Southampton Archaeology Unit

Report 964

Archaeological watching brief at 90 – 102 High Street, Portsmouth. 2009/181

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1. Summary

The Archaeology Unit of Southampton City Council carried out an archaeological watching brief at 90 – 102 High Street, Portsmouth on behalf of Colas. Three test trenches were dug to ascertain the cause of subsidence along the pavement.

The trenches dug along the High street have shown that the dips in the pavement, was due to the back fill of cellars from demolished houses beginning to subside. In all three trenches southern walls of these cellars was observed and the cellar backfill excavated. The southern end of the cellars was backfilled with soil and brick rubble witch contained several finds dating from the 19th -20th century. The northern end of the cellars nearer the Cathedral was backfilled with soil containing finds also dating from the 19th - 20th century and some fragments of human bone. Only the western most cellar, in trench three contained some internal walls. The backfill of the cellars was not compacted and contained fragments of large wooden beams and would probably subside more if left.

2. Introduction

The Archaeology Unit of Southampton City Council carried out an archaeological watching brief at 90 – 102 High Street, Portsmouth (figure 1) on behalf of Colas. Three test trenches were dug to ascertain the cause of subsidence along the pavement. The observations were made by EL McDonald BA MA between the 05/10/09 and the 07/10/09. The project was managed by Dr A Russel BA PhD.

3. Aims of the investigation

The aims of the investigation as defined in the written scheme of investigation were:

To establish the nature and extent of archaeological activity within targeted parts of the pipeline trench;

To establish the nature and extent of archaeological activity within targeted parts of the easement where topsoil stripping is of sufficient depth;

To record to an appropriate level any archaeological activity identified;

To disseminate the results of any investigation, if required, through the deposition of an ordered archive at an appropriate local museum and by the production of a fieldwork report for the Hampshire AHBR.

4. Watching brief methodology

All archaeological records were made using the Southampton City Council archaeological recording system. The colours of deposits were recorded using the Munsell Soil Color Chart and these are used in this report (Munsell Color 1975).

5. Site location and geology

The site is in the old town area of Portsmouth. It is located on the north side of the High Street, opposite the eastern end of Portsmouth Cathedral (figure 1).

The site is on Portsea Island which has Valley Brickearth above Plateau Gravel as the surface geological deposits (GSGB 1976). They are above the Bagshot Beds. The modern ground surface is at 3.7m OD.

