

**1A WEST PARK STREET,
CHATTERIS, CAMBRIDGESHIRE:**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

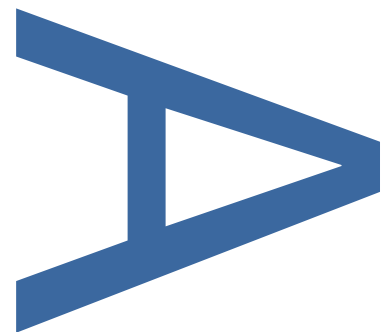
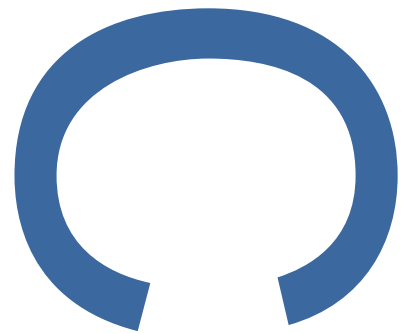
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FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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JULY 2020



PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

1A WEST PARK STREET,
CHATTERIS, CAMBRIDGESHIRE:

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

Quality Control

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Project Number	K6598
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1A West Park Street, Chatteris, Cambridgeshire: Archaeological Monitoring

Local Planning Authority: Fenland District Council

Planning Reference: F/YR18/0546/F

Central National Grid Reference: TL 39265 85840

Event Number/Site Code: ECB6218

OASIS No. preconst1-389563

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CONTENTS

CONTENTS	2
ABSTRACT	3
1 INTRODUCTION	4
2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY	5
3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND.....	6
4 METHODOLOGY	11
5 QUANTIFICATION OF ARCHIVE.....	13
6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS.....	14
7 DISCUSSION	16
8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	17
9 BIBLIOGRAPHY	18
10 FIGURES.....	19
11 APPENDIX 1: PLATES.....	24
12 APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT INDEX.....	28
13 APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM	29
FIGURE 1 SITE LOCATION	19
FIGURE 2 DETAILED SITE LOCATION.....	20
FIGURE 3 HER LOCATIONS	21
FIGURE 4 INTERPRETIVE PLAN OF CHATTERIS ABBEY	22
FIGURE 5 SECTIONS	23
PLATE 1: VIEW OF HOUSE, VIEW NORTH-WEST.....	24
PLATE 2: CORNER OF COACH HOUSE, VIEW SOUTH	24
PLATE 3: CONTEXT (3), POSSIBLE YARD SURFACE, VIEW SOUTH	25
PLATE 4: THE COACH HOUSE, VICTORIA STREET; VIEW EAST.....	26
PLATE 5: THE PIPE TRENCH, VIEW NORTH.....	26
PLATE 6: VIEW OF WALL ON SOUTH SIDE OF VICTORIA STREET; VIEW SE ..	27

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ABSTRACT

Pre-Construct Archaeology (PCA) was commissioned by Alex Derbyshire to undertake archaeological monitoring of groundworks associated with conversion of an existing outbuilding to an annexe at 1a West Park Street, Chatteris, Cambridgeshire, PE16 6AH (NGR TL 39265 85840).

The site is located close to the junction of West Park Street and Victoria Street in Chatteris town centre, within the former boundary of Chatteris' medieval Abbey precinct.

The development consisted of the conversion of a 19th-century coach house into an annexe (Fenland District Council ref: F/YR18/0546/F). The archaeological monitoring was undertaken during digging of a drainage pipe trench connecting the annexe to the foul sewer serving the main house.

