

Marches Archaeology

Mardol Gardens Shrewsbury Shropshire

A report on an archaeological evaluation

March 2004

Marches Archaeology Series 327

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**Mardol Gardens
Shrewsbury
Shropshire**

A report on an archaeological evaluation

NGR: SJ 490 126

**Report by
Jo Wainwright**

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Summary

Three trenches were excavated. Trench 1 was situated to cross the line of the postulated town ditch and trenches 2 and 3 were situated to test the Roushill frontage. Trench 1 was excavated to a depth about two metres below the present ground surface. Stratified archaeology dating to the 17th century was reached and archaeological features and deposits including the town ditch may exist at deeper levels.

A sandstone wall seen in the base of Trench 1 could be part of a post-medieval or a medieval building or part of a boundary wall running back from the Mardol frontage. The base of this wall was not reached. Layers abutting this wall probably represent early post-medieval build up of soil but could represent dumping to raise the ground level.

In the 17th century the sandstone wall had been re-used as part of the foundation for a brick wall which was on a similar alignment. A later foundation for a building situated in the south of the trench also reused part of the sandstone wall. In the 19th century the ground in this area was built up by about 1.5 metres.

In trenches 2 and 3 the earliest buildings date to the late 18th or probably the 19th centuries. These seem to have partially demolished and the ground made up by about 1.5 metres with 19th century dumping and new buildings were erected.

1 Introduction

There is currently a proposal to erect a retail and residential development on land at Roushill and Mardol Gardens. The site is centred on NGR SJ 490 126 (Fig. 1).

The site lies close to sites registered on the local Sites and Monuments Record. The Local Planning Authority's Archaeology Advisor advised that further information was required before the archaeological implications of the application could be adequately assessed and recommended that a desk based assessment and archaeological evaluation be carried out to provide this information.

The Local Planning Authority's Archaeology Advisor produced a "Brief for an archaeological assessment and field evaluation". The first stage of this development, a desk based assessment, was carried out by Marches Archaeology in 2002 (Stone, 2002). Subsequently the Local Planning Authority's Archaeological Advisor placed a condition on

the planning permission requiring a programme of archaeological work. A revised “Brief” was produced for this work. The programme of archaeological work comprises of two stages. The first stage, to which this report relates, is an archaeological field evaluation of the site and the second shall be devised in response to the results of the phase one evaluation.

3C Developments (the client) commissioned Marches Archaeology to provide the archaeological services detailed in the Brief.

2 Aims and objectives

The aim of this evaluation is to provide information that will enable an informed and reasonable decision to be taken regarding the further archaeological provision for the areas affected by the proposed development.

The Brief stated that the archaeological project should consist of field evaluation of three trenches, two of which should be 1.5m x 5m in plan, the third being 8m x 1.5m.

An archaeological evaluation aims to “gain information about the archaeological resource within a given area or site (including presence or absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality) in order to make an assessment of its merit in the appropriate context, leading to one or more of the following: the formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource; the formulation of a strategy to initiate a threat to the archaeological resource; the formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research” (Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations).

3 Methodology

Documentary research

No documentary research was undertaken for this project. The desk based assessment (Stone, 2002) summarises the interest of the site, which straddles the line of the thirteenth century town defences and lies within an area which was probably developed at an earlier date.

Fieldwork

Demolition of the existing buildings and the concrete slab on the site had been carried out prior to the archaeological evaluation.

Three trenches were excavated by a JCB in the positions shown in the Brief (Fig. 1). Trench1 was initially 1.5m wide at the base but had to be widened to about 3m at the base in the centre of the trench to allow for safe access. The sides of all three trenches were battered for safety reasons. During the excavation of Trench 3 it was decided by the Local Planning Authority's Archaeological Advisor that excavation could stop when the length of the trench was about 3 metres. The client’s engineer requested the excavation of two small trenches to check the foundations of the standing building in the south of the site. Trenches 4 and 5 were excavated to a depth of about 1 metre and both contained brick rubble for the full depth investigated.

Plant and machinery for the excavation were provided by Marches Archaeology.

The upper deposits in Trench 1 were excavated by a JCB to a level determined to comprise deposits, features or horizons of archaeological significance. In trenches 2 and 3 because of the depth of overburden, which posed problems with safety, no significant features or deposits were reached. Further excavation was by hand. Such features as were considered to be of value to the understanding and interpretation of the site were selectively excavated, either in part or in full. All artefactual material recovered from hand excavation was retained.

The recording system included written, drawn and photographic data. Trench recording sheets were completed and context numbers were allocated. A site diary was also kept. A running matrix was maintained. A plan and sections of significant data were made. The plan was multi-context. The photographic record was made using black and white negative and colour transparency film.

On completion of the fieldwork the trenches were backfilled by the client.

