alluvial floodplain and hinterland was the focus of a wide range of prehistoric activity (Knight and Howard 2004). This has been demonstrated through aerial photography and increased commercial excavation (Knight and Howard 2004).
- 2.2.3 Evidence of Romano-British occupation within the historic core of the city of Nottingham is limited to a small amount of pot sherds, which were recovered from the backfill of caves (Lomax 2013, 16). The proximity of the River Trent (Trisantonæ) and the Fosse Way Roman road to the city demonstrate that the area was well connected during this period and that Roman remains are to be expected (Bishop 1998b, 2; Allen et al. 2016).

## Anglo Saxon

- 2.2.4 Archaeological investigations at the previously mentioned Halifax Place, and further works on land under the Motorpoint Arena have produced evidence which indicate that the Lace Market was occupied during the early and middle Anglo-Saxon Period (Lomax 2013, 17). Beyond these two sites little further evidence of early Anglo-Saxon occupation exist within the city of Nottingham.
- 2.2.5 Prior to the Conquest in 1066AD Nottingham changed hands between the Danes and the Anglo-Saxons on several occasions (Lomax 2013, 17-18). Nottingham prospered despite these changes and in 928AD the city was able to found a mint (Lomax 2013, 18). The settlement spread out from the area of the Lace Market across the sandstone plateau during this period (Lomax 2013, 18).
- 2.2.6 The caves beneath Nottingham were first mentioned in documentary sources during this period. Whilst writing about the life of King Alfred, the Welsh monk Asser referred to it as 'Tiggua Cobaucc' or 'place of caves' in 868AD (Lomax 2013, 114). For the caves to have been a defining feature of the city during this period it can be presumed that they were both well-known and well used.

## Medieval

- 2.2.7 A single medieval non-designated heritage asset was identified within the vicinity of the site, the Whinstone Mines (approximately 215m north-east of the site). The exact date of these caves/mines is unknown, but it is thought they may date from as far back as the late 13th Century. They were infilled with concrete in the 1980s; an inspection prior to this recorded by the Nottingham HER concluded that they were likely the result of sand extraction, rather than deliberately cut cellars (Waltham 1994, 3, 8-9).
- 2.2.8 In 1067AD a Norman castle was erected on the outcrop of sandstone which is the site of the current Nottingham Castle (Lomax 2013, 86). During this period Nottingham existed as two separate boroughs; the Anglo-Saxon borough existed in the area now known as the Lace Market, while the Norman borough was centred around the castle (Lomax 2013, 86).
- 2.2.9 During the Medieval period hundreds of caves were dug within the city of Nottingham finding many different uses. A complex of caves which are remarkably well-preserved exist beneath the Intu Broadmarsh Shopping Centre; these caves were used for tanning during the Medieval period (Lomax 2013, 131-132; Nottingham Caves Survey 2018). Around thirty



of the caves within the city were used as medieval malt kilns (Lomax 2013, 128). Other caves across the city had numerous purposes, most of which were related to storage.

- 2.2.10 In 1267AD the first murage grant was levied to raise funds for the building of a town wall; then in 1395AD the first reference to the town wall being robbed was made (Lomax 2013, 18). The Shakespeare Street site is located outside the line of the medieval town wall, in fact, it was not until the late 19th century that the site was developed and fully incorporated into the city.