The lowest and stratigraphically earliest deposit encountered during the monitoring was a localised gravel layer associated with limestone fragments and crushed oyster and mussel shell. This deposit may be the remains of a yard surface. It was sealed beneath mid-19th-century garden soil but was otherwise undated. It is possible that it is of medieval date and associated with the Abbey, although a post-medieval date is equally possible from the evidence observed within the trench.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology (PCA) was commissioned by Alex Derbyshire to undertake archaeological monitoring of groundworks associated with conversion of an existing outbuilding to an annexe at 1a West Park Street, Chatteris, Cambridgeshire, PE16 6AH (Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (NGR) TL 39265 85840; Figure 1).
- 1.2 The site is located close to the junction of West Park Street and Victoria Street in Chatteris town centre, within the former boundary of Chatteris' medieval monastic precinct.
- 1.3 The development is the conversion of an existing 19th-century coach house (Plate 4) into an annexe (Fenland District Council ref: F/YR18/0546/F) (Figure 2). The archaeological monitoring was undertaken during digging of a drainage pipe trench connecting the annexe to the foul drain serving the existing house at 1a West Park Street (Plate 1).
- 1.4 The monitoring was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Tom Woolhouse of PCA (Woolhouse 2020), in response to a Brief issued by Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (CHET) (Thomas 2020).
- 1.5 Due to the location of the site within the former medieval monastic precinct at Chatteris, an area of high archaeological potential, the redevelopment of the annexe was subject to a planning condition requiring archaeological monitoring of any groundworks undertaken. The site is close to medieval burials found on Park Street, and medieval stonework has been recorded at the adjacent property (Fenland District Council 2018).
- 1.6 This report describes the results of the investigations. The site archive will be deposited at the Cambridgeshire Archaeology Archive.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

2.1 Geology

- 2.1.1 The site is located on superficial geology of March gravels, which form a north to south band, overlying Ampthill Clay (British Geological Survey 2020).

2.2 Topography

- 2.2.1 The development area comprises a small 'L'-shaped plot of land to the east of the house at 1a West Park Street, currently a rear garden. The site is at an elevation of between 12 and 13m above Ordnance Datum (OD).
- 2.2.2 The development area is located on the high ground of Chatteris, which forms a narrow north- to south-aligned ridge. Prior to large-scale drainage of the Cambridgeshire Fens, beginning in the 17th century, Chatteris was a 'fen island' surrounded by wetlands.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 This archaeological background has been taken from a search of the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER).

3.2 Prehistoric (c. 800,000 BC–AD 42)

- 3.2.1 The remains of an Early Iron Age settlement were uncovered in an excavation at Cromwell Community College, 700m south of the site (CHER MCB19835). The settlement appears to have been enclosed by a boundary ditch with an entranceway. Within the settlement were several clusters of pits, postholes and two possible four-post structures arranged in a sub-square shape.
- 3.2.2 An evaluation in 2006 on land off New Road, 500m north of the site, identified features relating to an Iron Age settlement (CHER MCB17496). Features included burials, a post-built structure, a hearth, ditches, two pig burials and pits. The postholes, pits and ditches contained Early Iron Age pottery.
- 3.2.3 An evaluation in 2012 of the field to the west of Fenland Way, 900m north-west of the site, recorded a ditch which contained Middle Iron Age pottery (CHER MCB22675).
- 3.2.4 Prehistoric and Roman features have been recorded on land north of Chatteris Parish Church, just under 500m north-east of the site (CHER MCB18461, CB15323 and MCB18462). These features included Bronze Age burials and pits, Early Iron Age pits, and a large 1st-century AD ditch. Other features recorded on the site included remains of Anglo-Saxon timber structures (CHER MCB18463), medieval pits (CHER MCB18464) and post-medieval structures. The presence of Beaker pottery and animal bone suggest a Bronze Age settlement site nearby, but there was no evidence of domestic activity of this period on the site itself.
- 3.2.5 Prehistoric find spots around the site include a Palaeolithic flint flake recovered at South Park Street, just over 100m south of the site (CHER MCB19246), a

Neolithic stone axe found in a garden 900m north-east of the site (CHER MCB16699) and a Neolithic polished axehead found 200m east of the site (CHER 12004). A possible Middle to Late Bronze Age hoard, consisting of a shield and a looped spearhead, was found off Blackmill Road, 900m south of the site (CHER 03697).

3.3 Roman (c. AD 43–410)

- 3.3.1 Roman features, comprising ditches, gullies and a possible pit, were recorded during an evaluation off Fenland Way, 900m north-west of the site (CHER MCB22675). The associated finds suggest that the site was on the periphery of a settlement, while the presence of two possible fragments of imbrex roof tile suggests a well-built building in the vicinity. A post-medieval brick wall, soakaway pit and ditches were also recorded on the site.
- 3.3.2 A Roman coin was found at 21 New Road, 450m north of the site (CHER CB14730).

