

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF:  
MARKET SQUARE, SOUTH SHIELDS,  
TYNE AND WEAR**

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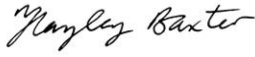

PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

**DOCUMENT VERIFICATION**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF:  
MARKET SQUARE, SOUTH SHIELDS, TYNE AND WEAR**

**WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

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**An Archaeological Watching Brief:  
Market Square, South Shields, Tyne and Wear**

**National Grid Reference: NZ 436060 567100**

**Site Code: SSM 14**

**Commissioning Client: Prospect Archaeology (on behalf of Muse Development)**

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**October 2014**

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# 1. NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

- 1.1 An archaeological monitoring and recording exercise was conducted in association with the redevelopment of the Market Place, South Shields Newcastle, situated at National Grid Reference NZ 436060 567100. The archaeological investigation was commissioned by Prospect Archaeology on behalf of Muse Development and was undertaken in August 2014 by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited. The Market Place is located within an area of urban development and comprises a roughly rectangular block of land bounded by Church Way to the south, the B1344 to the west and north and a pedestrianised shopping street the east.
- 1.2 An archaeological desk-based assessment was compiled in 2014 by Prospect Archaeology. The site is of archaeological interest as it is located within the vicinity of St Hilda's Chapel, which is situated to the south. The existing church is thought to overlie a 7th-century chapel founded by St Aidan in AD 647 and later put in the charge of St Hilda.
- 1.3 The assessment concluded that the site has relatively low potential for archaeological investigation, in part due to modern uses, and in part due to low impacts from the proposed development. In the Market Place, where limited impacts are proposed in the new development, it is not clear whether the underlying soils that lie beneath the current surface slabs and sub-base have been reworked. The watching brief was therefore undertaken in association with the investigation of geotechnical test pits to determine if these clays were redeposited. This work was undertaken to ascertain the potential or nature of the possible archaeological remains below the current ground surface to inform a decision about whether further archaeological investigation is necessary.
- 1.4 Four test pits were monitored each comprising a roughly square pit which measured at least 0.70m by 0.60m excavated to a maximum depth of 1.20m. Test Pit 1 was located in the south-western corner of the Market Place; Test Pit 2 in the south-eastern corner; Test Pit 3 in the north-eastern corner; and Test Pit 4 in the north-western corner.
- 1.5 A clay deposit which probably represents the natural sub-stratum was encountered in Test Pit 1 at a depth of 0.90m below the present ground surface.
- 1.6 Levelling deposits were recorded in Test Pits 1, 2 and 4. The maximum combined thickness of these deposits in Test Pit 1 and 2 was 0.54m and 0.90m, respectively, although in Test Pit 2 it was not possible to expose the full thickness of the levelling deposits. The earliest exposed levelling deposit comprised a clay deposit which did not produce any artefactual material. In Test Pit 1 this was 0.28m thick and was encountered at a depth of 0.63m below the current ground. In Test Pit 2 this was at least 0.33m thick and was encountered at a depth of 0.86m below the current ground surface. The uppermost levelling deposit, exposed in Test Pits 1, 2 and 4, produced pottery of 19th-century date.
- 1.7 Investigation of Test Pits 3 and 4 ceased at depths of 0.22m and 0.42m due to the presence of concrete structures at these depths below present ground level. Test Pit 3 contained a reinforced concrete pile capping and Test Pit 4 contained a concrete layer or surface.

## **2. INTRODUCTION**

### **2.1 General Background**

- 2.1.1 A programme of archaeological monitoring and recording ('watching brief') was undertaken in association with the redevelopment of the Market Place in South Shields town centre (Figure 1). The work was commissioned by Prospect Archaeology on behalf of Muse Development and undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited (PCA) in August 2014.
- 2.1.2 The proposed development is split between three areas with a new Central Library and Digital Media Centre in the central area, improvements to the Market Place and a new car park in the western area.
- 2.1.3 The archaeological work was commissioned by Prospect Archaeology in association with the investigation of geotechnical test pits to ascertain the potential or nature of the possible archaeological remains below the current ground surface to inform a decision about whether further archaeological investigation is necessary.
- 2.1.4 A desk-based assessment (DBA) to assess the archaeological potential of the site was undertaken prior to the geotechnical groundworks as part of the planning application for the redevelopment of the site (Rosenberg 2014).
- 2.1.5 At the time of writing, the Site Archive, comprising written, drawn and photographic records, is housed at the Northern Office of PCA, Unit N19a TurSDale Business Park, Durham, DH6 5PG. When complete, the Site Archive will be deposited with the Tyne and Wear Museums and Archives at Arbeia, South Shields, Tyne and Wear under the site code SSM14. The Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) reference number for the project is: preconst1-191300.