Office work

On completion of fieldwork a site archive was prepared. The written, drawn and photographic data was catalogued and cross-referenced and a summary produced. The artefactual data was processed, catalogued and cross-referenced and a summary was produced. The checked site matrix was produced.

Assessment was based on the site archive. The pottery, which required specialist assessment, was submitted for such work.

4 Site description

The site lies on the north side of Mardol and stretches back to Roushill (Fig. 1). It consists of a walkway, 'Queen's Passage', through from the Mardol frontage to a wide area fronting onto Roushill. Before the proposed development the land use was as a retail development. The site slopes gently down to the north.

5 The evaluation

Trench 1 (Figs. 2 and 3)

The earliest feature encountered was seen at the base of the trench in the west section and consisted of two squared red sandstone blocks one on top of the other [115]. This feature continued south-westward and westwards into the unexcavated area as well as below the base of the trench. The northern ends of both blocks were slightly damaged and tile had been inserted between the blocks and above the feature. It seems probable that this was carried out when [115] was re-used as part of a foundation for a later brick wall [105].

Butting [115] was a mid brown silty sandy clay layer [109] which contained residual medieval floor tile and pottery dating from the 17th century. This layer was overlain by a deposit of cobbles and sandstone fragments [120], which only appeared under the brick wall [105], which formed the northern part of the western section of the trench. It is thought that

[120] was perhaps laid down to bed the brick wall [105] onto. This wall was at least 3.4 metres in length, 225mm wide and 1.7 metres high. The bricks were hand made and generally 225mm in length, 105mm wide and 65mm thick. There was no apparent bonding material or coursing pattern but five courses up from the base there was a course of mainly headers.

Butting [105] was a layer [110]. This was similar to [109], was about 300mm thick and contained pottery from the 18th century.

In the south of the trench the earliest layer excavated was a mid black brown silty clay [108]. This was not fully excavated but was at least 300mm thick. Pottery recovered from this layer dates to the later half of the 17th century. Above [108] was a similar layer [107] which was about 500mm thick. This contained pottery of a similar date to [108].

In the north-east of the trench the earliest layer seen was [111] this probably continued westwards and overlay [110] but was machined off in this area. Pottery recovered from [111] dates from the later half of the 17th century.

Cutting [107], [110] and [111] was a construction cut [113] for a sandstone foundation [104]. This footing ran approximately north-east to south-west across the centre of the trench and was about 550mm wide. The blocks were rough hewn in the main but the stones on the north face had been worked to a better finish. The two courses were bonded with a beige/brown mortar. In the far west of the trench [115] was re-used as part of footing [104]. Built on top of [104] was a brick wall [116]. This was bonded with a similar mortar to the foundation. Only four courses of [116] had survived. The bricks were hand made and in the main were 240mm in length, 120mm wide and 55mm thick. This wall probably formed the north wall to a building to the south. A 20th century or late 19th century sewer running approximately north-east to south west had been inserted through [104] and [116].

To the south and butting up to [116] was a layer of sand and mortar [106]. This is presumably an internal surface, which was perhaps originally tiled. Butting [116] in the north-east corner of the trench was a sandstone and brick footing/wall [112]. This is probably an extension to the building in the south or possibly a property boundary. Above [112] was a layer of ash [117], which was only seen in section. This is possibly bedding for a layer of bricks [118] which formed a surface.

Above [118] and [106] was a 1.6 metre dump of 19th century material [101]. Two 19th century brick walls [102] and [103] are probably the remains of buildings shown on the 1882 century Ordnance Survey Map.

Trench 2 (Fig. 4)

This trench was excavated to a depth of about 1.7 metres. No significant archaeological features or deposits were excavated. In the south of the trench was a brick wall or footing [210] seen at the limit of excavation. This was running approximately east to west across the trench. A similar feature was seen in the north-east section of the trench running approximately north to south [208]. Above [210] was a 19th century dump [209] and above [208] was another dump of 19th century material [207]. Cutting [209] in the far south of the trench was a brick footing and wall [203] running east to west. Across most of the trench was another dump of material [206]. This was cut by a pit [205] which was filled with brick

rubble [204] and a sewer pipe trench [211]. Above [204] and [211] was a levelling layer [202] and above this was the make-up [201] for the concrete slab.

Trench 3 (Fig. 5)

This trench was excavated to a depth of about 1.5 metres. No significant archaeological features or deposits were excavated. The earliest layer seen was a 19th century dump of material [308]. Cutting this was a brick wall/footing [305] which ran approximately east to west. To the south of [305] and above [308] was a layer of mortar [307] which is possibly a surface associated with [308]. To the north of the wall was a layer of bricks [304] which also probably represents a surface associated with the wall. A layer of mortar on top of [304] could be a later surface. To the south of the wall and overlying [307] was [306] which is possibly a levelling layer. Above [303] and [306] was the make-up [302] for the concrete slab [301].

