
GAS WORKS HOUSE, HORSEFAIR, BOROUGHBIDGE.

REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
OSA REPORT No: OSA10WB17

July 2010



OSA

ON SITE ARCHÆOLOGY LTD

25A Milton Street • York • North Yorkshire • YO10 3EP
telephone • 01904 411673 • fax • 01904 414522 • mobile • 07767 385766

e-mail • onsitearchaeology@gmail.com

© *On-Site Archaeology* 2010.

Report Summary.

REPORT NO: OSA10WB17

SITE NAME: Gas Works House, Horsefair, Boroughbridge

COUNTY: North Yorkshire

PARISH: Boroughbridge

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NGR SE 39422 66474

ON BEHALF OF: C. K. Batchelor

TEXT: Berny McCluskey

GRAPHICS: Berny McCluskey
Dave Pinnock

FIELDWORK: Berny McCluskey

TIMING: Fieldwork:
June 2010 – July 2010
Post excavation & report preparation:
July 2010

ENQUIRIES TO: Nick Pearson
On-Site Archaeology
25A Milton Street
York
YO10 3EP

tel: (01904) 411673
fax: (01904) 414522
mobile: (07767) 385766
e-mail: onsitearchaeology@gmail.com

PERIODS REPRESENTED: 19th – 20th century

Table of Contents

1.0 Abstract	3
2.0 Site Location, Geology, Topography and Land Use.....	5
3.0 Archaeological Background.....	5
4.0 Methodology.....	5
5.0 Results.....	7
6.0 Discussion and Conclusions.....	9
7.0 Bibliography.....	9
8.0 Appendix 1 ~ List of Contexts.....	9
9.0 Appendix 2 ~ Archive Index.....	11
10.0 Appendix 3 ~ The Plates.....	12

List of Figures

Figure 1. Site location (NGR SE 39422 66474).....	4
Figure 2. Site plan showing trench locations.....	6

List of Plates

Plate 1. General site shot looking north.....	12
Plate 2. North-facing section Trench D.....	12
Plate 3. South-facing section Trench F.....	13
Plate 4. East-facing section Trench E.....	13
Plate 5. Trench H looking northeast.....	14
Plate 6. East facing section Trench A.....	14
Plate 7. East-facing section Trench C.....	15
Plate 8. East-facing section Trench B.....	15

1.0 Abstract.

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by On-Site Archaeology Ltd at Gas Works House, Horsefair, Boroughbridge, North Yorkshire, during a programme of bio-remediation work at a former Victorian gas works, which was subject for re-development into residential housing.

The bio-remediation programme involved targeting of areas of below ground contamination by mechanical excavation of 8 trenches. A total of 7 of 8 bio-remediation trenches were archaeologically monitored during this programme. The sequences of deposits recorded with of each trench were identified as activities related to operation of the former gas works and its disuse.

No pre-19th century archaeological features or finds were detected.