### **2.2 Site Location and Description**

- 2.2.1 The Market Place lies on the western side of South Shields at National Grid Reference NZ 436060 567100, c. 130m to the east of the River Tyne (Figure 1). It comprises a roughly rectangular block of land which measures c. 101m NW-SE by 65m NE-SW covering c. 0.7 hectares. It is bounded by Church Way to the south, the B1344 to the west and north and a pedestrianised shopping street the east.
- 2.2.2 The site appears to have been a market place prior to the Ordnance Survey map of 1857. The Ordnance Survey map of 1896 shows what appear to be tramlines going through the Market Place from the south-west corner to Dean Street on the eastern boundary, although these had gone by 1956. The Old Town Hall which is a Grade I listed building is situated at the centre of the Market Place (Figure 2). To the south of the site is the Church of St Hilda and its grounds. The current surface of the Market Place is slab and brick paved with a one way access road encompassing it.
- 2.2.3 Many of the surrounding buildings are modern and were constructed after heavy bombing during the Second World War. The plot to the west of the Market Place which is surrounded by timber hoarding comprises an area of cleared and levelled ground. To the west of Ferry Street, the area for the proposed car park is currently grassed open space, which slopes down

towards the River Tyne. The floating ferry dock is adjacent and the area enjoys views north and south along both banks of the river.

## **2.3 Geology and Topography**

2.3.1 The site is located in an area of mixed geology; Roker Formation Dolostone and Pennine Middle Coal Measures, locally overlain with Glaciolacustrine Devensian clay and silt (*British Geological Survey website*).

2.3.2 The site is level across the Market Place and adjacent plot, dropping away towards the river on the west side of Ferry Street. Current ground level in the central part of the Market Place around the Town Hall is at around 10.50m OD. Around the margins of the Market Place current ground level is around 10.15m OD in the north and 10.30m OD in the south.

## **2.4 Planning Background**

2.4.1 Muse Developments are submitting a planning application for the redevelopment of land adjacent to the existing Market Place, South Shields, for the site of a new library and digital media centre, improvements to the Market Place itself and the creation of a car park to the west of Ferry Street.

2.4.2 Two planning applications will be made for the development:

A. Erection of New Central Library & Digital Media Centre, creation of a 40 space car park and pedestrian link;

B. Remodelling of Market Place and erection of market stall canopy structure.

2.4.3 At a national level, justification for the work lies within guidance on the historic environment now contained within Section 12, 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' of the *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)* (Department of Communities and Local Government, 2012). Previously, *Planning Policy Statement 5: 'Planning for the Historic Environment'* (PPS5) (Department of Communities and Local Government, 2010) set out the guidance.

2.4.4 As described in the DBA, the South Tyneside Local Development Plan is in preparation and at present the Local Development Framework provides planning direction. In addition the South Shields Town Centre and Waterfront Area Action Plan (The Area Action Plan) provides specific policies relating to the current study site.

2.4.5 The Area Action Plan specifically recognises the archaeological potential of the proposed development site. It is identified as one of only two Areas of Potential Archaeological Importance where Policy SS12 comes into effect to "promote and encourage schemes and proposals that protect, preserve and enhance the historic, cultural and architectural character and heritage, visual appearance and contextual importance of the designated sites and settings".