The pottery by Stephanie Ratkái

A total of 59 sherds of pottery and ceramic building material, weighing 3177g was recovered. All the pottery was post-medieval or modern in date. The pottery was divided into ware groups and was quantified by sherd, rim and base count.

Landfill [101] contained a mixture of 19th century wares. There appeared to be little or no residual material in the landfill. Contexts, [107], [108], [111] and [114] were all associated with wall (104). The pottery from these contexts was fairly consistent and suggested a date in the second half of the 17th century. Contexts [109] and [110] were associated with wall [105]. The pottery from [109] was very similar to that associated with wall [104] and dated to the 17th century. Context [110] which lay above the footing of [105] contained a mix of pottery. The earliest pottery comprised two Cistercian ware sherds, dating to the late 15th-mid 16th centuries. Pottery from the 17th century was represented by blackware, slipware and coarseware. However, the context also contained a brown salt-glazed stoneware sherd from a large jar or flagon and two coarseware sherds with buff fabrics and dark brown glazes. These were unlikely to be earlier than the 18th century.

The 17th century pottery was made up of blackware mugs and cups, yellow ware jars and bowls, light-on-dark trailed slipware bowls, a tin glazed earthenware foot-ring dish, decorated on the interior with concentric blue bands, coarseware jars, bowls, a chafing dish and a tripod pipkin, and Midlands Purple ware jars. There was a small sherd from a Martincamp I flask, an import from northern France. This was one of the earliest sherds from the site since it dates to c 1475-1550. Two Cistercian ware sherds, occurring residually in [110] are of similar date. The range of 17th century fabrics and forms from [107]-[114] were consistent with post-medieval urban assemblages in the West Midlands.

A small amount of building material was also present in Trench 1 and comprised, brick, floor tile and roof tile fragments.

The pottery from Trench 2 was made up of a small number of 18th and 19th century sherds.

6 Discussion

Burgage plots running back from Mardol were probably in existence before the town wall was built in the mid 13th century (Baker *et al*, 1993). Excavations have revealed that the town wall ran along a line between Mardol and Roushill (Barker, 1961 and Stone, 2002). Despite many archaeological projects in this area the presence of a ditch outside the town wall remains uncertain, though elsewhere in the town it has been studied by excavation. Barker in his excavations along the wall surmised that the area outside the wall was wet and marshy but whether water was filling an actual ditch was not determined (Barker, 1961).

In the 15th century houses were being built over the town wall in this area. Therefore, if there was a ditch here it is likely that it would have been filled in by this date.

Trench 1 was situated across the postulated line of the town ditch. Although no deposits earlier than the 17th century were excavated it is possible that the ditch exists below the limit of excavation. Stratified deposits were excavated in the base of the trench over two metres below the present ground surface. There is no reason to believe that earlier deposits do not exist at deeper levels.

The sandstone wall [115] seen in the base of Trench 1 could be medieval in date and is certainly no later than the 17th century as it was partially demolished by this time. From this small evaluation it is not possible to determine whether this was the corner of a building or similar structure or whether it was a boundary wall running north-east to south-west. Whatever structure this wall was part of it is more than likely that it was associated with buildings fronting onto Mardol and not Roushill. The alignment seems to respect the property boundary forming the side of the 'Queen's Passage' which runs back from the Mardol frontage. This property division may have predated the town wall but wall [115] itself is almost certain to be later than the 15th century.

The base of wall [115] was not reached so therefore the ground surface when this wall was built is over 2 metres below the present ground level. Layers abutting this wall presumably represent early post-medieval build up of soil but alternatively they could represent dumping to raise the ground level. In the 17th century [115] was re-used as a footing for the brick wall [105]. Therefore, [115] must have been partially demolished by this time. The brick wall is probably too narrow to be part of a building and is perhaps a property boundary. It possibly a re-build of, or alteration to, wall [115].

During the early post-medieval period a further build up or dumping of soils took place. A building was erected in the southern part of the site in probably the 18th century. This consisted of a sandstone foundation [104] and a brick wall [116]. An internal mortar surface was seen to the south of [116], which was perhaps originally tiled.

At a later date a wall [112] was tacked onto [116] for either an extension in the east or perhaps as part of a boundary wall running south-west to north-east.

A later brick surface may be an outside yard associated with [116] though it is more than likely to be associated with a different building as it overlies wall [112]. In the 19th century the ground level in the area of Trench 1 seems to have been made up by at least 1.5metres and new buildings were erected.

In trenches 2 and 3 the earliest buildings date to the late 18th or probably the 19th centuries. These seem to have partially demolished and the ground made up by about 1.5 metres with 19th century dumping and new buildings were erected.