3.4 Anglo-Saxon and Medieval (c. AD 411–1540)

- 3.4.1 Building material dating to the medieval period has been recovered from the garden of 40 Victoria Street, a short distance south-east of the site (CHER MCB15978). Medieval stonework is also recorded in the garden of 3 West Park Street, directly west of the current site (CHER CB15351). This is reputed to be from one of the gateways into the medieval monastery (see below), though the evidence for this is unclear.
- 3.4.2 Remains of ridge and furrow, from medieval ploughing, have been recorded in fields 900m east of the site (CHER 09861). Cropmarks of ridge and furrow are also present to the west of Chatteris cricket ground, around 800m south-east of the site (CHER 11443). Earthwork remains of ridge and furrow can be seen just north of the cricket ground (CHER 08771A); brick footings have been excavated on the same site and probably formed part of a medieval to post-medieval farm, possibly incorporating a stable or sheepfold. An area of earthworks at Manor Park, 750m north of the site, also show clear evidence of medieval ridge and furrow, along with medieval field boundary ditches (CHER

08670).

- 3.4.3 A site at Cox's Lane/ Chapel Road, 1km north of the site, uncovered deeply-stratified soil horizons dating from the late medieval to post-medieval period, with sporadic phases of alluvial encroachment from the adjacent Slade Lode (CHER CB15741). No evidence for earlier medieval settlement was identified.
- 3.4.4 Two medieval pits were recorded during a single-trench evaluation at 84 High Street, 600m north of the current site (CHER MCB19976). A post-medieval structure was also uncovered.
- 3.4.5 Saint Peter and Saint Paul's Church is located 300m north-east of the site (CHER 03701). The church has medieval origins but was extensively rebuilt in the early 20th century. The nave arcades and small western tower date from the 14th century. An investigation carried out in 1994 in the churchyard uncovered eight brick vaulted tombs.

3.5 Chatteris Abbey (c. AD 1006–1538) (Figures 3 and 4)

- 3.5.1 The site is located within the presumed precinct of Chatteris Abbey (CHER 03700). The abbey was a Benedictine nunnery dedicated to St Mary, founded by a niece of King Edgar in the early 11th century (between AD 1006 and 1016). It was one of only eight nunneries mentioned in Domesday Book. The nunnery did not have extensive endowments, so remained relatively small and poor. The curia, or manorial centre, of one of its modest endowment of estates, in Barley, Hertfordshire, has recently been investigated (Woolhouse 2019). The nunnery was dissolved in 1538. The extent of the former monastery precinct is preserved in the layout of streets around the site: Park Street, West Park Street, East Park Street and South Park Street, which take their names from Park House, a 17th-century mansion built on the site of the abbey and which incorporated parts of the cloister. The current site is thought to be located at the western edge of the monastic precinct, possibly adjacent to one of its entrances (Fig. 4).
- 3.5.2 A short distance east of the site, archaeological evaluation in the garden of No.

19 Victoria Street uncovered a series of walls and between three and five burials (CHER MCB20081; Clarke 2011; Fig. 3). The walls may have been associated with the burials, although a more substantial footing at the north end of the trench could have been related to one of the abbey buildings. It was concluded that the evaluation trench had located a secular/ lay burial ground within the abbey precinct. More than one phase of burial was evident, and all were interred in a Christian manner, with heads to the west and arms to the sides; no evidence of coffins was seen. The burials were of mixed age.

3.5.3 Slightly closer to the current site, evaluation by PCA ahead of construction of an extension at No. 21 Victoria Street, in 2017, found late medieval dumping/levelling deposits thought to be associated with the demolition of the adjacent monastic kitchens after the Dissolution; 'high' medieval (c. 12th- to 14th-century) features survived beneath these layers (CHER ECB5043; Jackson and Woolhouse 2017; Fig. 3).

3.6 Post-Medieval (c. AD 1541–1900+)

3.6.1 An archaeological evaluation at Tern Gardens, 700m north of the site, revealed post-medieval 'backyard' activity associated with properties fronting on to the High Street (CHER MCB19100). Further post-medieval activity was uncovered on the High Street in an evaluation to the rear of an existing 17th-century cottage, 600m north of the site (CHER MCB20124). The evaluation revealed pits of late medieval to early post-medieval date, sealed by soil layers indicative of cultivation. One pit was at least 3m across and thought to be an extraction or rubbish pit; sherds of 15th- to 17th-century pottery were recovered from its fills. Other pits further away from the High Street frontage contained 12th- to 14th- century pottery. The soils were overlain by layers of probable 18th- to 19th-century date, associated with a possible robber trench.