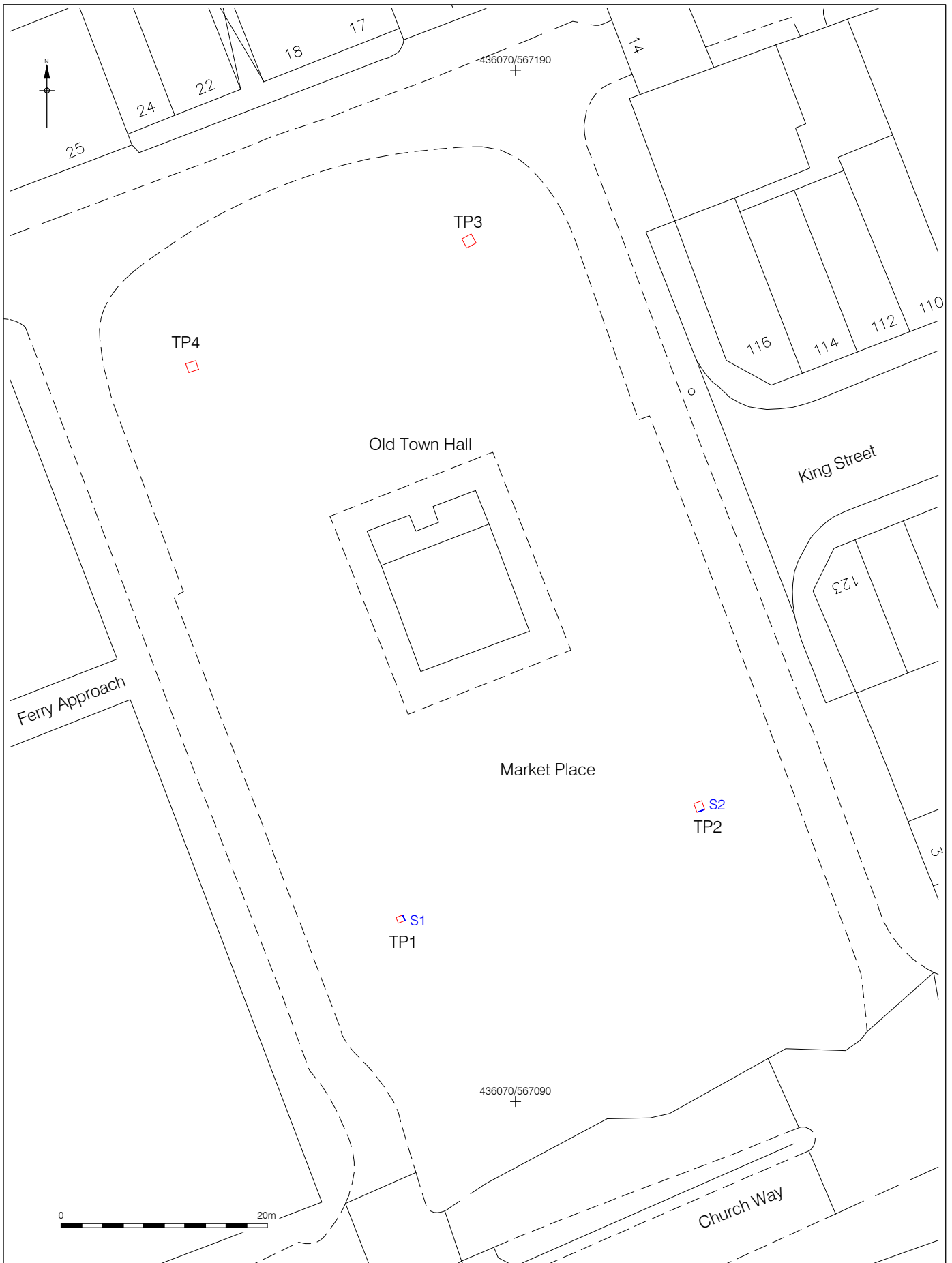
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Figure 1  
Site Location  
1:20,000 at A4





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Figure 2  
Trench Location  
1:500 at A4

## **2.5 Archaeological and Historical Background**

*Full details of the archaeological and historical background of the site are provided in the 2014 DBA compiled by Prospect Archaeology. The key points are described below, the writing of the authors responsible is acknowledged.*

### **2.5.1 Designated Heritage Assets**

- 2.5.1.1 The Old Town Hall which is the only listed building extant on site (Grade I listed) was constructed in 1786 by the Dean and Chapter of Durham to provide a market hall, manor court and offices. The Town Hall survived the Luftwaffe bombing of the Market Place in 1941 but fell into disrepair until it was restored in 1977. It is built of ashlar on a square plan with a timber bell turret above.
- 2.5.1.2 Visible from the site is the church of St Hilda to the south of the Market Place which retains an 18th-century tower (possibly with medieval lower levels) but otherwise rebuilt in 1810-11. It is believed to be constructed on the site of a chapel founded by St Aidan in AD 647. The church is located immediately to the south of the Market Place with its cemetery extending to the south and west.
- 2.5.1.3 To the north west of the Market Place, Alum House Ham (Tyne Dock Engineering Company) is an early 19th-century brick and slate building which is now in use as a public house.