7 Recommendations

The three trenches excavated are all within the footprint of the proposed building. It is believed that the foundations for the proposed buildings will be piled, with a shallow raft elsewhere. The drainage trenches will be excavated to a depth no deeper than about 47.0 metres. However, the majority of these trenches will be above about 50.0 metres. In the area of Trench 1 two drainage trenches will be above about 50.7 metres.

The evaluation has identified that in the area of Trench 1 the majority of significant archaeology exists at about 50.7 metres, a depth of 1.6 metres below the present ground surface. However, the top of the brick wall [105] is at 51.98 metres and this is a significant feature. In Trenches 2 and 3 no significant archaeology was reached. These trenches were excavated to a depth of about 50.0 metres, a depth of 1.5 metres below the present ground surface. Although it is possible, it is unlikely that in the area of the proposed building significant archaeological features and deposits exist at a level above about 51.0 metres.

Each pile will destroy any archaeology, if it exists, within a small radius. Excavations for the concrete raft will more than likely be within 19th landfill and will not have an impact on any archaeological significant features and deposits.

Excavations for the drainage may have an impact on any archaeologically significant features and deposits in the area of Trench 1 and if remains exist in other areas these will be disturbed. However, the drainage trenches will be narrow in the main and will not impact greatly on the archaeological resource.

The piles in the area of Trench 1 will have an impact on archaeological features. These features, the brick wall [105] and the sandstone wall [115] should ideally be preserved *in situ* by designing the pile location footprint to have minimum impact on these features.

In order to ensure that archaeological features are preserved by record it is recommended that a watching brief be maintained on drainage work. Because of the depth of overburden and the narrowness of the drain runs it is suggested that the watching brief be restricted to new manholes and any other excavations of similar area.

The archaeological impact of the foundations including piles is likely to be negligible and it is recommended that no archaeological response be put in place for this work.

8 References

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Barker, P. A, 1961, Excavations on the Town Wall, Roushill, Shrewsbury, *Medieval Archaeology*, Vol. V

Stone, R, 2002, *Land at Mardol Gardens and Roushill, Shrewsbury: Archaeological Desk Based Assessment*, Marches Archaeology Report Number 236

9 Acknowledgements

Thanks must go to Lyndon Wain of 3C Developments for his co-operation and assistance during the evaluation. Thanks also to Simon Jeffery and Allen Wright, co-workers on site. The illustrations were by Vicky Sears and Allen Wright.

10 The archive

The site code is MGS04A. The archive consists of:

- 16 context sheets
- 3 trench sheets
- 1 drawing index sheets
- 7 field drawings on 3 sheets
- 1 sheet of levels
- 2 sheets of site diary and notes
- 10 finds sheets
- 2 photo record sheets
- 1 film of black and white photographic negatives
- 1 film of colour photographic transparencies
- 1 box of finds:

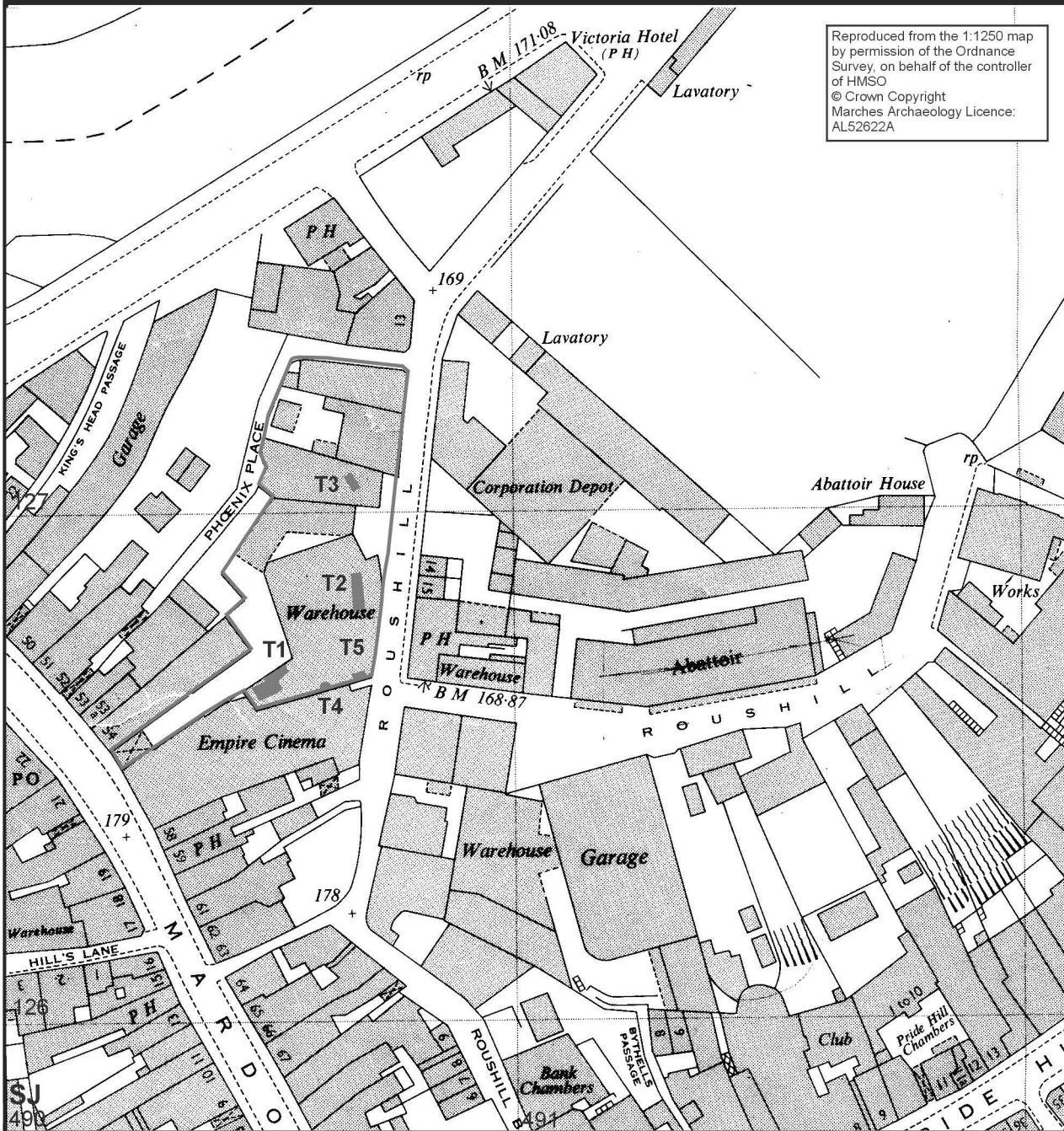
The archive is currently held by Marches Archaeology awaiting transfer to Rowley's House Museum, Barker Street, Shrewsbury.

Appendix I: List of contexts

Context Number	Description	Interpretation
101	Dark grey loamy clay with frequent inclusions of brick and tile rubble, coal and ash	19 th century dumps
102	Brick wall in north of trench	19 th century wall
103	Brick wall in south-west of trench	19 th century wall
104	Sandstone foundation running approximately east to west. Within construction cut [113] and below brick wall [116]	Foundation of ?18 th century building to south
105	Brick wall running approximately NE-SW at limit of excavation. Above layer [120] and abutted by layer [110]	17 th century wall of building or boundary wall
106	Pink mortar bedded onto orange sand to south of wall [116]. Presumably tiles were laid on top of the mortar though none were excavated. Below [101]	Surface associated with brick wall [116] of building to south
107	Mid black brown silty clay with frequent sand, mortar, charcoal, plaster and tile fragments. Depth c. 500mm. To the south of and cut by foundation cut [113]. Above [108]	Early post-medieval soil build up
108	As [107] except contained less inclusions. Not fully excavated. Below [107]	Early post-medieval soil build up
109	Mid brown silty sandy clay with frequent tile, charcoal and mortar. Not fully excavated. Butts sandstone wall [115] and below layer [120]	Early post-medieval soil build up
110	As [109] except more mixed. Depth about 300mm. Cut by construction cut [113] and butts brick wall [105]	Post-medieval soil build up or dump
111	Black grey silty clay with 30% charcoal and coal, frequent tile, brick, mortar and ash. Cut by construction cut [113]. Not excavated. Probably extended westwards and overlay [110] but was machined off	Post-medieval dump of material
112	Sandstone and brick only seen in east section. Butts brick wall [116] to the south. Below [117]	Sandstone footing and brick wall. Probably an addition to wall [116].