3.6.2 An evaluation at 24 Bridge Street, 900m north of the site, uncovered a ditch of possible late medieval date, and post-medieval features including wall foundations and floors (CHER MCB20072).

3.6.3 An archaeological evaluation at 13 Railway Lane, 400m north of the site,

revealed a probable cess pit, pits which contained possible post-medieval sledge runners, and a number of undated postholes (CHER MCB20425).

- 3.6.4 Just 50m west of the site was a former blacksmiths workshop, which is now demolished (CHER MCB22187). A Zion chapel (CHER MCB21358), an Emmanuel United Reformed Church (CHER CB14949) and a bank (CHER MCB21357) were present on the 1885 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map just to the north of the site.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Excavation and Sampling

- 4.1.1 The archaeological monitoring consisted of observation and recording during the digging of a c. 500mm-wide drainage pipe trench connecting the annexe, fronting Victoria Street (Plate 4), with the existing foul drain serving the house at 1a West Park Street, to the north-west (Plate 1). The course of the drain extended approximately northwards from the annexe, following the line of the existing eastern garden wall (Figure 2; Plate 5), before turning to a more north-westward alignment towards the rear of the house.
- 4.1.2 Within the pipe trench, the topsoil, subsoil and/ or manmade made ground deposits were removed by machine, operating under close archaeological supervision, using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket, down to the first soil horizon of archaeological interest. Machining was conducted in even, shallow spits of no more than 100mm at a time.
- 4.1.3 Exposed archaeological features and deposits were cleaned and defined using hand tools.
- 4.1.4 Metal-detecting was carried out on all stripped deposits, up-cast spoil and archaeological features as they were encountered.

4.2 Recording Methodology

- 4.2.1 Field excavation techniques and recording methods are detailed in the PCA Fieldwork Induction Manual (Operations Manual I; Taylor and Brown 2009).
- 4.2.2 Descriptions of any relevant deposits and features were entered into pro-forma context record sheets and scale drawings were recorded on permatrace.
- 4.2.3 High-resolution digital photographs were taken of all archaeological deposits and features; working and general site shots were also taken throughout the watching brief.

4.2.4 A site plan was produced and located from existing features shown on Ordnance Survey mapping.

5 QUANTIFICATION OF ARCHIVE

5.1 Paper Archive

Context register sheets	1
Context sheets	6
Plan registers	0
Plans at 1:50	1
Plans at 1:20	0
Plans at 1:10	0
Plans at 1:5	0
Section register sheets	1
Sections at 1:10 & 1:20	3
Trench record sheets	0
Photo register sheets	1
Small finds register sheets	0
Environmental register sheets	0

5.2 Digital Archive

Digital photos	25
GPS survey files	0
Digital plans	0
GIS project	0
Access database	0

5.3 Physical Archive

None.

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

6.1 Trench Description (Figure 2)

- 6.1.1 Archaeological monitoring was undertaken during the excavation of a 500mm width drainage trench between the north-eastern corner of the Coach House (Plate 2) and the north-east corner of 1a West Park Street (Plate 1). The course of the trench ran roughly northwards for approximately 10m, parallel to the eastern garden wall (Figure 2; Plate 5), and then turned north-westwards to join up with the main domestic drainage.
- 6.1.2 The trench measured 0.40m in depth by the Coach House and fell to a depth of approximately 0.80m below existing ground level at its terminus adjacent to the house. The garden surface transected by the trench was broadly level with the Coach House floor and the pavement surface on Victoria Street outside.
- 6.1.3 The existing garden surface consisted of around 100–150mm of gravel laid on a plastic membrane. This was above a deposit of garden soil, overlying made ground.