#### Post-Medieval

- 2.2.11 There are three cave systems within the wider area which are believed to date from the Post-Medieval period. The Peel Street caves are located approximately 160m north of the site (MNU277). These caves functioned as a sand mine in late 18th century; they consist of two separate cave systems joined together, each including many winding passages. There is some debate as to who the excavator of these caves was; local knowledge accredits them to a man by the name of White in 1796, while in 1815 Blackner records them as having been excavated for the previous 30 years by James Ross or Rouse. Subsequently, parts of these caves have been used as cellars for the shops on Mansfield Road (MNU276), and as air-raid shelters in the Second World War.
- 2.2.12 A second cave system is believed to have been situated beneath York Street (approximately 230m east of the site, MNU275) but its exact location is unknown. These caves are known from Borough records alone; they are recorded as having had various works carried out in 1747 and 1755.
- 2.2.13 The final cave system recorded by the Nottingham HER within the Study Area is located approximately 240m east of the site beneath Nottingham Brewery Ltd and York House (MNU784 and MNU475). As with the Peel Street examples, these caves also consist of two separate systems. It is believed that the northern section of the caves was first excavated as cellars to St Mary's Workhouse in the late 18th century. The southern section of these caves is thought to have been first excavated as the cellar of a public house in the early 19th century. This southern system was then enlarged by Nottingham Brewery Ltd in the mid-19th century and used to store barrels; in the late 19th century a tunnel was dug to the Victoria Station to allow for their easy transportation. Similar to Peel Street, sections of these caves were later used for storage and as an air-raid shelter (The Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire 1986, 69-78).
- 2.2.14 The Nottingham HER records two archaeological events which may have uncovered parts of the city's Civil-War defences. Two ditches were observed by Shipman in 1868 during excavations at Belgrave Square (approximately 210m south of the site, EUN411). In 1885 Shipman's brother observed a large ditch during excavations on South Sherwood Street (approximately 230m south-east of the site, EUN412). In 1949 Butler reinterpreted these ditches as being part of the Civil War defences of the city and these locations are included on the currently accepted projection of the Civil War defences. If correct, this means that the Shakespeare Street site is located outside of these defences (The Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire 1949, 26-33).
- 2.2.15 Nottingham played an important role in the English Civil war. In 1642 King Charles started the conflict by raising his standard at Standard Hill near the Castle (Lomax 2013, 152). The city was quickly seized by the Parliamentarians and held until 1646. Lucy Hutchinson the wife of a former city governor recorded her memories of this period (Lomax 2013, 152). She wrote that by 1643 the city had large defences built which consisted of 'half moones & bulwarks' and would have required 3000 men to man properly (Lomax 2013, 155). If this record is to be believed, then such defences would have undoubtedly left substantial archaeological remains; it therefore seems strange that, thus far, possible remains have only been encountered on two occasions in the 19th Century.



- 2.2.16 The cartographic evidence demonstrates that site was beyond the northern extent of the city in the post-medieval Period. John Speed's map of 1610, the 1677 Thoroton map, Henry Overton's map of 1714, and Chapman's map of 1774 all depict the site as being outside the city showing the area as either blank space, fields or cultivated land. From the time of the 1677 Thoroton map development can be seen to spread north from the city centre along Mansfield Road.
- 2.2.17 By the late 19th Century the area of the city surrounding the site had started to become much more developed. This included a number of houses within the confines of the site itself, and an increased density of buildings within the wider area.
- 2.2.18 The cartographic evidence demonstrates that the site continued to be used for agricultural purposes until the end of the 19th Century. The Staveley and Wood map of 1831 and the Dearden map of 1844 both depict the site as open land. However, by the time of the 1880 Six Inch Ordnance Survey map, the site, and the area surrounding it, had been completely developed for housing. The 1899 Six Inch Ordnance Survey map does not show that any further development had taken place after this.

#### Modern

- 2.2.19 The houses recorded at the site were demolished by 1973-1977 when the site was acquired by the university.

#### Previous Archaeological Investigations

- 2.2.20 Two archaeological watching briefs have previously taken place in proximity to the site, neither of which discovered any archaeological features; these took place at the corner of Chaucer Street and Goldsmith Street in 1970-74 (approximately 90m south of the Site) (Nottingham City Council 2018), and at a site on North Sherwood Street in the 1990s (approximately 150m north-east of the Site) (Reeves 2019).
- 2.2.21 The DBA carried out for this site established that there was low potential for the Site to contain archaeological evidence dating from the Prehistoric to the post-medieval period (Reeves 2019). The DBA determined that there was moderate potential for the Site to contain 19th century road surfaces relating to both Dryden Street and Shakespeare Street, as these surfaces are likely to have been affected by later truncation. There was moderate potential for the site to contain archaeological remains relating to the 19th century houses which may have existed within the Site. It was also assessed that there is low potential for the site to contain any other 19th Century archaeological remains, including caves (ibid)

## 3 Aims and Objectives

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- 3.1.1 The overall aim of the watching brief was to ensure that any remains exposed during the installation of the detention shaft were excavated, recorded and recovered. Any such remains were subject to post-excavation analysis and reporting.
- 3.1.2 The general objectives of the fieldwork can be stated as:
- To monitor intrusive groundworks and assess the location, extent, date, character, significance and levels of preservation of any archaeological remains within the development site.
  - To ensure that any remains present were preserved by record according to their significance, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government 2019).