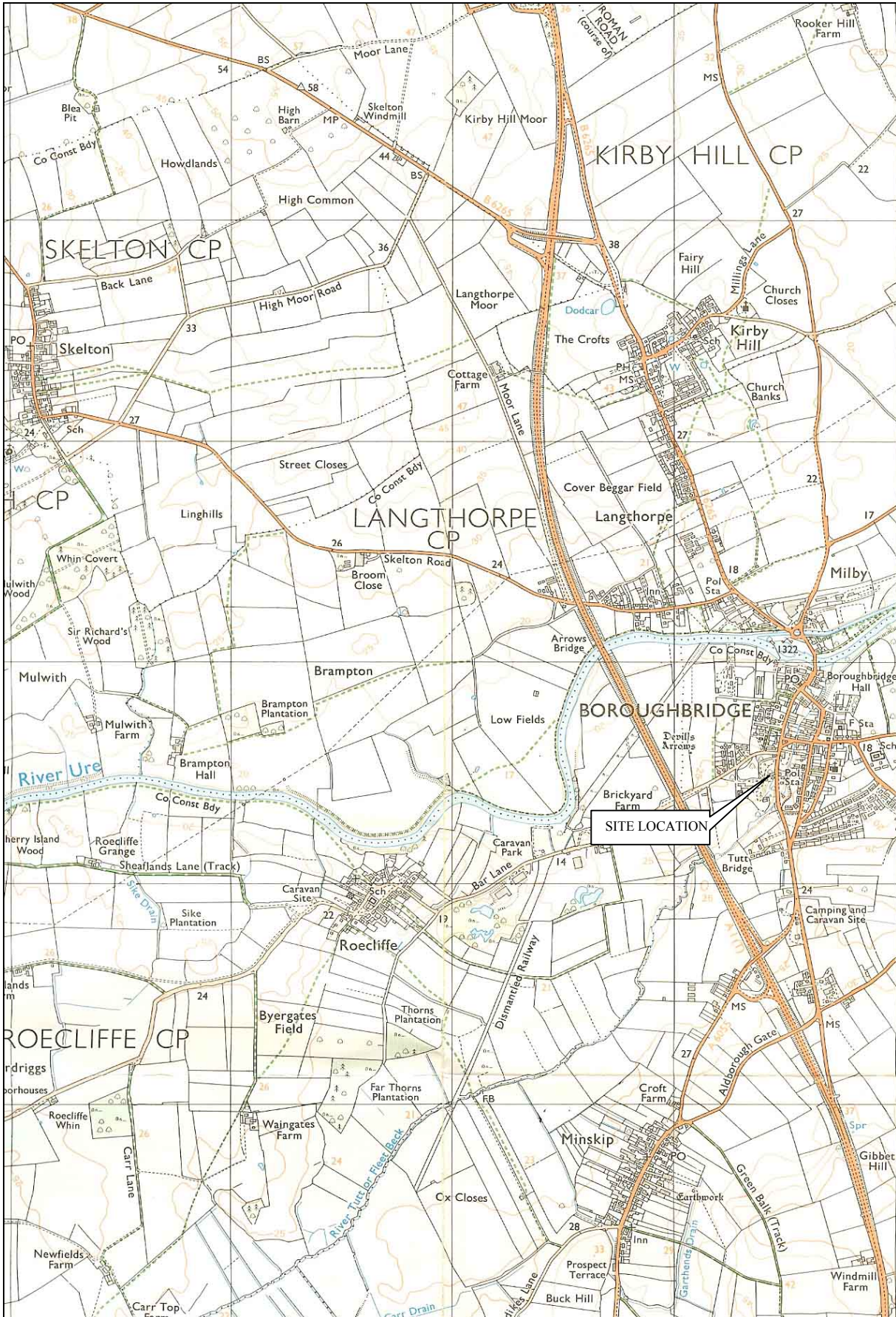


Figure 1. Site location (NGR SE 39422 66474)

Reproduced from the 2000 Ordnance Survey 1:25 000 maps with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
© Crown copyright. OSA Licence No: AL 52132A0001

2.0 Site Location, Geology, Topography and Land Use.

The site is located at NGR SE 39422 66474 to the south of the historic core of Boroughbridge, North Yorkshire (Figure 1). Gas Works House was bounded by residential properties to the north, west and south, and to the east by Horsefair, a road that leads from the south into the town. The site is situated upon alluvium associated with the River Ure floodplain, which overlies drift geology comprising silt and clay Glacial Lake Deposits. These deposits are founded upon a solid geology of the Sherwood Sandstone Group. At the time of the investigation the disused land had been cleared of scrub and was banked on the north and west sides the ground surface rose slight up to the southwest (Plate 1).

3.0 Archaeological Background.

The past history of the current settlement at Boroughbridge has not yet been extensively studied or understood. The limited knowledge of the site that is the subject of this evaluation would however indicate that this precise location has high archaeological potential for the medieval period.

Earlier periods are more problematic. Boroughbridge is not mentioned in the Domesday Book and in the current body of knowledge there is nothing to suggest that it was a focus of settlement in either the Anglian or the Anglo-Scandinavian periods. As for the Roman period the important settlement of Aldborough (*ISURIUM*) lies close by and it is assumed that the current core of Boroughbridge represents a shift away from that site, perhaps as a result of changes in the river regime or crossing point of the River Ure.

The town of Boroughbridge lies within an area that is clearly of significance in the prehistoric period. An alignment of standing stones, known as the Devils Arrows, is located close to the town centre, less than half a kilometre from the redevelopment site. Recent archaeological work associated with residential development has shown that the stones are but the visible part of a complex Neolithic and Bronze age landscape. The presence of remains of prehistoric date must therefore remain a possibility at the former Victorian gas works.