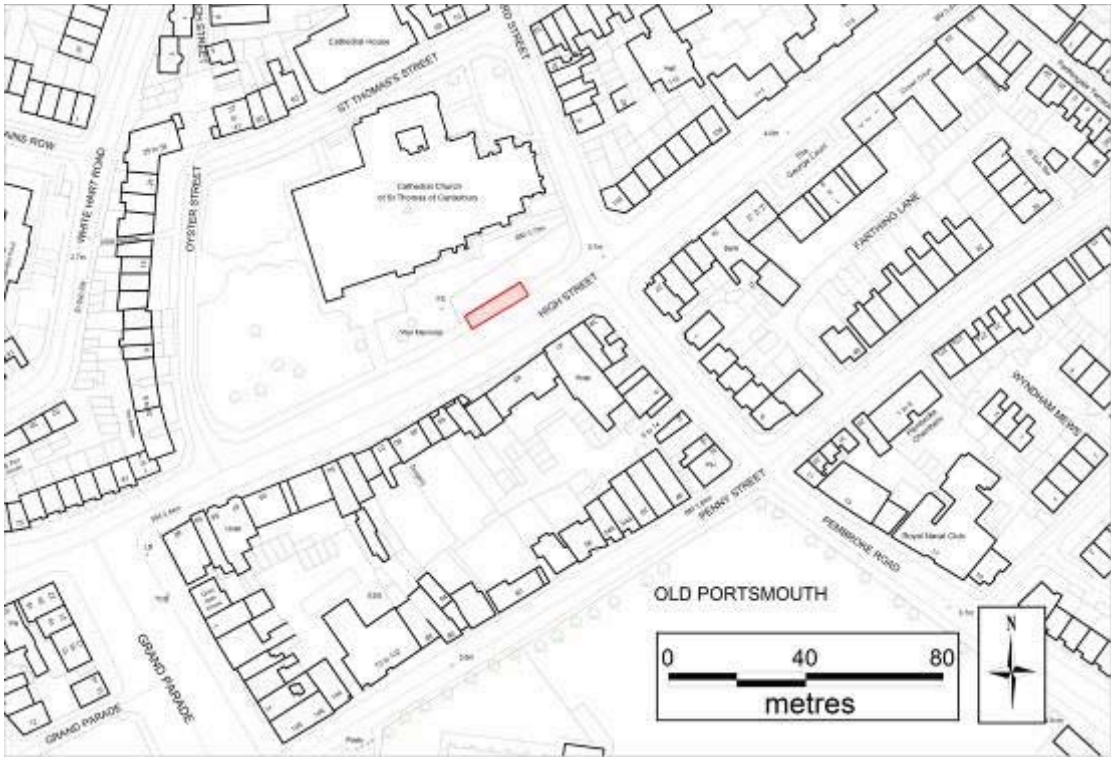

Fig 1: Site location (site in red)

6. Historical and archaeological background

The harbour town of Portsmouth was in existence by the late 12th century and received a charter from Richard I in 1194. It developed into an important port for trade with Europe. During The Hundred Years War it was raided and burnt by the French in 1338 and 1369. The adoption of Portsmouth by Henry VII as a base for the building and repair of the king's ships and the threat of war with France led to expansion of the town from the late 15th century.

In the mid 19th century Golden Lion Lane, now known as Lombard Street, situated to the east of the site was widened due to increased traffic to the Dockyard. In 1868 the town council had a meeting to consider buying 102 High Street "which was owned by Councillor Emanuel who rented the property to Mr Lewis" (http://www.history.inportsmouth.co.uk/events/golden-lion-

lane.htm). The eastern part of this property may be part of one of the cellars on the site.

