

Holy Cross Churchyard wall Canterbury, Kent

Report on Archaeological Evaluation 2012

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**EVALUATION AT HOLY CROSS CHURCHYARD, WESTGATE GARDENS, CANTERBURY.
HCCW-EV-12
NOVEMBER 2012**

1 Introduction

- 1.1 A small scale archaeological evaluation was carried out between 14 and 16 November, on a section of the churchyard wall of Holy Cross Church (now the Guildhall; NGR 614570 158055) on behalf of Canterbury City Council (Military Road, Canterbury CT1 1YW).
- 1.2 The churchyard wall forms the boundary of Holy Cross Church cemetery, which is within Scheduled Ancient Monument KE348, the City Wall and Bastions. The course of the Roman and medieval city wall is immediately adjacent to the north-west of the churchyard. Class 5 consent (Ancient Monuments (Class Consents) Order 1994) was required to allow Canterbury City Council to carry out repairs to one section of wall as it has suffered structural damage, principally due to tree root disturbance. This necessitated the demolition of the wall to ground level in October 2009. A proposed new foundation design for a concrete raft spanned over three piers has been designed to enable an adjacent tree to remain *in situ*. The archaeological evaluation was to determine the potential impact on buried archaeological remains of the proposed new foundation, and was carried out to a specification provided by Canterbury City Council's Archaeological Advisor.
- 1.3 The archaeological investigation comprised two test pits measuring, 1.3m x 1m in area positioned immediately outside the churchyard, but extending over the line of the wall (Fig. 1). Trench 1 was situated 23m north of the western corner of the churchyard wall. Trench 2 was located 10m from the western corner of the church. Excavation was limited to the removal of recent soils to the top of significant archaeological remains. These deposits were not excavated. In the event, the depths and extents of the trenches were significantly limited by the presence of tree roots.

2 Fieldwork results

- 2.1 Test Pit 1 (Fig. 2)
- 2.1.1 The earliest deposit, encountered at a depth of 0.75 to 0.8m below the present ground surface (9.65m OD), was a compact grey-brown silty clay (108). This deposit produced a few small and abraded sherds of Roman and medieval pottery from its upper surface. Sealing this was a compact deposit of dark brown silty soil (107) containing brick and peg tile. Above this was a layer of grey-brown, gritty soft silty soil (106). Truncating this layer and also cutting (107) was a shallow pit [105] only partially exposed, filled by (104). This fill consisted of flint nodules and mortar rubble with fragments of brick and peg tile. Layer (106) was also cut by the construction trench [103] of the cemetery wall (101). This very shallow foundation (base at 10m OD) comprised a wide footing (102) made up of flint nodules bonded with mortar, only 0.08m thick at maximum. The cemetery wall itself is constructed from brick, which would appear to be later eighteenth or nineteenth century in date. The footings (102) and the first two courses of the brickwork (101) were sealed by present garden soils (100). Finds from the upper layers were all post-medieval or modern in date and were not retained.
- 2.2 Test Pit 2
- 2.2.1 Excavation of Test Pit 2 ceased at a depth of 0.09m (10.06m OD) due to the density of tree roots.

3 Conclusions

- 3.1 Only Test Pit 1 was excavated to any depth. The archaeological sequence observed in this test pit comprised of four deposits (108), (107), (106) and (100). The earliest deposit (108) produced material dating from the Roman and medieval periods, but this was probably residual. Although the deposit could not be reliably interpreted within the confines of the

trench, because of its nature and the finds recovered, it is considered likely that it represents the upper level of significant archaeology, probably of later medieval or early post-medieval date. The level may represent early agricultural activity immediately within the City wall, but this interpretation should be treated with caution; it is possible that the deposit represents the latest in a sequence of material that would have built up over the original berm, or bank that would usually be located on the interior. Alternatively, if the original graveyard of Holy Cross extended right up to the city wall at this point, the deposit could represent general graveyard soils.

- 3.2 The remaining stratigraphy was all fairly recent or represented landscaping. Two of these deposits, (107) and (106) were truncated by pit [105] filled with post medieval building debris (104; possibly related to the construction of the cemetery wall itself) and the construction cut for the wall [103] and probably represent early post medieval garden or agricultural soils. The deposits are of little archaeological significance. The cemetery wall is probably of late eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century date which would agree with the shallow type of foundation used here, common in brick builds of the first half of the nineteenth century in Canterbury.
- 3.3 Although the restrictions imposed by the tree roots have not allowed a definitive appreciation of the archaeological sequence, it is fairly clear that any further interventions necessary to reconstruct this section of the wall will have no impact on any significant archaeological levels to a depth of *c.* 0.8m from present ground surface.