The Victorian gas works buildings still survives on the northern extent site and was part of a complex involved with the manufacture of 'town gas' that would have supplied the Boroughbridge households during the mid 19th century. Manufacturing plant associated with the production of gas during the 19th century may be encountered during the investigation.

4.0 Methodology.

The bio-remediation trenches were located within areas of known contamination previously identified by an earlier site borehole survey. The trench results are presented below in order

these were excavated (Lettered trench titles allocated by bio-remediation company – Trenches A – G) (Figure 2). Trench G was not archaeologically monitored.

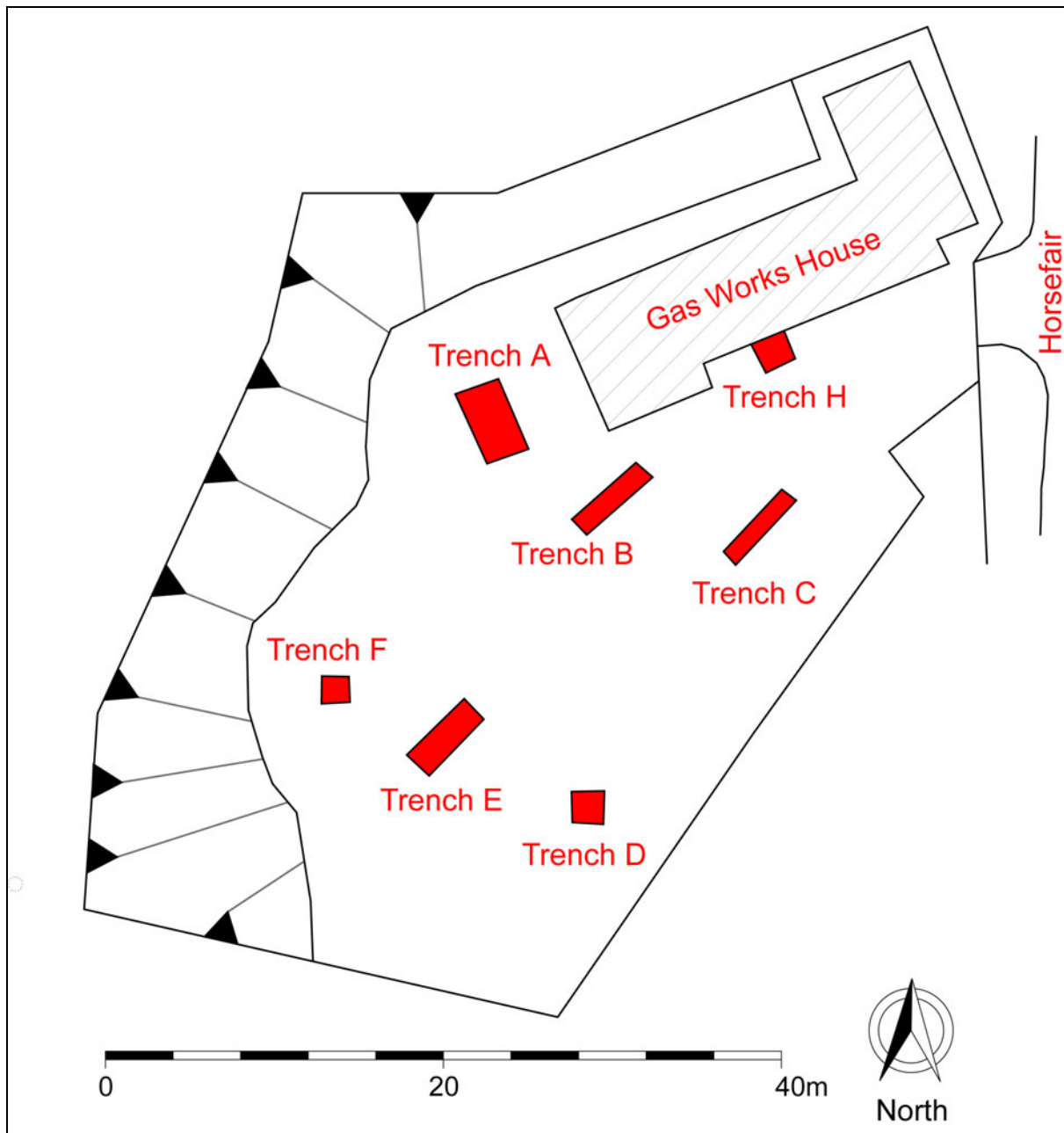


Figure 2. Site plan showing trench locations

The bio-remediation trenches were excavated using 360° excavator using a 1.8m ditching and a 0.6m-toothed buckets. The trenches were excavated down to a depth where the ground contamination were encountered and removed either by the mechanical excavator (solid contamination) or pumped out (liquid contamination) of the trench into safe storage container. The excavated trenches were not entered for recording purposes as instructed by the bio-remediation contractors due to possibility of escaping dangerous fumes or gases. All recording of deposits were undertaken from the surface of each trench and measurements presented in results are approximate.

Standard *On-Site Archaeology* procedures were followed throughout the watching brief. This involved the completion of a trench sheet for each trench with details of deposits or cuts encountered, along with a location plan of the trenches drawn to scale. Heights were taken from below ground level (BGL). A photographic record of the deposits and features was also maintained. A full list of context description of all deposits recorded is provided within Appendix 1.

5.0 Results.

5.1 *Trench D*

Trench D measured 2.8m by 1.2m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 3m (Plate 2). The earliest deposit detected was a dark greyish-black silty-clay alluvium layer (103) that had an excavated depth of 1m. Layer (103) was sealed by two clayey-silt levelling deposits (102) and (101) respectively. Levelling deposit (102) was a yellowish-brown colour measuring 1m in depth and (101) a greyish-black colour also 1m in depth. Sealing (101) was a greyish-brown sandy-silt topsoil containing moderate 19th – 20th century ceramic building material (CBM). No finds were recovered from this trench.

5.2 *Trench F*