- All recording has resulted in 'the preparation of a report and ordered archive', in line with the Standards and Guidance: for an archaeological watching brief of the ClfA Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (ClfA 2014).

## 4 Regional Research Framework

- 4.1 The programme of archaeological mitigation proposed herein may reveal evidence that allows research priorities highlighted by regional research frameworks to be addressed. Any evidence uncovered by the monitoring should be considered with the guidance provided by East Midlands Historic Environment Research Framework (EMHERF) in mind. Research objectives highlighted in the framework of particular note to this programme include:

High Medieval (1066-1485)
<b>7.1 Urbanism</b>
3. How may we enhance our understanding of the chronology, functions and morphology of caves, and in particular the outstanding subterranean resource of medieval Nottingham?
Modern (1750 to present)
<b>9.2 Buildings in town and countryside</b>
1. Can we establish a typology of modern buildings, particularly of the twentieth century, and how does this vary regionally?

## 5 Methodology

### 5.1 Methodology of Archaeological Watching Brief

#### General conditions

- 5.1.1 The work comprised the monitoring of excavation of one detention shaft using a tracked excavator fitted with a ditching bucket.
- 5.1.2 All recording resulted in 'the preparation of a report and ordered archive, in line with the Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance: for an archaeological watching brief of the ClfA Institute for Archaeologists (2014a and 2014b).

#### Shaft excavation

- 5.1.3 For the excavation and installation of the detention shaft, concrete ring sections 1m high, with an internal diameter of 12.5m and a thickness of 0.35m, were pushed into the ground using a crane and hammer (Figure 2). A tracked excavator was lowered inside the rings to remove material in 1m spits in a circular strip using a ditching bucket; spoil was stored adjacent to the hole.

## Recording

- 5.1.4 All excavations ceased before TPA staff entered the dig at each intermittent watching brief phase to record the excavation at 1m depths. TPA staff liaised closely with the contractor throughout the majority of the fieldwork, however, archaeological attendance ceased prior to the date that excavations reached the full depth of 28.6m.
- 5.1.5 The sequence of deposits and archaeological features was recorded on pro-forma context sheets. Sections were recorded by hand on drafting film at an appropriate scale (i.e. 1:20). This was supplemented with digital photography.
- 5.1.6 Archaeological features were hand-cleaned sufficient to determine their plan and form, and to recover any datable artefacts. In some instances, due to safety constraints and the nature of the excavation it was not possible to fully access the site for recording.

## 6 Results (Figures 3 and 4)

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- 6.1 Weathered natural sandy gravel layer (0017) was recorded as beginning at approximately 5.7m BGL (Plate 11); this was overlain by (0016), a deposit of sand/gravel clay alluvium. These layers are consistent with the depths and composition recorded for natural sand and gravels in the previous borehole surveys conducted at the site.
- 6.2 Above these natural layers, a brick culvert (0014) of a provisionally broad 19<sup>th</sup> century date was observed, placed on a concrete pad (0015) due to the soft sand geology below (Plates 8 and 7). The culvert was identified within the central-western portion of the shaft, aligned north-south. The bricks were double skinned and laid in English cross bond formation with a light yellowish white mortar containing small pebble inclusions. It was circular in profile, and approximately 0.7 m wide.
- 6.3 A sequence of made ground layers and deposits were recorded: in the western half of the shaft a soft sandy deposit (0013) was visible for approximately 4.0m across the shaft above (0016). Following this, above the culvert and across the rest of the shaft, a series of made ground layers and sandy deposits were observed (also overlying modern services) – this included (0012), (0011), (0010) and (0009) (Plate 4).
- 6.4 Deposit (0008), a silty sand, and layer (0007), a layer of made ground with large quantities of rubble, were visible at the northern end of the shaft and were likely to have been laid down around the same time (Plate 5).
- 6.5 Above layer (0007) brick surface (0006) was recorded. This was a single course of bricks laid as part of a former floor surface. No obvious bonding pattern was observed; however, mortar was identified as light yellowish-grey sand with minimal inclusions. The bricks were of a standard size 7cmx11x23cm, indicating a broad post-1830 construction date. Approximately 3.0m of this surface was seen in section (Plate 5).
- 6.6 Brick surface (0006) was overlaid by a layer of tarmac (0005) and a layer of hardcore (0004) (Plate 4). Two deposits, (0003) and (0002), were present above (0004). Deposit (0003) was the initial backfill of a cut to divert a culvert along the north-western edge of the shaft and comprised of made ground to a depth of 2.5m BGL, with modern pottery and fragments of ceramic drain pipe (Plate 3). This was not retained due to recent disturbance. Deposit (0002) was the second deposit backfilling the culvert diversion, and comprised modern pea gravel; above this, the site was sealed by (0001), a layer of tarmac (Plate 3).