### **2.5.2 Non-designated Heritage Assets**

- 2.5.2.1 There is evidence for a pre-Roman settlement below the site of the Roman fort at Arbeia and some bones from the extinct Irish Elk were found below a nearby brickworks. This appears to be the extent of the local prehistoric activity. This being said, such waterfront locations were often focal points of activity during the prehistoric period.
- 2.5.2.2 The Roman fort of Arbeia to the north-east of the site, its later civilian settlement (*vicus*) and the potential harbour related to these are all protected as part of the World Heritage Site 'Frontiers of the Roman Empire (Hadrian's Wall)'. The Roman road known as the '*Wrekendyke*' passes within 60m of the site. Whilst it is unlikely to survive to any great degree, it is worth noting that Roman roads are often surrounded by small satellite buildings. There is also Roman worked stone on Corporation Road to the south of the site.
- 2.5.2.3 Of particular interest to this investigation is the chapel commissioned by St Aidan in AD 647 which was subsequently placed in the charge of St Hilda. It is believed that the current Church of St Hilda lies on top of the site of the Saxon chapel. This original chapel was probably destroyed by the Danes in the 9th century, but there is evidence for a Saxon building underneath the present nave.
- 2.5.2.4 By the mid 13th century, South Shields was known as *Suthseles*. The town had moved to the south, away from the Roman fort, with the focus of activity being located around the church. The Mill Dam inlet became a focus of trade and industry resulting in a large number of fisheries along the banks of the Tyne along with a budding salt panning industry. As well as a water mill at the Mill Dam inlet there appears to have been a nearby windmill under the same ownership.
- 2.5.2.5 South Shields owes much of its growth to the boom in industrial activity during the post-medieval period. Salt panning was an important local industry but through the 18th century, glass manufacturing developed on the river front and the town expanded eastwards into the

current market site. The market place was established by the Prior and Convent of Durham in 1767, to replace a street market that had been held in the town for many years. The town hall was constructed at the same time to provide a market hall, manorial court and offices but incorporates an earlier market cross.

2.5.2.6 The Ordnance Survey map of 1897 shows that by this date a tram line ran north-east to south-west across the southern part of the Market Place with another running north to south along the southern part of its eastern boundary. By 1915 the NE-SW branch had been removed and a line extended east to west to the Town Hall.

2.5.2.7 The Second World War saw the construction of two underground air raid shelters within the Market Place. Their precise locations are unknown although they are both believed to have been located to the east of the Old Town Hall. South Shields suffered numerous Luftwaffe bombing raids during the war, with the Market Place suffering direct hits on 2nd October 1941. Many buildings were entirely destroyed by the bombing and the subsequent fires caused as a result of a direct hit on Dunn's Paint Store which sent burning tins of paint and oil flying across to other properties, causing further extensive damage, amplified by damage to the gas mains. The air raid shelters were hit but were not as heavily occupied as they might have been as the access to them was restricted as a result of a previous bombing raid. In total, 68 people were killed, 117 seriously injured, 91 slightly injured and approximately 2,000 made homeless. In addition 240 houses, shops and offices were destroyed at the time or had to be demolished later. The Old Town Hall and the Church of St Hilda had suffered some relatively minor damage but most of the rest of the Market Place properties were destroyed or seriously damaged.

### **3. PROJECT AIMS AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

3.1 The principal aim of the archaeological monitoring of the geotechnical test pits was to assess whether the underlying soils in the Market Place have been reworked to determine whether a further programme of archaeological investigation is necessary. The general aims of the project were:

- to identify and record any archaeological deposits, structures or built fabric within the site;
- to determine the extent, condition, character, significance and date of any encountered or exposed archaeological remains;
- to accurately record the location and stratigraphy of areas excavated during groundworks;
- to recover artefacts disturbed by the site works;
- to prepare a comprehensive record and report of archaeological observations during the site work.