6.2 Archaeological Sequence (Figure 5)

- 6.2.1 The earliest deposit seen in the trench consisted of a layer of coarse yellow clayey sandy gravel (3) (Plate 3). The exposed part of this deposit measured 4m along the length of the trench; its width is unknown.
- 6.2.2 This deposit was observed near the centre of the trench, just south of the central change in alignment. The deposit's surface incorporated a localised cluster of roughly hand-sized limestone fragments and a concentration of crushed oyster and mussel shells. Overall, the deposit had the appearance of a yard surface, or made ground, although it is possible that the gravel is natural in origin (i.e. the exposed surface of the natural drift geology), with the other materials having been pushed into the layer's surface. The stone and shell are consistent with this location's historic association with Chatteris Abbey and may have originally derived from the Abbey and/ or medieval occupation within it.

- 6.2.3 Context (3) is tentatively interpreted as a yard surface or construction/demolition spread, dating from the medieval to post-medieval period. The limestone fragments or cobbles measured roughly 150–200mm in maximum dimension, had varying shapes and were sub-rounded to angular in appearance. The stone appears to be a good match for reused stone from the Abbey, seen in garden walls and buildings in the Victoria Street/ West Park Street area. Although their positions appeared predominantly random, some stones did appear to be arranged in a broadly south-west to north-east alignment (Plate 3). This gravel and stone deposit was encountered at a depth of around 0.50m below existing ground level (0.5m bgl).
- 6.2.4 The gravels were overlain by a thin layer of slightly greenish-grey clayey sand, Contexts (2) and (5), which was devoid of artefactual material except for very small fragments of crushed red ceramic building material, probably brick. This deposit measured 0.3–0.5m in thickness and was present at a depth of 0.45m bgl.
- 6.2.5 Overlying this was a thick deposit of garden soil, recorded as Contexts (1), (4) and (6). It consisted of a friable humus-rich deposit of dark grey/ brown clayey silty sand. This deposit contained fairly common fragments of transfer-printed blue and white porcelain and occasional beer bottles and other late-19th- to 20th-century glass, along with fragments of animal bone, plastic and brick. These finds were all judged to derive from the site's use from the mid-19th century onwards and were not retained. This garden soil was present along the full length of the trench, had a typical thickness of 0.35m (more in places), and was typically encountered at 0.15m below existing ground level.
- 6.2.6 The garden soil was overlain with a plastic weed-preventing membrane, topped with 100–150mm of coarse gravel, thus raising the ground surface to a height for the most part level with pavement surface on Victoria Street. This recent layer was not given a unique context number.

7 DISCUSSION

- 7.1 Due to the narrow width and shallowness of the pipe trench, it is not possible to make any definitive archaeological statement about the history of the site prior to its current usage as the garden of a domestic dwelling, which was built in the mid-19th century.
- 7.2 The earliest feature found during the monitoring, a possible yard surface (3), was only exposed at the very base of the trench at its deepest point of excavation. There is a possibility that the cluster of limestone fragments found on its surface are the remains of an *in-situ* structure from the medieval period, but this is unlikely. It is more likely that they represent salvaged and reused material from the demolished Abbey. Many fragments of reused 'Barnack'-type limestone can be seen built into garden walls and some of the buildings around the Park Street/ Victoria Street area of Chatteris (e.g. see Plate 6), which are all believed to originally derive from the Abbey structures, there being few other immediate sources of building stone in the Fenland area.
- 7.3 Dating this deposit accurately is not possible from the evidence observed in the trench. It could date from the period of the Abbey's occupation, or from any time through to the mid-19th century, when Park House, a 17th-century mansion incorporating parts of the Abbey cloister, was demolished and land within the former monastic precinct was redeveloped for domestic and commercial purposes.
- 7.4 The accumulated deposits above this layer probably all derive from the period associated with the development of the current house at 1a West Park Street, and the domestic use of the back-garden area from the late 19th century to the present day.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Alex Derbyshire for commissioning and funding the work. PCA are also grateful to Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team for monitoring the work on behalf of Fenland District Council. The author would like to thank Mark Prior and his colleague for their assistance and good humour. The project was managed for PCA by Tom Woolhouse and was supervised by Aidan Turner. Figures accompanying this report were prepared by Rosie Scales of PCA's CAD Department.