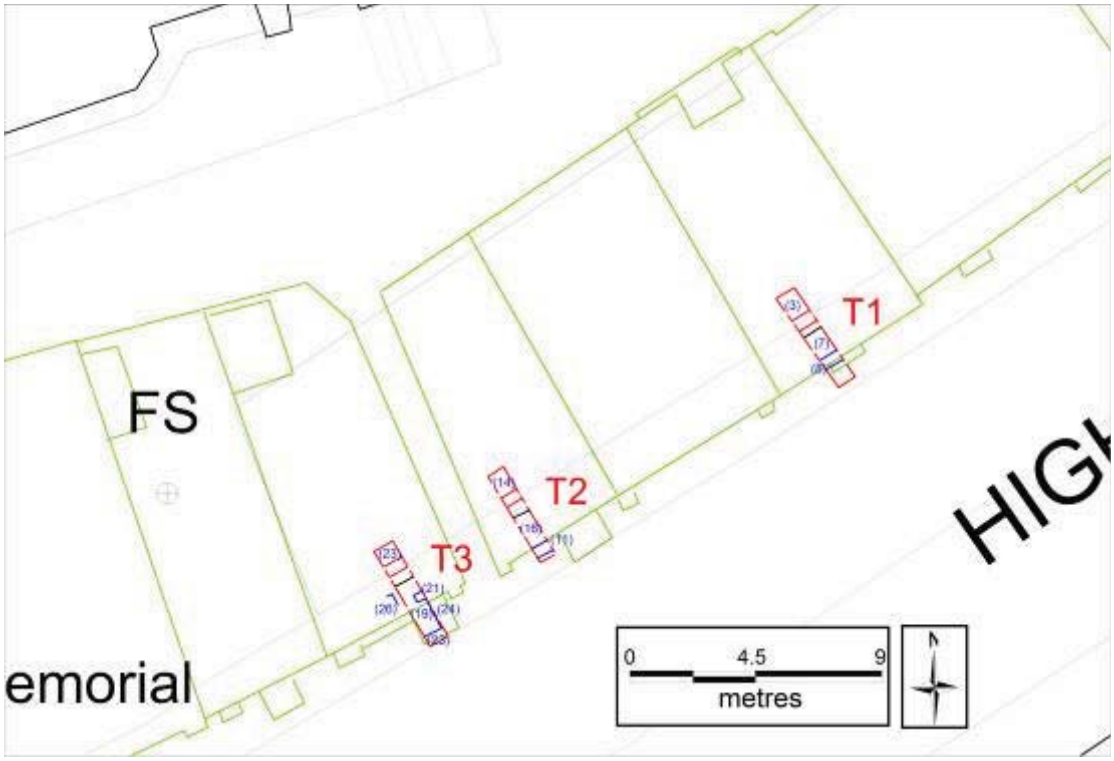

Fig 2: Plan of housing along the northern side of the High Street in 1865 (green), in relation with the trenches (red) and features (blue).

7. Results of the watching brief

7.1. Introduction

A total of three test trenches were dug in areas of subsidence along the pavement west of St Thomas cathedral. The trenches were on average just under 4m long, 0.6m wide and 1m deep. The trenches were dug mostly in the pavement, but one meter of each trench was dug into the cathedrals grounds (fig 3).