## 7 Discussion and Conclusion

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- 7.1 No pre-modern archaeological finds, features or deposits were observed during the watching brief.
- 7.2 Excavation revealed a fairly uniform stratigraphy of tarmac, made ground and natural sandy gravels that were consistent with the results observed during the 2018 borehole survey.
- 7.3 The archaeological horizon was reached at the depths required for the groundworks to be carried out. The results obtained from this watching brief are therefore limited in their potential to address the EMHERF questions that held relevance for the historical and archaeological context of the site.
- 7.4 The 19<sup>th</sup> century brick culvert and brick ground surface offer some insight into the modern historical infrastructure in this area of Nottingham, however this is limited due to the nature of the excavation carried out for the installation of the detention shaft.

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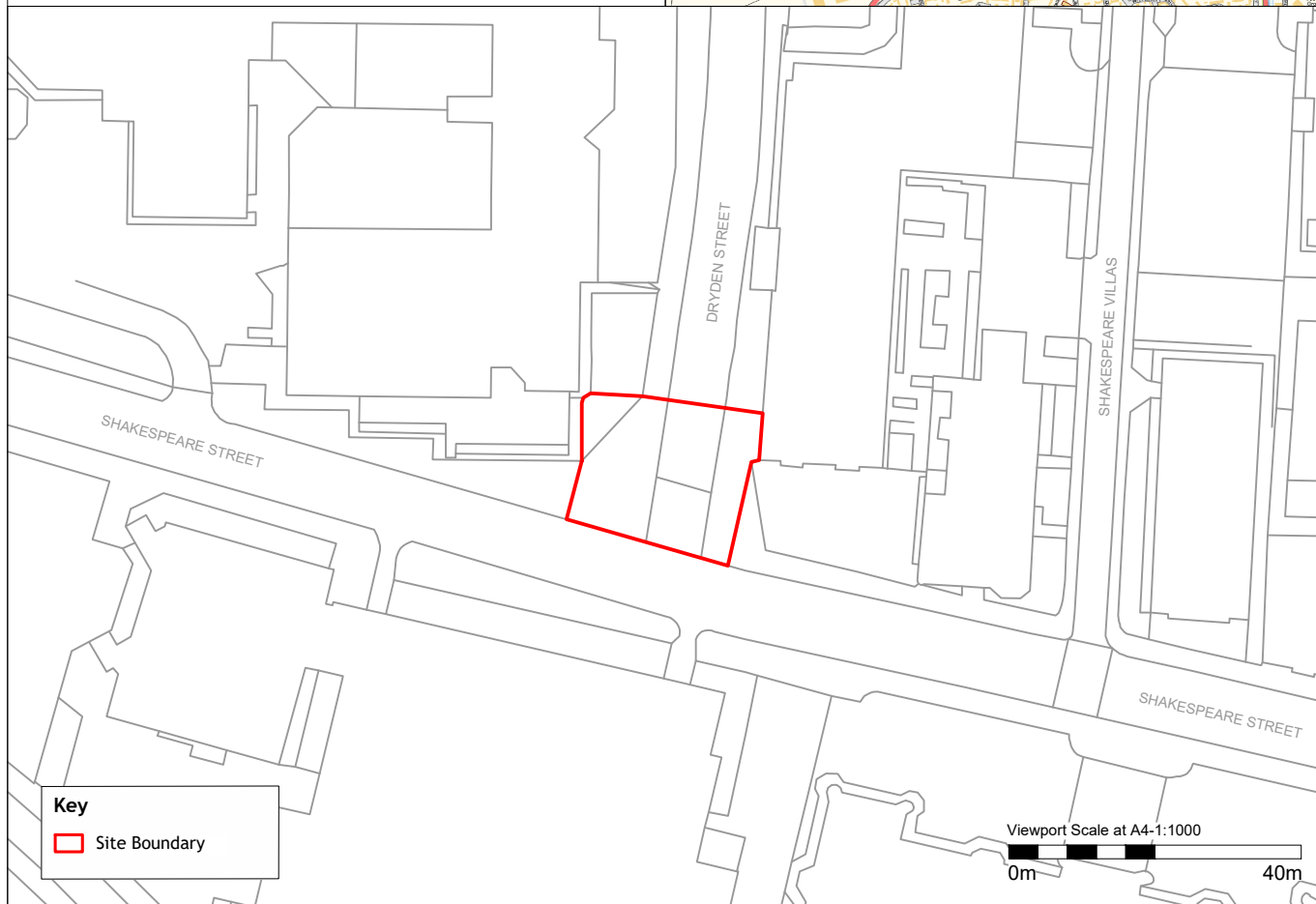
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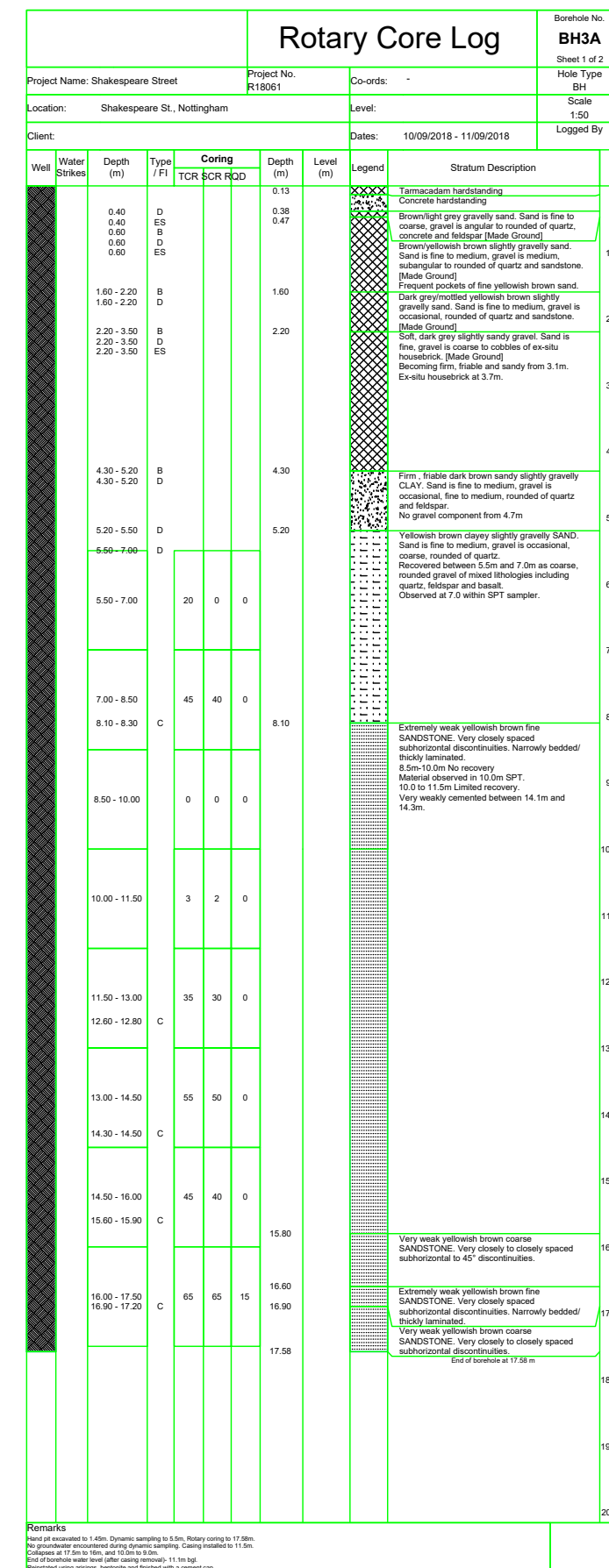
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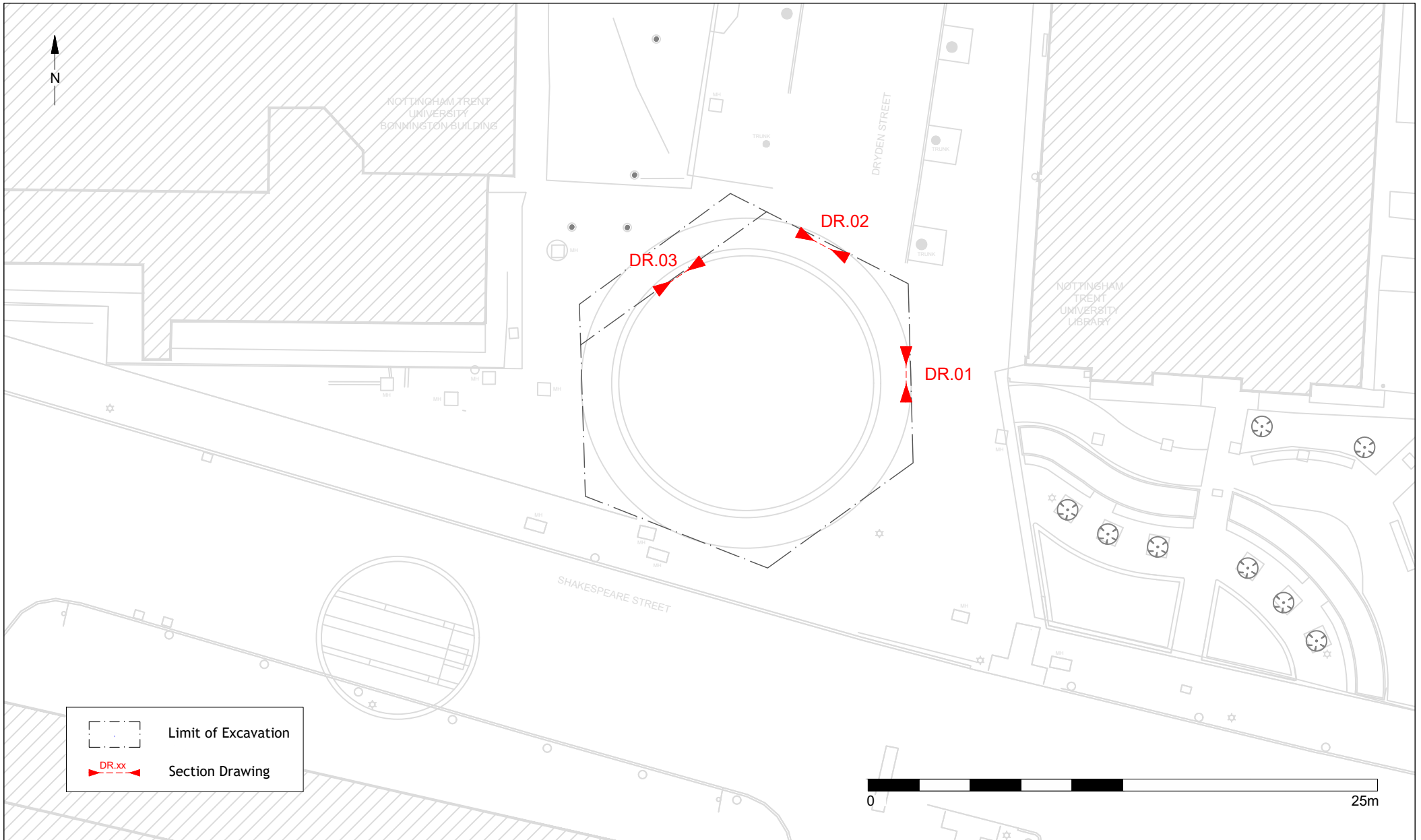