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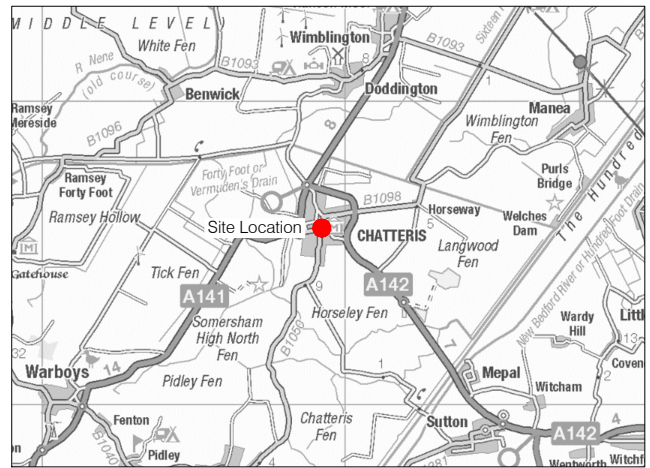
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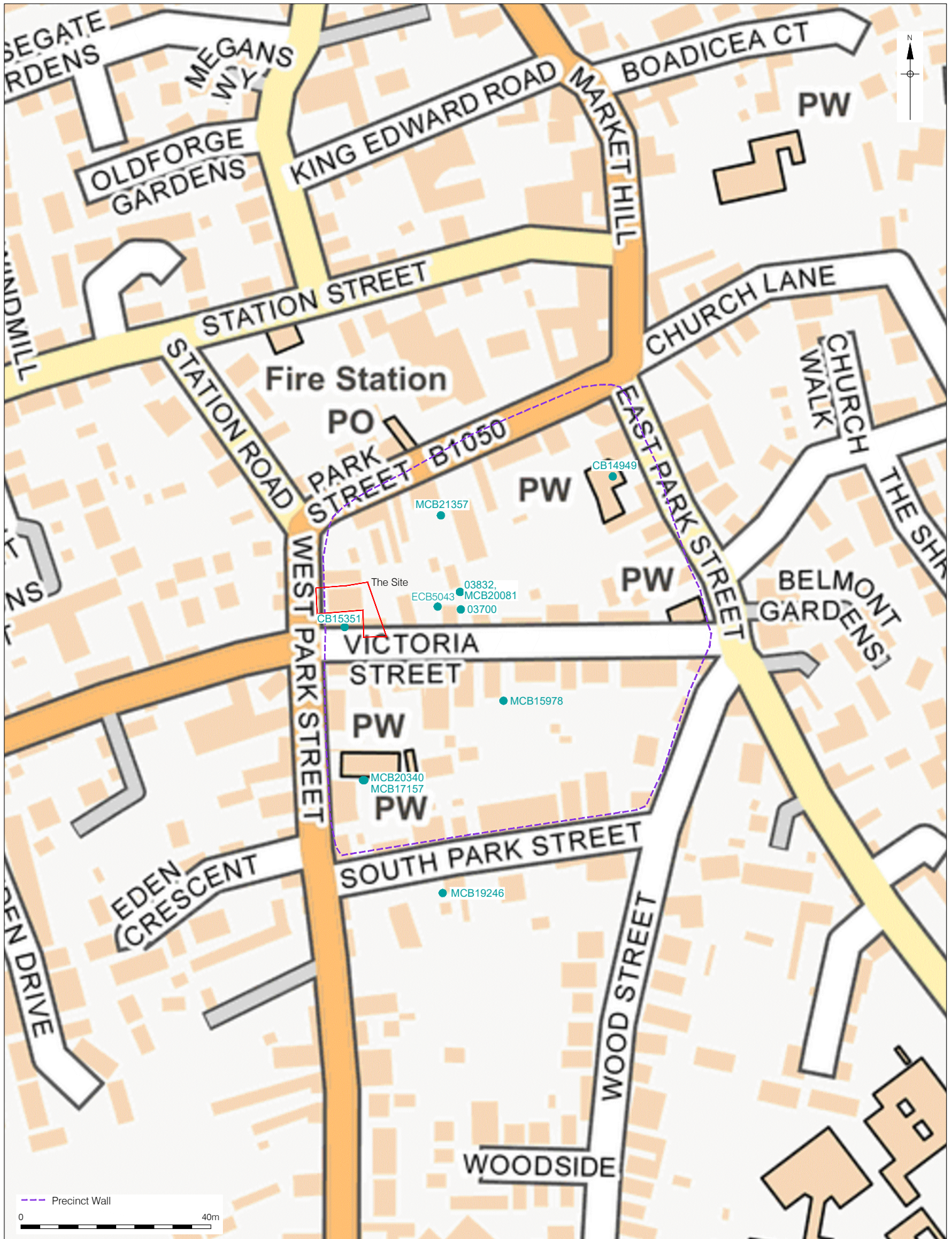
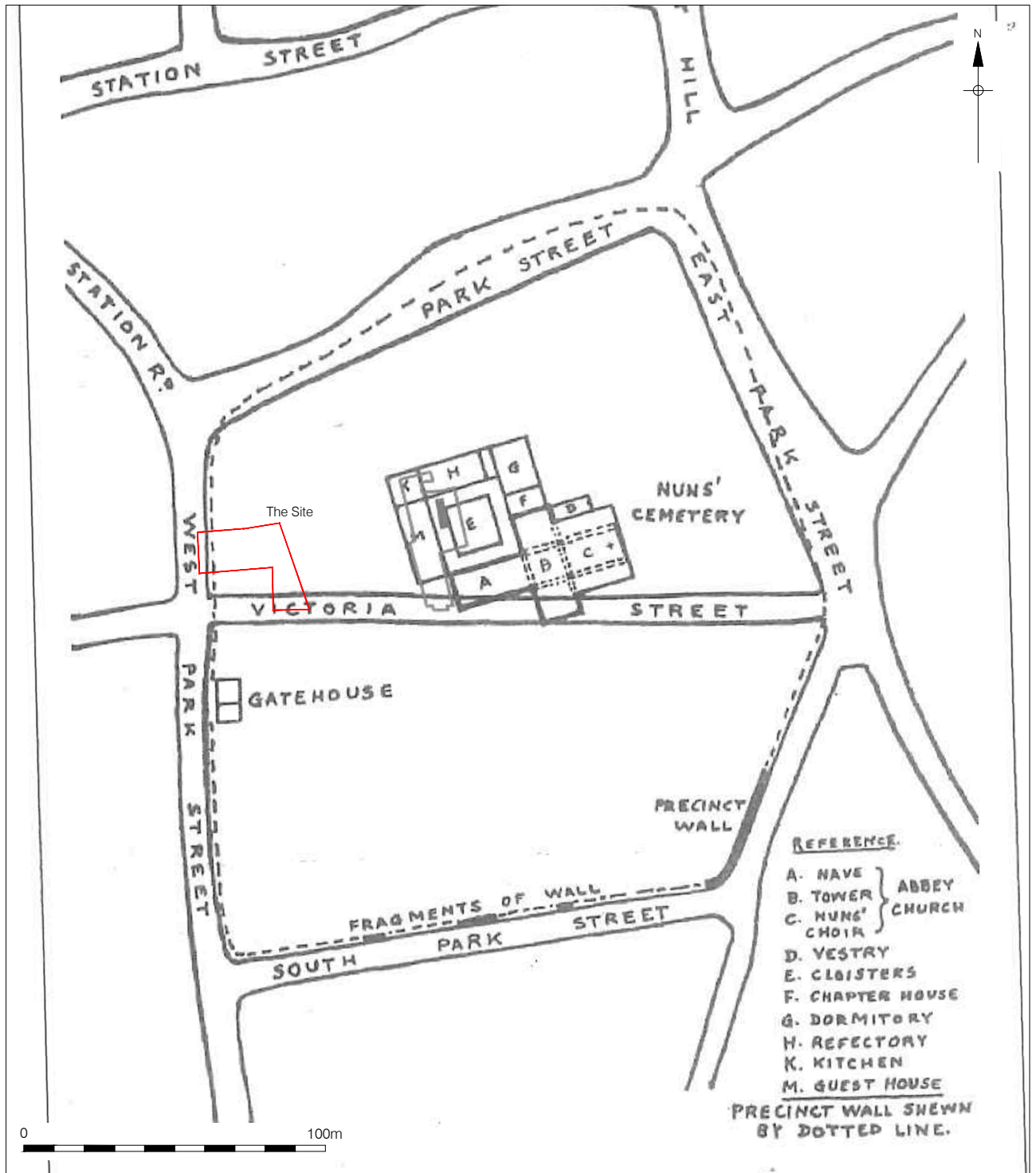
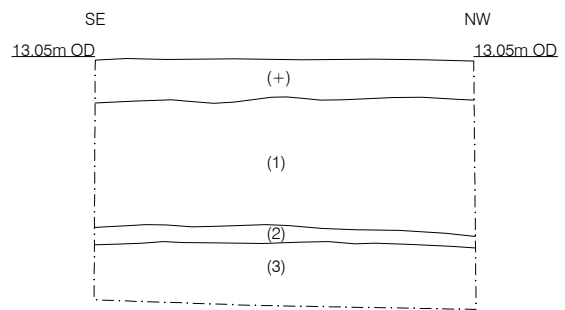
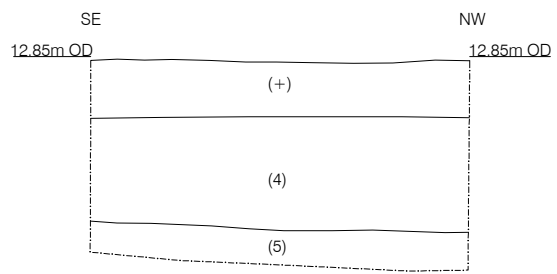