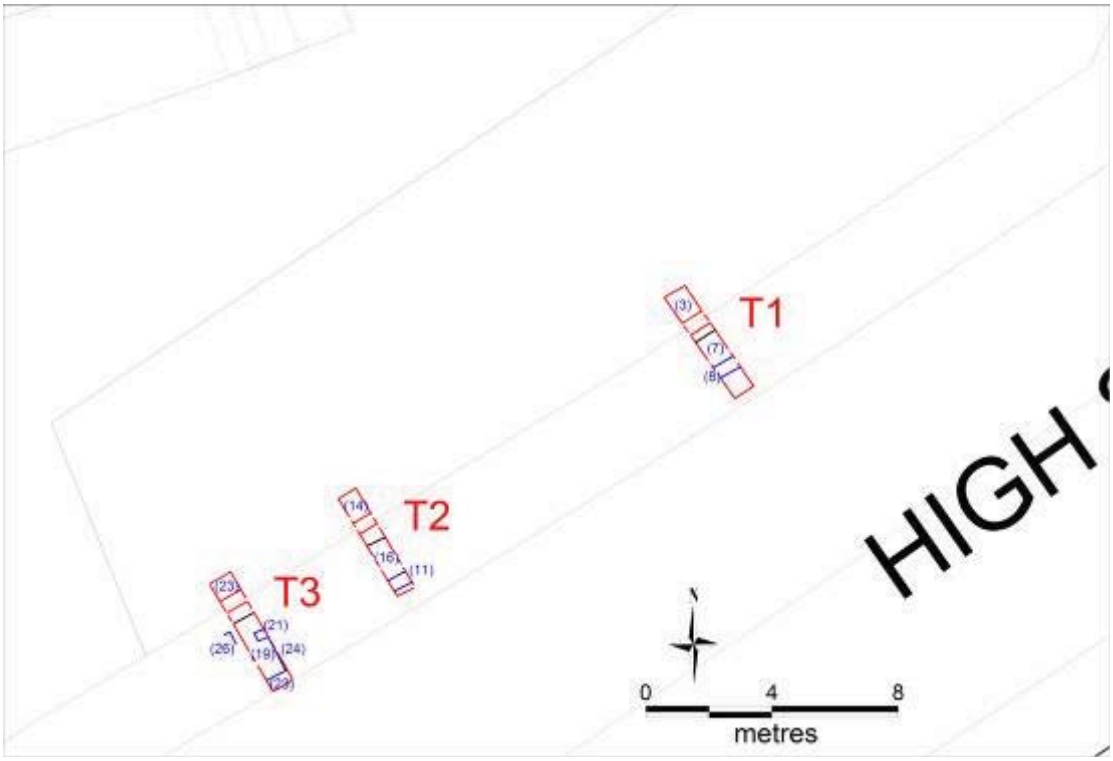

Fig 3: Trench and feature location plan

7.2. Natural, context 15

Natural gravel 15 was observed in trenches one and two. It was brownish yellow, 10YR6/6, in colour and was situated 190mm below the surface where it was not cut by cellar walls 4, 10 and 20.

7.3. Cellar walls, contexts 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26

Cellar construction trenches and walls were observed in all three trenches. Construction trench 4 and cellar wall, contexts 8 and 9 were situated in trench one. The wall ran northeast - southwest across the southern end of the trench. The trench only showed a small fraction of the cellar but it was at least 3.8m long, 600mm wide and 1m deep. The cellar wall consisted of bricks on the top, context 8 and lime stone blocks in the base, context 9. The bricks were 244mm long and 63mm wide and were in a stretcher bond coursing. The lime stone blocks were situated 403mm from the top of the wall. They were shaped lime stone blocks in a lime mortar matrix and had an irregular coursing (fig 4 and 5).

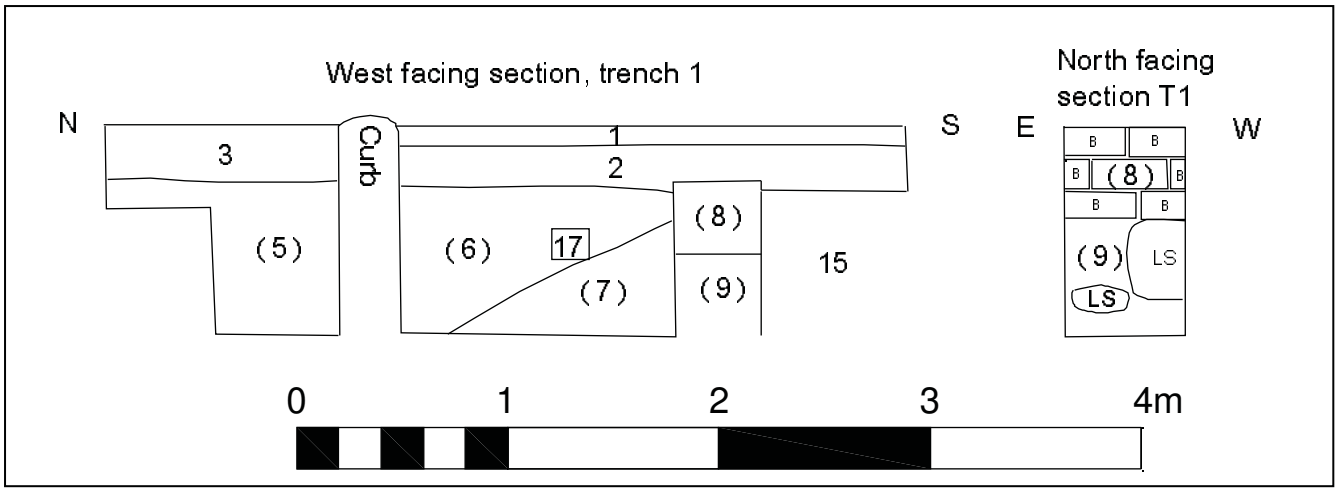

Fig 4: West facing section (left) and north facing section (right) of trench 1, showing cellar wall 8, 9 and back fill 5 and 7. Key: B = Brick, LS = Lime stone.

Fig 5: North facing section of trench 1showing wall 8 and 9.