This trench measured 4m by 2.3m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 3m (Plate 3). Layer (205) was the earliest deposit detected within the trench, which consisted of a mixed red sand and clay excavated to a depth of 1.5m. Layer (205) appeared to represent the contaminated natural geology. Sealing this layer was a brown sandy-silt bedding layer (204) for an above concrete layer (203) that was 0.35m in depth. The concrete layer (203) appeared to have been a former external surface associated with the former gas works. Above the concrete was a dark-brown sandy-clayey soil layer (202) that measured 0.2m in depth, this layer probably formed or was deposited after the concrete surface went out of use. This was sealed by a reddish-brown gravel levelling/dumping layer (201) that measured 0.4m, which was later sealed by layer (200) a greyish-brown sandy-silt topsoil containing moderate 19th – 20th century ceramic building material (CBM). No finds were recovered from Trench F.

5.3 *Trench E*

Trench E measured 5m by 2.3m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 3m (Plate 4). The earliest deposit detected was a mixed red sand and clay natural, excavated to a depth of 1m. This was sealed by two levelling deposits (302) and (301) respectively. Levelling (302) was a greenish-grey clayey-silt that measured 1.2m in depth and (301) was a reddish-brown sand with moderate stone inclusions with a depth of 0.4m. Layer (301) was sealed by a topsoil that measured 0.4m of a similar description as topsoil seen in Trenches D and F. No finds were recovered from Trench E.

5.4 Trench H

Trench H measured 5m by 2.3m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.8m (Plate 5). A reddish-brown silty-clay layer (404) excavated to a depth of 0.2m was the earliest deposit detected and possibly represented the natural. Truncating layer (404) was the construction cut of the Gas Works House foundation that extended further than 0.4m below excavation. The construction cut was in-filled by a reddish-brown silty-clay (401). This was sealed by a dark-greyish-brown/black sandy-clayey-silt levelling (401) that measured 0.2m in depth and contained 19th – 20th century CBM inclusions. Above layer (401) was the tarmac surface (400). No finds were recovered from this trench.

5.5 Trench A

Measuring 3.5m by 3m Trench A was excavated to a maximum depth of 2.5m (Plate 6). The earliest deposit identified within this trench was red sand (505) excavated to a depth of 0.1m. This was sealed by a contaminated layer (504) that consisted of a black tarry sludge/residue, which measured 0.15m in depth. This deposit appeared to have been capped by a reddish-brown silty-clay re-deposited natural (503) that was 1.1m in depth. Above layer (503) was another contaminated layer (502) that consisted of greyish-black clayey-silt and measured 0.4m in depth. Sealing layer (502) was a levelling (501) that consisted of a dark brown sandy-clayey-silt 0.5m in depth. Above layer (501) was a topsoil (500) that measured 0.4m in depth. No finds were recovered from Trench A.