113	Linear cut with vertical sides and flat base. Cuts [107], [110] and [111]. Backfilled with [114]	Construction cut for foundation [104]
114	Mid grey brown silty clay with frequent tile, mortar, charcoal and occasional sandstone fragments.	Back fill of construction cut [113] for foundation [104]
115	Squared sandstone blocks only seen in north-west section. At least two courses deep. Layer [109] butts [115] and [104] and [105] built on top of this feature	Wall of ?medieval building or corner of ?medieval building
116	Brick wall running approximately west to east. Sat on foundation [104] and above backfill of construction cut [114]. Abutted by surface [106] to south and by wall [112] to north	Brick wall of building to south. Sat on foundation [104]. Surface [106] associated with [116] and is probably internal
117	Black ash and clinker about 150 mm thick. Above [112] and below surface [118]	Possible bedding for surface [118]
118	Layer of bricks only seen in section. Above [117] and below [101]	?19 th century brick surface
119	Sewer pipe, cut and backfill seen in base of trench at limit of excavation. Cuts [101]	20 th century or late 19 th century sewer
120	Sandstone fragments and cobbles in a mid brown sticky silty clay matrix with occasional charcoal and pebbles. Only seen underneath brick wall [105] and is above layer [120]. About 200mm thick	?Layer to bed wall [105] onto
201	Mixed make-up partially removed. Max depth 400mm.	Make-up for concrete slab
202	Crushed bricks about 300mm thick	Levelling layer
203	Brick wall and footing running approximately east to west	19 th or 20 th century wall
204	Brick and brick rubble in a sandy silt matrix	Fill of [205]
205	Cut against wall [203]	Cut for possible brick structure which has been very disturbed
206	Mixed layer of ash, clinker, mortar, brick rubble and pebbles in a dark brown silty sand matrix. About 800mm thick	19 th century dumps

207	Brick rubble and mortar in a pink clay matrix. About 500mm thick	19 th century dump
208	Brick footing or wall to cellar	19 th century brick footing or wall to cellar
209	Soft lenses of silty sandy clay varying in colour between black and mid brown	19 th century dump
210	Brick wall or footing seen at limit of excavation. Top of feature has been removed in antiquity	18 th or 19 th century brick wall or footing
211	Sewer pipe, cut and backfill	20 th century or late 19 th century sewer
301	Concrete slab	Concrete slab for building
302	Brick rubble in a silty sand matrix. About 400mm thick	Make-up for [301]
303	Layer of mortar about 200mm thick	Possible surface associated with [305]
304	Layer of bricks	Possible 19 th century surface
305	Brick wall	19 th century brick wall
306	Dark grey sandy silty clay with brick fragments. About 350mm thick	Layer
307	Layer of mortar about 100mm thick	Possible surface associated with [305]
308	Dark grey sandy silty clay with frequent inclusions of coal, bricks and mortar. 19 th century pottery seen in section but not recovered	19 th century dump



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Fig. 1 Location of site and the evaluation trenches