Construction trench 10 and cellar wall 11 were situated in trench 2. The construction trench cut natural 15. The full extent of the construction trench was not observed but it was at least 3.4m long, 600mm wide and 1.1m deep. The cellar wall ran northeast – southwest across the southern end of the trench. Wall 11 consisted of bricks, 221mm long, 102mm wide and 58mm thick, in a lime mortar matrix. It was 390 wide and was at least 1.1m deep. Only the top course of bricks was visible as the rest of the wall was painted white (fig 6 and 7).

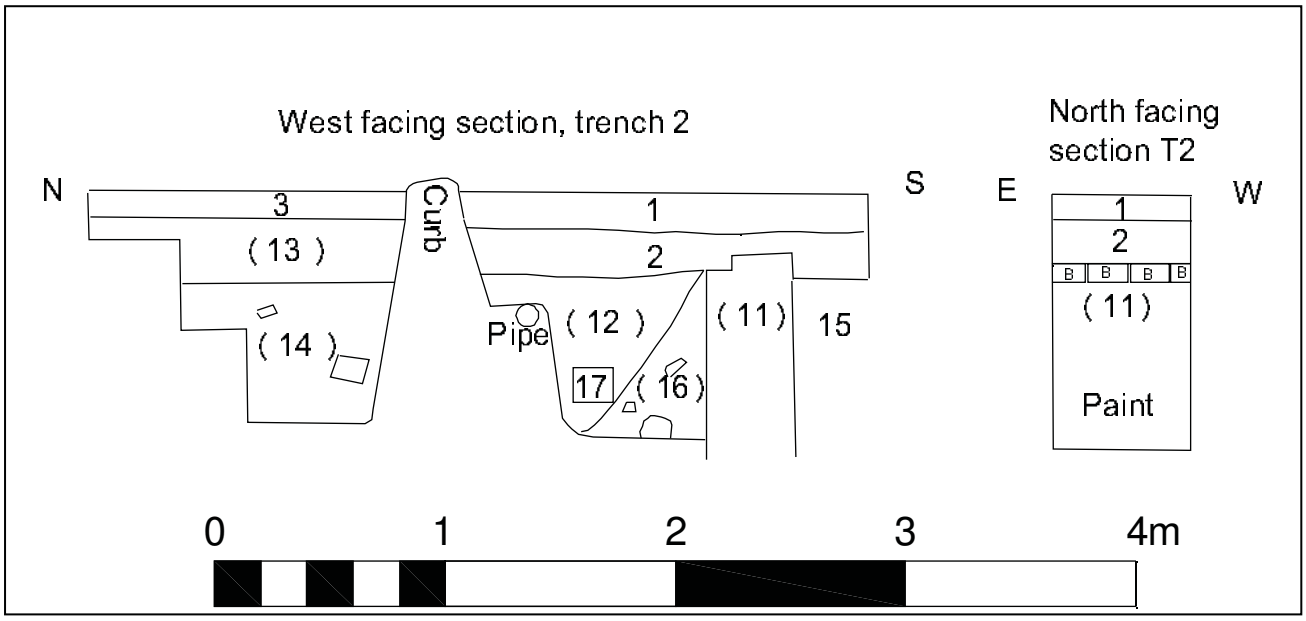

Fig 6: West facing section (left) and north facing section (right) of trench 2, showing wall 11 and back fills 14 and 16. Key: B = Brick.

Fig 7: North facing section showing wall 11.

Construction trench 20 and cellar walls 21, 24, 25 and 26 were situated in trench three. The construction trench cut natural 15 and was at least 3.9m long, 600mm wide and 1m deep. A small section of cellar wall, context 21, was situated half way along the eastern edge of trench three and jutted out 400mm from wall 24. It may have been built to create a doorway within the cellar. The wall consisted of bricks, 212mm long, 102mm wide and 66mm thick, in a lime mortar. Wall 24 ran northwest – southeast along the eastern edge of trench three. It was mostly made up of roughly squared lime stone blocks, although three bricks and two flint cobbles were also observed in the wall. It was bonded to walls 21 and 25 (fig 8 and 9). Wall 25 was situated in the south of the trench. It ran northeast – southwest across the trench. It

consisted of bricks with no frogs, dated post medieval, 208mm long, 95mm wide and 63mm thick, in a lime mortar. Wall 26 ran northwest – southeast along the western edge of trench three. Only a small section of the wall was exposed when the section collapsed. It consisted of bricks in a lime mortar. It's had a stretcher bond coursing and full extent was not observed (fig 10 and 11).