## **4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Fieldwork**

- 4.1.1 The watching brief was undertaken on the 14 August 2014. The work was undertaken in compliance with the relevant guidance document of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) (IfA 2008a); PCA is an IfA-Registered Organisation.
- 4.1.2 Four geotechnical test pits were located across the Market Place (Figure 2). Test Pit 1 was situated in the south-western corner and measured 0.70m by 0.59m. It was excavated to a depth of 1.20m. Test Pit 2 was located in the south-eastern corner and measured 0.81m by 0.89m and was excavated to a depth of 1.18m. Test Pit 3 was located in the north-eastern corner and measured 1.02m by 1.02m. It was only excavated to a depth of 0.22m due to the presence of a concrete pile capping in the centre of the test pit. Test Pit 4 was located in the north-western corner and measured 1.01m by 0.90m. It was only excavated to a depth of 0.42m in the south-eastern corner of the test pit and 0.12m elsewhere due to the presence of an extremely hard concrete surface located across the whole test pit.
- 4.1.3 Archaeological structures and deposits were examined, hand cleaned and recorded to an appropriate level and in accordance with the methodology set out in *Fieldwork Induction Manual. Operations Manual I* (PCA 2009) and *Archaeological Site Manual, Third Edition* (Museum of London 1994). A photographic record of the work was compiled. The monitored areas were located using hand tapes, the existing site plan and the architect's drawing for the new build supplied by the client.

### **4.2 Post-excavation**

- 4.2.1 The stratigraphic data for the project comprises written, drawn and photographic records. A total of 11 archaeological contexts were defined, relating to three phases of activity on the site. Post-excavation work involved checking and collating site records. A written summary of the findings was then compiled, as described in Section 5.
- 4.2.2 No suitable archaeological deposits were encountered to warrant the recovery of bulk samples for palaeoenvironmental material.
- 4.2.3 The complete Site Archive will be packaged for long-term curation. In preparing the Site Archive for deposition, all relevant standards and guidelines documents referenced in the Archaeological Archives Forum guidelines document (Brown, 2007) will be adhered to, in particular a well-established United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC) document (Walker, UKIC, 1990) and a more recent IfA publication (IfA 2008b). The depositional requirements of the receiving body, in this case Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums, will be fulfilled.

## 5. RESULTS: THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

*During the watching brief, separate stratigraphic entities were assigned unique and individual 'context' numbers, which are indicated in the following text as, for example [123]. The archaeological sequence is described below for each area in turn, with stratigraphic entities assigned to a scheme of broad phases assigned on a site-wide basis*

### 5.1 Test Pit 1 (Figures 2 and 3)

#### ***Phase 1: Natural sub-stratum***

5.1.1 The earliest deposit encountered in Test Pit 1 comprised a mid yellowish brown sandy clay, [7], which was exposed across the test pit with a maximum excavated thickness of 0.29m (Section 1). This deposit contained very occasional pea-gravel throughout and is interpreted as probably representing the natural clay sub-stratum, although with such a small area exposed interpretation cannot be definite. It was encountered at a height of c. 9.60m OD at a depth of 0.89m below the current ground level.

#### ***Phase 2: Post-medieval***

5.1.2 Deposit [7] was overlain by a deposit of stiff, dark blue black, silty clay, [6], which contained very occasional inclusions of pebbles. This had a maximum thickness of 0.28m and was encountered at a height of c. 9.75m OD at a depth of 0.63m below the current ground level (Section 1). It was overlain by a moderate to loosely compacted, dark blue grey, sandy gravel, [5], which contained very occasional fragments of ceramic building material. Its maximum thickness was 0.27m and it was encountered at a depth of 0.32m below the current ground at 10.03m OD. This deposit is interpreted as a probable levelling layer.

#### ***Phase 3: Modern***

5.1.3 Directly overlying deposit [5] was a 0.12m thick indurated concrete surface encountered at a height of 10.13m OD, [4]. This was overlain by a 0.06m thick sandy gravel deposit [3], and a 0.10m thick deposit of sand, [2]. This was a bedding deposit for the current brick and concrete slab paving, [1]. The current ground surface in the area of Test Pit 1 lies at a height of 10.35m OD.

### 5.2 Test Pit 2 (Figures 2 and 3)

#### ***Phase 2: Post-medieval***

5.2.1 The earliest deposit exposed in Test Pit 2 comprised the same blue black silty clay deposit [6] recorded to the south-west in Test Pit 1. In this area the levelling deposit was encountered at a depth of 0.86m below the current ground surface at a height of 9.53m OD (Section 2). It was excavated for a maximum thickness of 0.33m and continued below the maximum depth of the test pit.