5.6 Trench C

Trench C measured 5m by 2m and excavated to a maximum depth of 2.7m (Plate 7). The basal deposit within this trench was a dark blackish-grey alluvium (603) that contained rare CBM inclusions. This was sealed by two layers of re-deposited natural (602) and (601) respectively. Layer (602) was 0.5m in depth and consisted of greenish-grey silty-clay and (601) was 0.3m in depth and was a reddish-brown silty-clayey sand. Above (601) was a hardcore bedding and tarmac surface 0.25m in depth. No finds were recovered from this trench.

5.7 Trench B

This trench measured 5m by 2m and excavated to a maximum depth of 1.3m (Plate 8). The earliest deposit within this trench was a dark blackish-grey alluvium (702) that excavated to a depth of 0.5m. Above (702) was layer (701) that consisted of a reddish-brown silty-sandy-clay re-deposited natural 0.6m in depth. Sealing (701) was a hardcore bedding and tarmac surface 0.2m in depth. No finds were recovered from Trench B.

6.0 Discussion and Conclusions.

No archaeological features pre-dating the gas works were detected within the trenches. It's possible that any surviving archaeology within these areas were either truncated during the construction of the gas works or by excavation of pits to bury unwanted by-products of the gas production, this may be indicated by thick layers of re-deposited natural seen in some trenches.

The former concrete surface identified Trench F is most likely associated with the former gas works. With the exception of disused service pipes seen in some of the trenches no other major structural elements associated with the gas works were detected. It is probable that after the gas works was closed items of plant involved with the production of 'town gas' - gasholders, retorts, hydraulic mains etc. were removed from site.

The sequences of deposits recorded with of each trench were identified as activities related to operation of the former gas works and probably its disuse.

7.0 Bibliography

Jones, William, 2006, 2nd edition. *Dictionary of Industrial Archaeology*. Sutton Publishing.

Geological Survey, 1973. *Geological Survey of Great Britain (England and Wales)*. Solid and Drift, Sheet 62

8.0 Appendix 1 ~ List of Contexts.

Context no.	Description	Thickness	Extent
<i>Trench D</i>			
100	Layer. Greyish-brown sandy-silt containing moderate ceramic building material (CBM), coal and charcoal fleck inclusions. Topsoil.	0.4m approx	2.8m x 1.2m
101	Layer. Greyish-black clayey-silt containing occasional sub-angular stone and CBM inclusions. Levelling.	0.6m approx	2.8m x 1.2m
102	Layer. Yellowish-brown/grey clayey-silt containing occasional stone inclusions.	1m approx	2.8m x 1.2m
103	Layer. Dark greyish-black silty-clay containing occasional stone inclusions. Alluvium.	1m approx	2.8m x 1.2m
<i>Trench F</i>			
200	Layer. Greyish-brown sandy-silt containing moderate ceramic building material (CBM), coal and charcoal fleck inclusions. Topsoil.	0.4m approx	2.3m x 4m
201	Layer. Reddish-brown gravel. Levelling/dumping	0.4m approx	2.3m x 4m
202	Layer. Dark brown sandy-clayey-silt containing occasional stone inclusions. Buried soil horizon.	0.2m approx	2.3m x 4m
203	Layer. Concrete surface.	0.35m approx	2.3m x 4m
204	Layer. Brown sandy-silt. Bedding deposit.	0.2m approx	2.3m x 4m