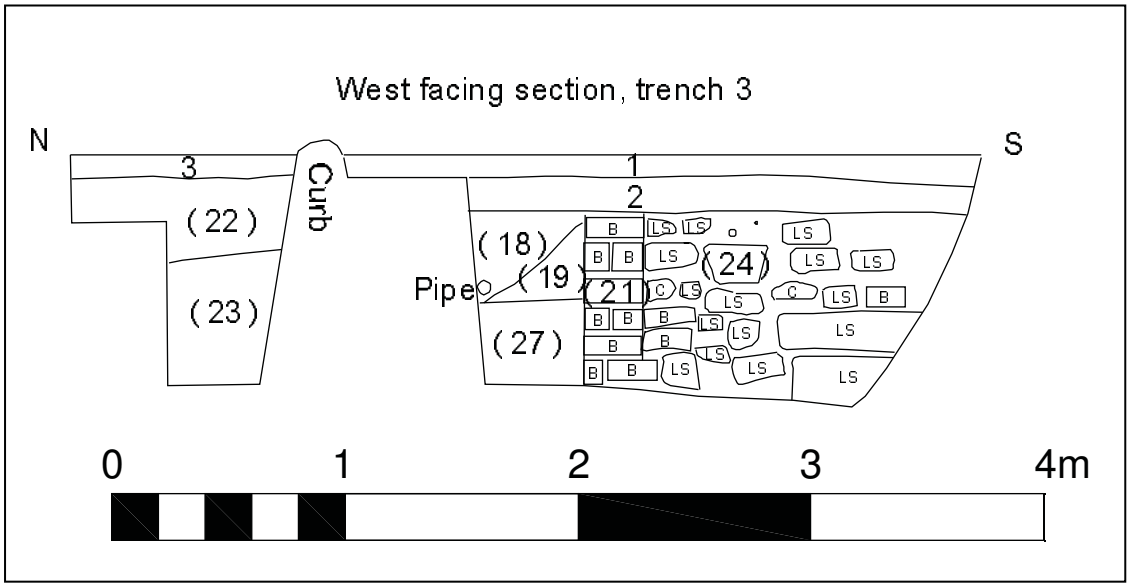

Fig 8: West facing section of trench 3, showing walls 21, 24 and back fills 19, 22, 23 and 27. Key: B = Brick, C = Flint cobble, LS = Lime stone

Fig 9: West facing section of trench 3 showing walls 21, 24 and back fills 19 and 27.