Figure 3
 HER Locations
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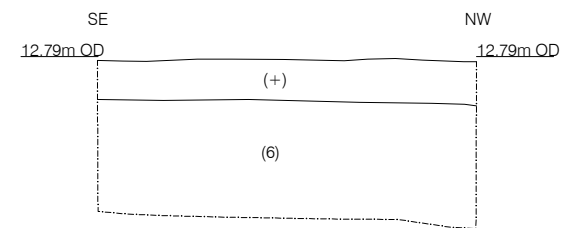




Section 1
Northeast Facing



Section 2
Northeast Facing



Section 3
Northeast Facing



11 APPENDIX 1: PLATES



Plate 1: View of house, view north-west



Plate 2: Corner of Coach House, view south



Plate 3: Context (3), possible yard surface, view south



Plate 4: The Coach House, Victoria Street; view east



Plate 5: The pipe trench, view north



Plate 6: View of wall on south side of Victoria Street; view south-east

12 APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT INDEX

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness (m)	Height (mbgl)	Section
1	Layer	Dark blackish grey garden soil	>1.00m	>0.50m	0.10m	0.10m	1
2	Layer	Greenish grey garden soils	>1.00m	>0.50m	0.05m	0.45m	1
3	Layer	Sandy gravels, inc. limestone fragments	4.00m	>0.50m	>0.15m	0.50m	1
4	Layer	Dark blackish grey garden soil	>1.00m	>0.50m	0.30m	0.10m	2
5	Layer	Greenish grey garden soils	>1.00m	>0.50m	>0.10m	0.45m	2
6	Layer	Dark blackish grey garden soil	>1.00m	>0.50m	>0.10m	0.10m	3

APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-389563

Project details

Project name	1a West Park Street, Chatteris: Monitoring
Short description of the project	Archaeological monitoring and recording of groundworks were carried out during digging of services for a new annexe at 1a West Park Street, Chatteris
Project dates	Start: 01-04-2020 End: 16-07-2020
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	F/YR18/0546/F - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Conservation Area
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	YARD Post Medieval
Significant Finds	N/A None
Investigation type	""Watching Brief""
Prompt	Planning condition
Prompt	Planning Informative

Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE FENLAND CHATTERIS 1a West Park Street, Chatteris
Postcode	PE16 6AH
Study area	50 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 39265 85840 52.452344209098 0.049638273867 52 27 08 N 000 02 58 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 9m Max: 10m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	PCA Central
Project brief originator	Andy Thomas
Project design originator	Tom Woolhouse
Project director/manager	Tom Woolhouse
Project supervisor	Aidan Turner
Type of sponsor/funding body	Private owner
Name of sponsor/funding body	A Derbyshire

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Physical Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Archive Facility
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Archive Facility
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography"
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Archive Facility
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Plan", "Section"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	An Archaeological Watching Brief at 1a West Park Street, Chatteris, Cambridgeshire
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Turner, A
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