5.2.2 Overlying deposit [6] was a 0.18m thick deposit of firm, mid to dark yellow brown silty sandy clay, [8], containing frequent inclusions of gravel. This was encountered at a depth of 0.68m below ground level at a height of 9.64m OD. This deposit is also interpreted as a levelling layer.

5.2.3 Deposit [8] was overlain by the sandy gravel levelling layer, [5], with occasional fragments of ceramic building material, which was also recorded within Test Pit 1. In this area the deposit had a maximum thickness of 0.50m and was encountered at a height of 10.32m OD.

***Phase 3: Modern***

- 5.2.4 The uppermost deposits within Test Pit 2 comprised the sand bedding deposit, [2] for the brick paving [1] which in this area lay at 10.28m OD.

**5.3 Test Pit 3 (Figure 2)**

***Phase 3: Modern***

- 5.3.1 A reinforced concrete pile capping, [9], which measured 0.95m north-south by 0.78m east-west was encountered at a depth of 0.22m below present ground level at a height of 10.08m OD (Plate 4). Excavation ceased at this level. With such a small area exposed, interpretation of this structure is not possible.
- 5.3.2 The concrete pile was overlain by the same sequence of deposits as encountered within the uppermost part of Test Pit 1; bedding deposits [3] and [2] for the current surface [1] which in this area lay at a height of (10.11m OD)

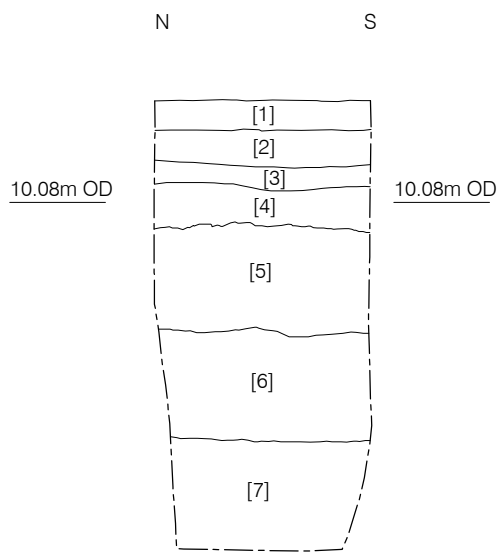
**5.4 Test Pit 4 (Figure 2)**

***Phase 2: Post-medieval***

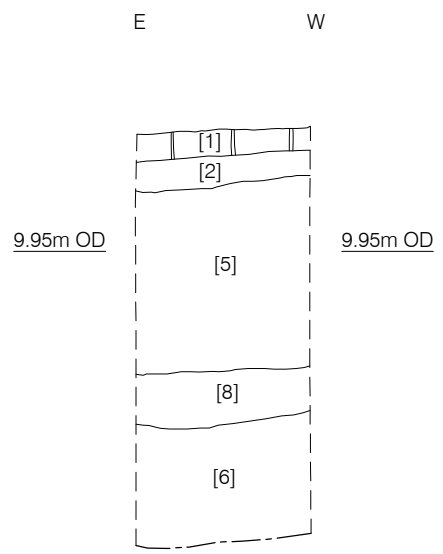
- 5.4.1 The lowermost exposed deposit within Test Pit [4] comprised levelling deposit [5]. This deposit was only exposed within a small area in the south-eastern corner of the test pit due to the presence of an indurated concrete surface which proved difficult to excavate (Plate 6). In this test pit, deposit [5] was exposed for a maximum thickness of 0.10m and encountered at height of 9.87m OD.

***Phase 3: Modern***

- 5.4.2 Levelling deposit [5] was overlain by a 70mm thick deposit of crushed dolomite, [11], which was the bedding layer for a very hard 0.14m thick concrete deposit, [10] (Plate 7). This was encountered at a height of 10.07m OD at a depth of 0.11m below the existing ground level.
- 5.4.3 As in all other test pits the uppermost deposits comprised the bedding deposit, [2], for the brick paving, [1], which in this area lay at 10.18m OD.