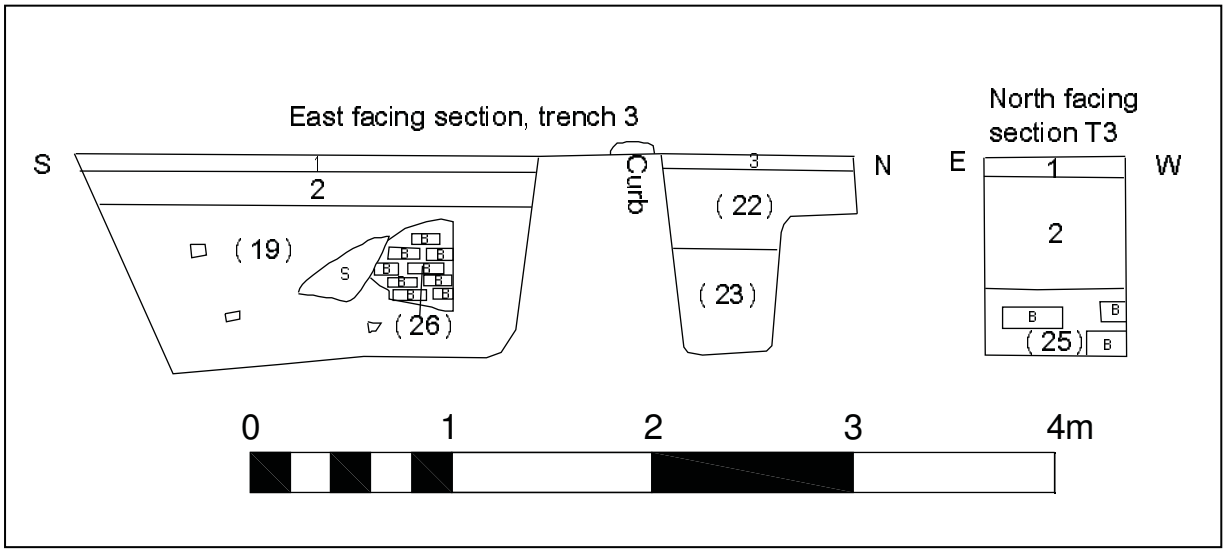

Fig 10: East facing section (left) and north facing section (right) of trench 3, showing walls 25, 26 and back fill 19. Key: B = Brick, S = stone slab.

Fig 11: East facing section showing wall 26 and back fill 19.

7.4. Cellar back fills, contexts 5, 7, 13, 14, 16, 19, 22, 23, 27

All three trenches were dug across the pavement outside of St Thomas cathedral, the northern end of the trenches were dug into the church grounds by 600mm. The northern ends of the cellars in the church grounds were backfilled with soil, contexts 5, 13, 14, 22 and 23. The southern ends of the cellars under the pavement were back filled with brick rubble, contexts 7, 16, 19 and 27.

In the northern end of trench one, in the cathedral property, cellar 4 was back filled with a dark grey, 10YR4/1, sandy loam soil, context 5. It was at least 700mm thick and contained fragments of brick, china, plastic and metal, a metal box was also observed in the south facing section. One fragment of brick dated post medieval and one fragment of pottery dated 19th – 20th century was retained from this context (fig 12).

Fig 12: South facing section of trench 1, showing metal box within back fill 5.

In the southern end under the pavement, cellar 4 was back filled with brick rubble in a yellowish red, 5YR5/6, sandy loam matrix. It was at least 300mm thick and contained a local brick dated post medieval, a sawn pig bone and a chicken bone (fig 4 and 13).

Fig 13: West facing section of trench 1, showing back fill 7 and wall 8 and 9.

In the northern end of trench two, cellar 10 was filled with a very dark greyish brown, 10YR3/2, clay loam, context 14. It was situated 200mm below the ground and contained fragments of brick, slate and mortar (fig 6 and 14).

Fig 14: Example of finds from backfill 14.

Above was fill 13, a dark greyish brown, 10YR4/2, clay loam. It was 300mm thick and contained fragments of brick, chalk, slate and mortar. In the southern end of the trench cellar 10 was backfilled with brick rubble in a greyish brown, 10YR5/2, sandy loam matrix, context 16. It was at least 700mm thick and contained a large wooden beam and bricks with no frogs, 213mm long, 95mm wide and 57mm thick (fig 6 and 15).

Fig 15: Example of finds from back fill16.

In the northern end of trench three, cellar 20 was back filled with a dark greyish brown, 10YR4/2, clay loam, context 23. It was 200mm below the surface and was at least 600mm thick. It contained one fragment of modern tile, fragments of bricks, mortar and fragments of human fibula, femur and tibia suggesting that graves were disturbed during the back filling of this cellar. Above was a greyish brown, 10YR5/2, clay loam, context 22. It was 300mm thick and contained fragments of brick, mortar and chalk (fig 8).