Fig 1. Trench location plan (1:1000)

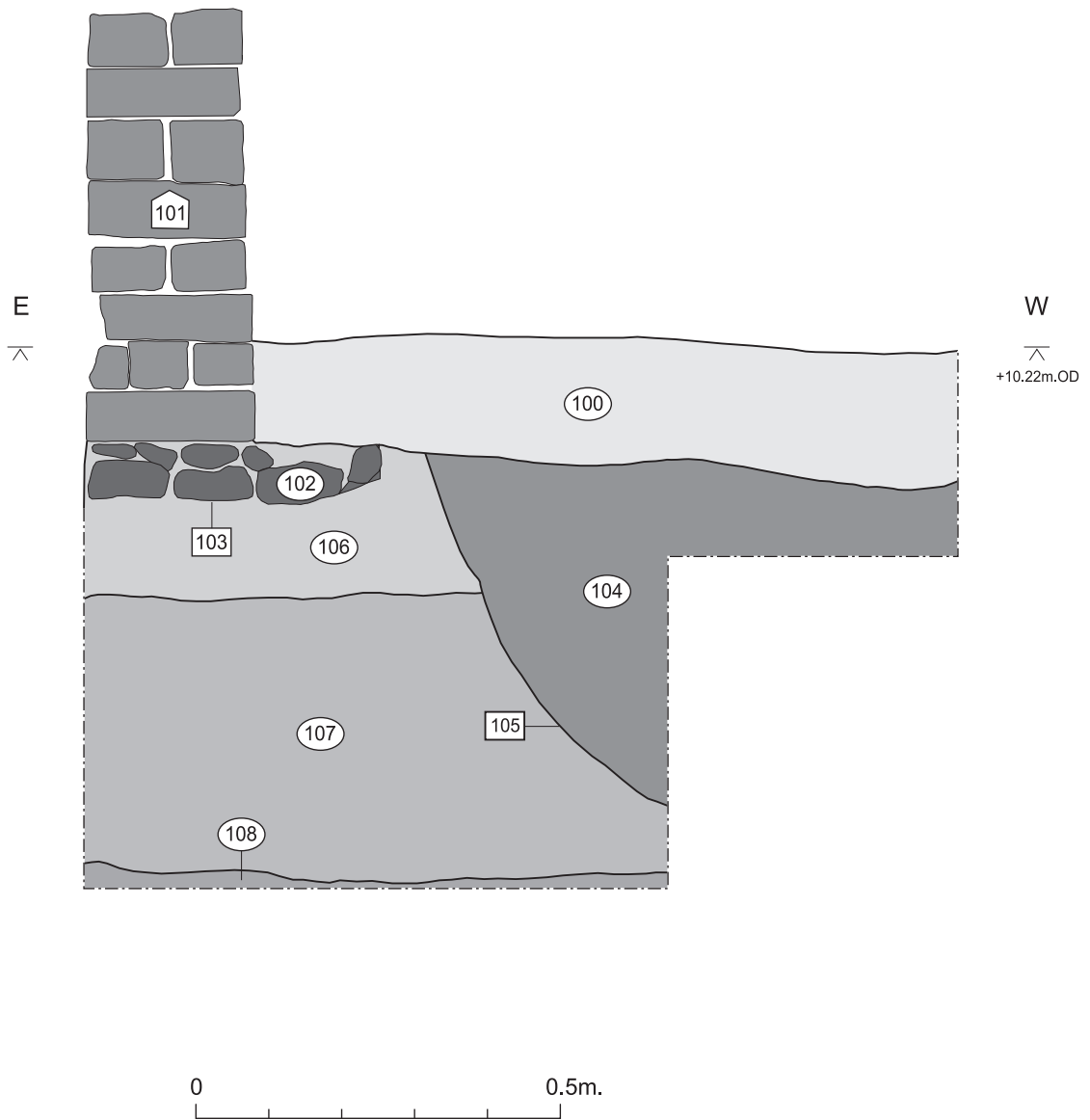


Fig 2. Section 1 (1:10)