## Appendix 2: Figures

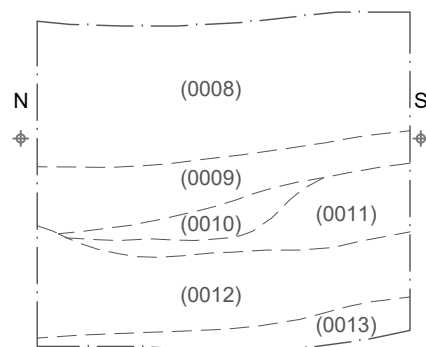
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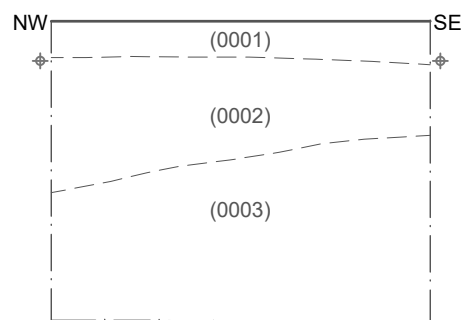




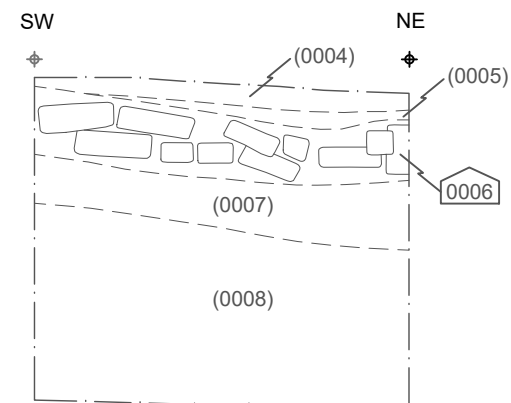
DR.01  
West Facing Section of Excavation



DR.02  
South West Facing Section of Excavation



DR.03  
South East Facing Section of Excavation





## Appendix 3: Plates

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Plate 3: General site photograph of Shakespeare Street. No scale.



Plate 2: Working shot of excavation, no scale.





Plate 3: West-facing representative section at eastern end of shaft, showing (0001), (0002), and (0003). Scale: 1m.



Plate 4: West-facing section of further excavation, showing (0008), (0009), (0010), (0011), (0012) and (0012). Scale: 1m.



Plate 5: South-facing representative section at northern end of shaft, showing (0004), (0005), (0006), (0007), and (0008). Scale: 1m.



Plate 6: East-facing representative section of test pit 1 in west of shaft. Scale: 1m.





Plate 7: Culvert (0014), looking north. No scale.



Plate 8: Oblique view of culvert (0014), looking north-east. Scale: 1m.



Plate 9: Working shot of ground reduction at site, no scale.





Plate 10: Working shot of continued ground reduction at site, no scale.



Plate 11: General view of site, showing natural gravels (0017) at base of shaft at this point of excavation. No scale.

## Appendix 4: OASIS Data Collection Form

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# OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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## Printable version

**OASIS ID: trentpea1-367815**

### Project details

Project name	Shakespeare Street, Nottingham: An Archaeological Watching Brief
Short description of the project	Trent and Peak Archaeology (TPA) was commissioned by NCMN to undertake an archaeological watching brief at a site between Nottingham Trent University's Bonington Building and Drydon Building. The works comprised the construction of a detention shaft. The site is located within the northern portion of Nottingham City Centre within the confines of the Nottingham Trent University city campus. The groundworks subject to archaeological monitoring comprised the excavation and installation of a detention shaft with an internal diameter of 12.5m and a thickness of 1.25m to a depth of 7m b.g.l. Excavation revealed a stratigraphy primarily of made ground and levelling layers that are consistent with borehole surveys conducted at the site in 2018. This is in keeping with the known modern development of the area. An intact 19th century brick culvert was recorded during excavation; additionally, a 19th century brick ground surface was recorded in section. No additional archaeological features, deposits or structures were present. As such, there was limited potential for addressing relevant topics in the EMHERF research agenda (Knight and Allen 2012).
Project dates	Start: 30-08-2019 End: 19-09-2019
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	SDN - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 11 - Thoroughfare
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE NOTTINGHAM NOTTINGHAM Shakespeare Street, Nottingham
Postcode	NG1 4FQ
Site coordinates	SK 57142 40387 52.9574938506 -1.149281623592 52 57 26 N 001 08 57 W Point

### Project creators

Name of	Trent and Peak Archaeology
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Organisation	
Project brief originator	Nottingham City Council
Project design originator	Kristina Krawiec
Project director/manager	Kristina Krawiec
Project supervisor	Victoria Owen
Type of sponsor/funding body	Client
Name of sponsor/funding body	NMCN

### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Drawing", "Map", "Miscellaneous Material", "Report"

### Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Shakespeare Street, Nottingham: Results of an Archaeological Watching Brief
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Ford, A.
Other bibliographic details	T and P Report Number 159/2019
Date	2019
Issuer or publisher	Trent and Peak Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	Nottingham
Description	Digital Grey Literature
Entered by	Abigail Ford (aford@yorkat.co.uk)
Entered on	3 October 2019

# OASIS:

Please e-mail [Historic England](#) for OASIS help and advice

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