205	Layer. Mixed red sand and greyish-yellow clay. Contaminated natural.	1.5m approx exc	2.3m x 4m
<i>Trench E</i>			
300	Layer. Greyish-brown sandy-silt containing moderate ceramic building material (CBM), coal and charcoal fleck inclusions. Topsoil.	0.4m approx	2.3m x 5m
301	Layer. Reddish-brown sand with frequent stone inclusions. Levelling/dumping.	0.4m approx	2.3m x 5m
302	Layer. Greyish-green clayey-silt. Levelling/dumping	1.2m	2.3m x 5m
303	Layer. Mixed red sand and greyish-yellow clay. Natural.	1m approx exc	2.3m x 5m
<i>Trench H</i>			
400	Layer. Tarmac surface.	0.1m approx	2.1m x 0.8m
401	Layer. Dark greyish-brown/black sandy-silt containing moderate ceramic building material (CBM), coal and charcoal fleck inclusions. Levelling.	0.2m approx	2.1m x 0.8m
402	Fill. Reddish-brown silty-clay containing occasional stone inclusions. Backfill of construction cut [403].	0.4m approx exc	-
403	Foundation construction cut of Gas Works House building.	0.4m approx exc	-
404	Layer. Reddish-brown silty-clay. Possible natural.	0.2m approx exc	2.1m x 0.8m
<i>Trench A</i>			
500	Layer. Dark greyish-brown sandy-clayey-silt containing moderate ceramic building material (CBM), coal and charcoal fleck inclusions. Levelling/dumping.	0.4m approx	3.5m x 3m
501	Layer. Dark greyish-brown/black sandy-clayey-silt containing moderate ceramic building material (CBM), coal and charcoal fleck inclusions. Levelling.	0.5m approx	3.5m x 3m
502	Layer. Dark greyish-black sandy-clayey-silt containing moderate ceramic building material (CBM), coal and charcoal fleck inclusions. Levelling/dumping.	0.4m approx	3.5m x 3m
503	Layer. Reddish-brown silty-clay. Clay capping over (504).	1.1m approx	3.5m x 3m
504	Layer. Black tarry residue/sludge. Contamination.	0.15m approx	3.5m x 3m
505	Layer. Dark-reddish-brown sand. Natural.	0.1m approx exc	3.5m x 3m
<i>Trench C</i>			
600	Layer. Tarmac and bedding.	0.25m approx	5.2m x 2m
601	Layer. Reddish-brown silty-clayey-sand containing occasional CBM inclusions.	0.3m approx	5.2m x 2m
602	Layer. Greyish-green silty-clay. Re-deposited natural.	0.5m approx	5.2m x 2m
603	Layer. Dark blackish-grey silty-clay containing rare CBM inclusions. Alluvium.	1.6m approx exc	5.2m x 2m
<i>Trench B</i>			
700	Layer. Tarmac and bedding.	0.2m approx	5m x 2m
701	Layer. Reddish-brown silty-sandy-clay. Re-deposited natural	0.6m approx	5m x 2m
702	Layer. Dark blackish-grey silty-clay. Heavily contaminated alluvium		5m x 2m

9.0 Appendix 2 ~ Archive Index.

Photographic Register.

Frame no.	Description	View	Scale	Initials and date
<i>Digital 30/06/10 – 02/07/10</i>				
1 - 2	Identification shots – Front of redevelopment	W	-	BJMcC 30/06/10
3 - 5	Identification shots – Within redevelopment area	-	-	BJMcC 30/06/10
6 – 8	North facing section Trench D	S	0.5m	BJMcC 30/06/10
9 – 14	South facing section Trench F	N	0.5m	BJMcC 30/06/10
15	Location shot Trench F	N	0.5m	BJMcC 30/06/10
16 – 21	East facing section Trench E	NW	0.5m	BJMcC 30/06/10
22	1m	N	-	BJMcC 30/06/10
23	Location shot Trench H	-	-	BJMcC 30/06/10
24 – 29	South facing section Trench H	N	1m	BJMcC 01/07/10
30	Location shot Trench A	-	-	BJMcC 01/07/10
31 – 36	East facing section Trench A	W	1m	BJMcC 01/07/10
37	Location shot Trench C	W	1m	BJMcC 02/07/10
38 - 43	East facing section Trench C	W	1m	BJMcC 02/07/10
44	Location shot Trench B	W	1m	BJMcC 02/07/10
45 – 50	East facing section Trench B	W	1m	BJMcC 02/07/10

10.0 Appendix 3 ~ The Plates.



Plate 1. General site shot looking north



Plate 2. North-facing section Trench D



Plate 3. South-facing section Trench F



Plate 4. East-facing section Trench E



Plate 5. Trench H looking northeast



Plate 6. East facing section Trench A



Plate 7. East-facing section Trench C



Plate 8. East-facing section Trench B