In the southern end of the trench the cellar was backfilled with a very dark greyish brown, 10YR3/2, clay loam27. It was 300mm below the surface, 400mm thick and contained fragments of brick and mortar. Above was a mixed soil, gravel and brick rubble layer 19. It was brown, 10YR5/3, with patches of yellowish brown, 10YR5/6, sandy clay loam. It was at least 900mm thick and contained bricks with no frogs 229mm long, 104 wide and 63mm thick (fig 10 and 16).

Fig 16: Example of finds from backfill 19.

7.5. Top soil, modern layers and pipe trench, contexts, 1, 2, 3, 6, 12, 17, 18

Pipe trench 17 ran east – west across the back fill of all the cellars. It was filled with hogging, contexts 6, 12 and 18. All the trenches were below the modern pavement, made up of lime stone slabs, context 1, on a sand and gravel bed, context 2. In the north of the trenches the fills were below the top soil in the grave yard of St Thomas church, context 3.

8. Conclusions

The trenches dug along the High street have shown that the dips in the pavement, was due to the backfill of cellars from demolished houses beginning to subside. In all three trenches southern walls of these cellars was observed and the cellar backfill excavated. The southern end of the cellars was backfilled with soil and brick rubble witch contained several finds dating from the 19th -20th century. The northern end of the cellars nearer the Cathedral was backfilled with soil containing finds also dating from the 19th - 20th century and some fragments of human bone. Only the western most

cellar, in trench three contained some internal walls. The backfill of the cellars was not compacted and contained fragments of large wooden beams and would probably subside more if left.

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Southampton City Council Archaeology Unit
Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Watching Brief at 61 St Thomas's Street, Portsmouth

MP Smith BA MIFA and EL McDonald BA MA
Southampton City Council Archaeology Unit
Report on the archaeological watching brief at 61 St Thomas's Street, Portsmouth. 2007/227
2007

Appendix 1. Context list

Number/letter codes (eg 10YR 3/1) = Munsell soil colour codes.
sa = stone abundance – 0 = virtually stone free; 5 = gravel

Context	Above	Below	Description
1	2		Stone paving slabs
2	6	1	Sand and hogging bedding for paving
3	5		Top soil layer, sandy loam. 10YR5/2. sa3
4	15	5, 7	Eastern most cellar
5	4	3	Soil and brick backfill. Sandy loam. 10YR4/1. sa3
6	8, 17	2	Hogging backfill
7	4, 8, 9	17	Brick rubble backfill. Sandy loam. 10YR5/6. sa4
8	4, 9	2, 7, 8	Brick cellar wall.
9	4	7, 8	Lime stone foundation.
10	15	13, 14, 16	Construction trench of cellar
11	10	2, 16	Brick cellar wall.
12	17	2	Hogging backfill
13	10, 14	3	Soil backfill. Clay loam. 10YR4/2.sa3
14	10	13, 17	Soil and brick backfill. Clay loam. 10YR3/2.sa3
15		2, 4, 10	Natural gravel. Sandy loam. 10YR6/6. sa4
16	10	17	Brick rubble backfill. Sandy loam. 5YR5/2. sa4
17	7, 16, 19	6, 12	Service trench
18	17	2	Hogging backfill
19	20, 26, 25, 24, 21	2, 17	Mixed backfill. Sandy clay loam. 10YR5/3, 10YR5/6. sa4
20	15	19, 21,	Construction trench for western cellar.

		22, 23, 24, 25	
21	20	2, 19	Brick wall, running east –west.
22	23	3	Soil backfill. Clay loam. 10YR5/2. 10YR5/2. sa3
23	20	22	Brick and soil backfill. Clay loam. 10YR4/2. sa4
24	20	2, 19	Mostly limestone with some brick wall.
25	20	2, 19	Brick wall
26	20	2, 19	Brick wall
27	20, 21	19	Soil and brick rubble backfill. Clay loam. 10YR3/2. sa4