Section 1  
Test Pit 1, west facing



Section 2  
Test Pit 2, north facing



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Figure 3  
Sections 1 and 2  
1:20 at A4



## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

### **6.1 Conclusions**

- 6.1.1 A clay deposit which may represent the natural sub-stratum was encountered within Test Pit 1, located in the south-western corner of the Market Place, at a depth of 0.90m below present ground level. With such a small area exposed it was not possible to be certain about the origin of this material.
- 6.1.2 Phase 2 represents ground raising and levelling deposits in the post-medieval period. The maximum combined thickness of these deposits in the south-western corner of the Market Place in Test Pit 1 was 0.50m. In the south-eastern corner of the Market Place in Test Pit 2 the maximum combined thickness was 0.90m but it was not possible to ascertain their full depth due to health and safety considerations. The earliest exposed levelling deposit comprised a clay deposit which did not produce any artefactual material. In Test Pit 1 this was 0.28m thick and was encountered at a height of c. 9.75m OD at a depth of 0.63m below the current ground. In Test Pit 2 this was at least 0.33m thick and was encountered at a depth of 0.86m below the current ground surface at a height of 9.53m OD. The uppermost levelling deposit, which was recorded in Test Pits 1, 2 and 4 produced seven fragments of 19th-century pottery.
- 6.1.3 A reinforced concrete pile was exposed in Test Pit 3, located which was located in the north-eastern corner of the Market Place. An indurated concrete surface was encountered within Test Pit 4, located within the north-western corner of the Market Place.
- 6.1.4 The uppermost sequence of deposits within all test pits comprised bedding deposits for the current brick and concrete surface.

## 7. REFERENCES

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## **8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CREDITS**

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### **PCA Credits**

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*Project Manager:* Jenny Proctor

*Report:* Aidan Pratt and Jennifer Proctor

*CAD:* Jennifer Simonson

### **Other Credits**

*Pottery Identification:* Jenny Vaughan (NCAS)



Plate 1: Test Pit 1 west facing section (scale 1m)



Plate 2: Test Pit 2 working shot



Plate 3: Test Pit 2 north facing section (scale 1m)



Plate 4: Test Pit 3 concrete pile capping [9], facing east (scale 1m)

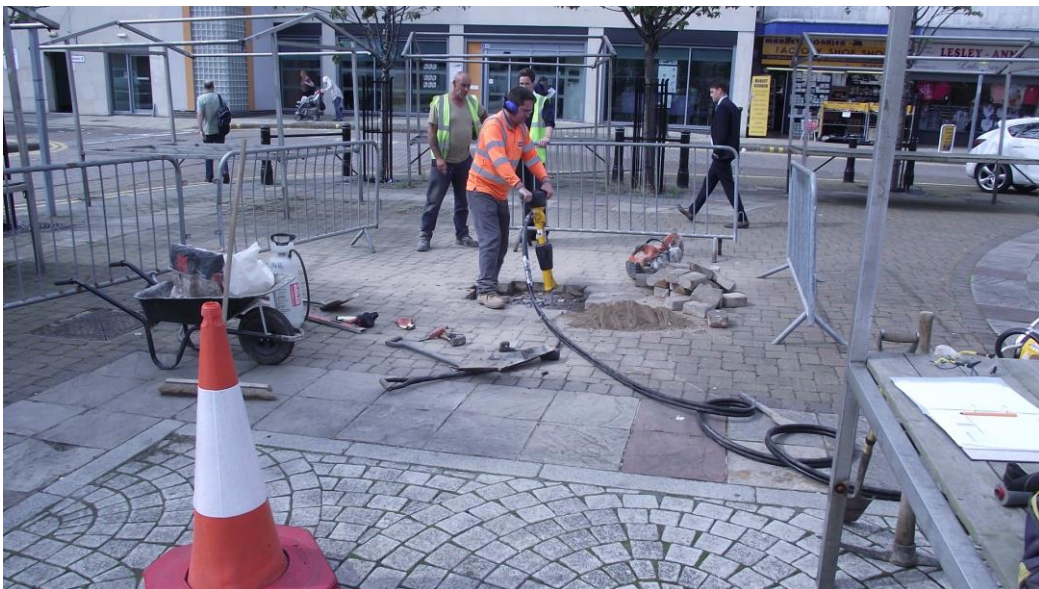


Plate 5: Test Pit 4 working shot



Plate 6: Test Pit 4 sondage cut through concrete surface [10], facing south (scale 1m)



Plate 7: Test Pit 4 north facing section (scale 1m)