Key

- T = Tile
- B = Brick
- S = Sandstone
- [shaded box] = Mortar

All heights are above
Ordnance Datum

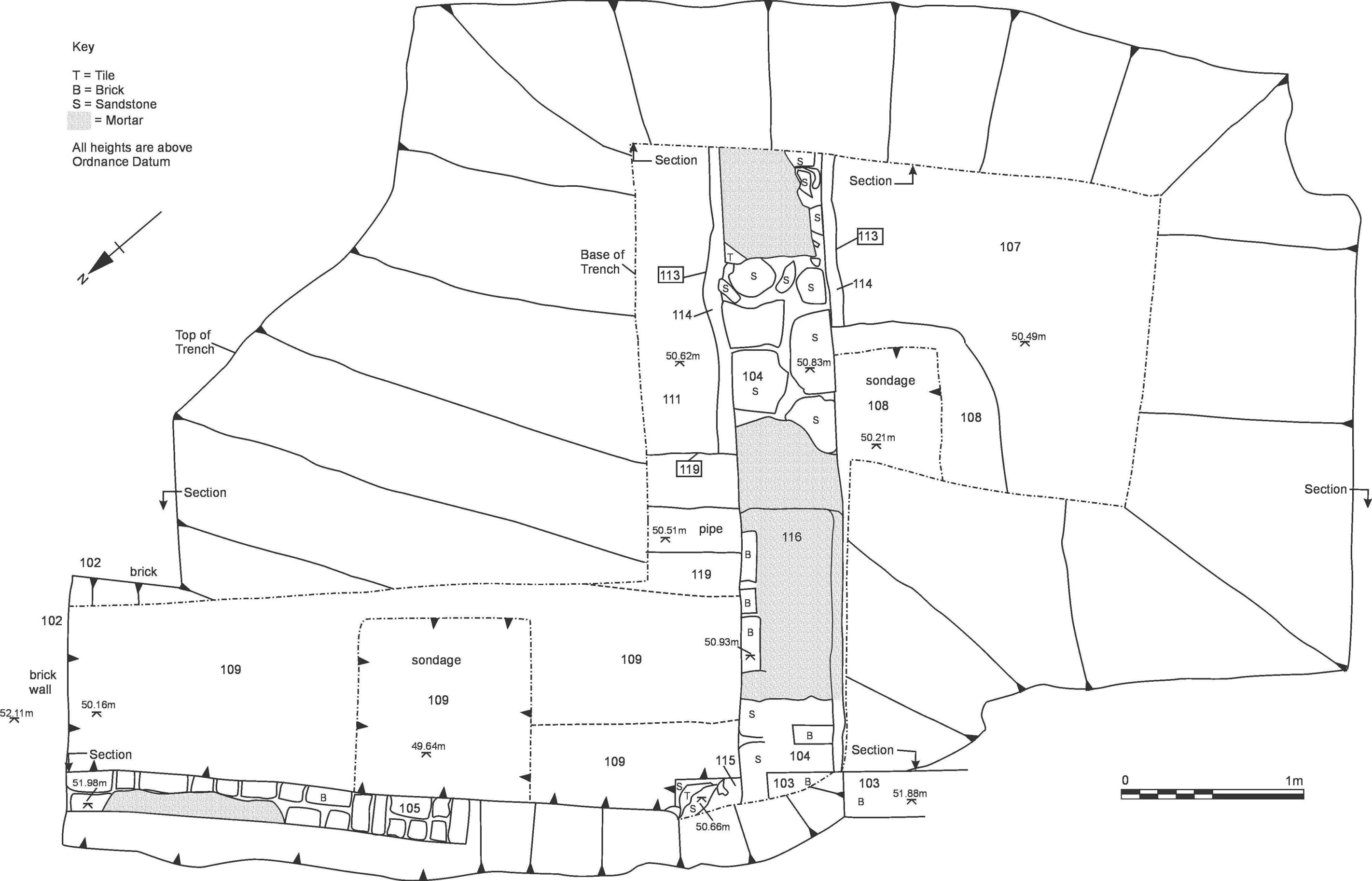
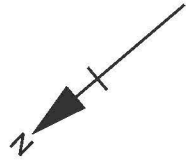
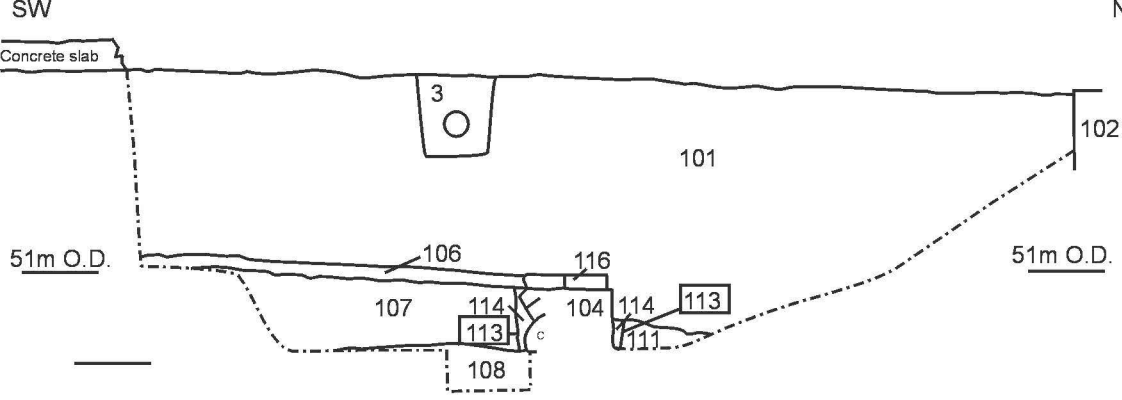
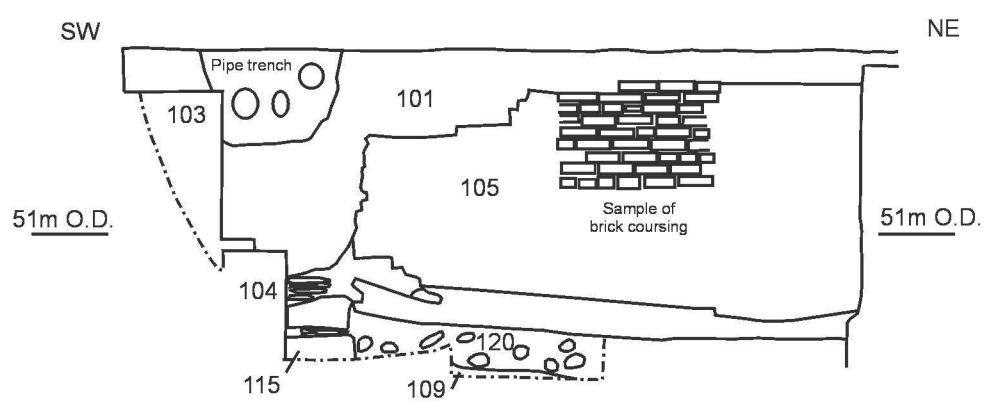


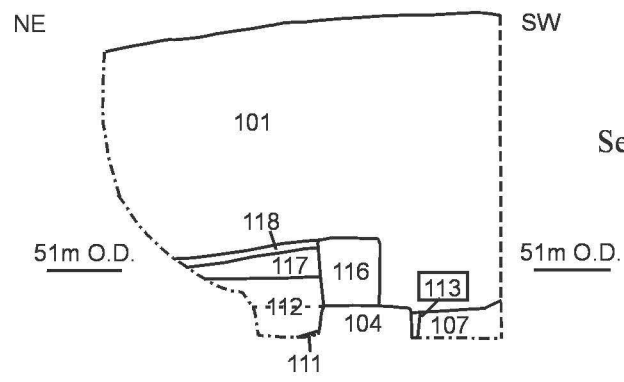
Fig. 2 Plan of Trench 1



Section across centre of trench showing [104] and [116]



Section and elevation of [105] and [115]



Section showing [104] and [116]

Fig. 3 Sections of Trench 1

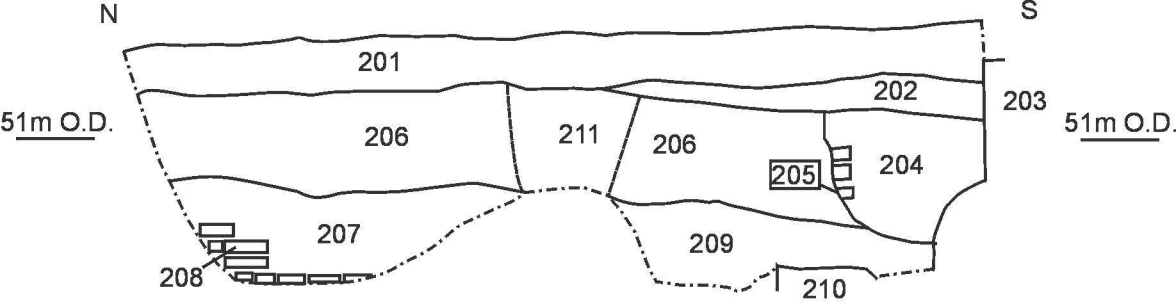


Fig. 4 Section of Trench 2

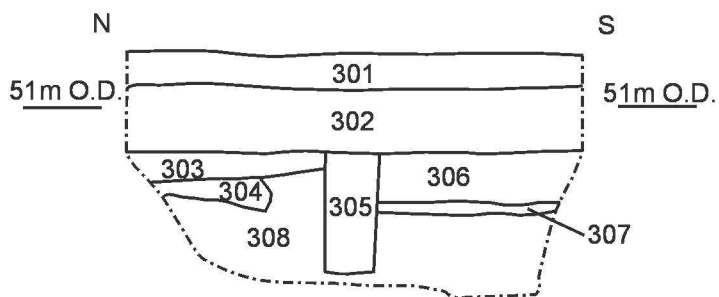
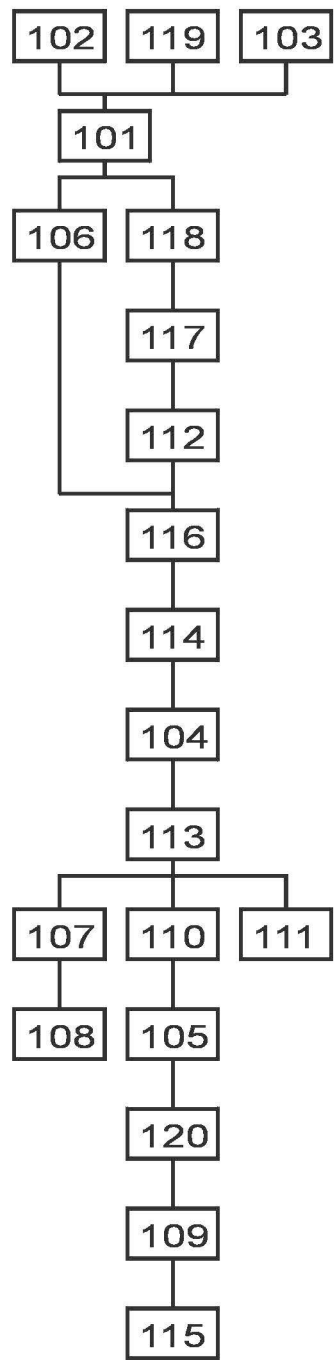


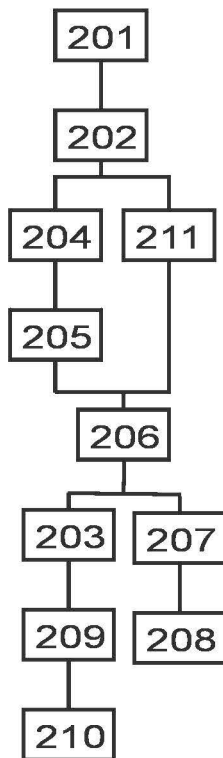
Fig. 5 Section of Trench 3

Appendix II: The site matrix

Trench 1



Trench 2



Trench 3

