



# BRISTOL & WEST ARCHAEOLOGY

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Proposed site for Dolphin School,  
Land off Bath Buildings, Montpelier,  
Bristol

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## Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Client: BAM Construction

23 September 2016

# Bristol & West Archaeology

**Planning Authority:**

**Bristol City Council**

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**National Grid Reference:**

**ST 5911 7437**

**Author: Raymond K Ducker**

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## Proposed site for Dolphin School, Land off Bath Buildings, Montpelier, Bristol

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**Summary**

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Bristol and West Archaeology on the site of the former Fowlers Engineering Works off Bath Buildings, Montpelier, Bristol. Groundworks comprised the removal of concrete engineering bases, floors, deeply-founded walls from former buildings and excavations for ground beams and site services.

A culvert for Cutler's Mill Brook which was recorded during adjacent development works in 2012 (BaRAS 2012) was further exposed and recorded towards the rear of the current site. Other structures recorded comprise an underground storage tank, engineering pit, conduit and cistern, all of 19th/20th century date. A single, undated pit and layer of buried garden soil were revealed in the site entrance off Bath Buildings.

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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Planning consent (13/05209/F) was granted by Bristol City Council for the construction of a new school located off Bath Buildings, Montpelier, Bristol. Attached to the consent was a planning condition for an archaeological watching brief during development groundworks.
- 1.2 The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (BWA 2015) approved by Bristol City Council and followed the *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (CIfA 2014) and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE: The Project Managers' Guide)* (EH 2006).
- 1.3 The fieldwork was conducted by Raymond Ducker between the 1st of September 2015 and the 8th of September 2016. This report was written by Raymond Ducker. The project archive will be deposited with Bristol City Museums and Art Gallery under the accession number 2015/70. The project is included in the Bristol Historic Environment Record database as BHER 25531 and in the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) database as Bristola3-222032.

## **2. SITE LOCATION AND GEOLOGY**

- 2.1 The site is centred on NGR ST 5911 7437 and was formerly occupied by Fowler's Engineering Works (now demolished) located between Cheltenham Road and Bath Buildings, Montpelier, Bristol.
- 2.2 The British Geological Survey 1:50,000 scale map for the area lists the natural strata as Charmouth Mudstone Formation - Mudstone. Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 183 to 197 million years ago in the Jurassic Period. Local environment previously dominated by shallow seas. No superficial deposits are recorded.

## **3. OBJECTIVES AND RECORDING METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1 The Watching Brief followed the methodology outlined in the Written Scheme of Investigation (BWA 2015) and involved monitoring all intrusive groundwork.
- 3.2 No artefacts or ecofacts were found. All archaeological and non-archaeological features and deposits were recorded on standard BWA Ltd pro-forma sheets with scaled plans and section drawings as appropriate. All records, drawings and photographs have been prepared as a standard archive according to English Heritage MAP2 standards and will be stored eventually with Bristol City Museums Service.

## **4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 In the early 19th century most of the site and immediate environs was agricultural land. It adjoins land formerly occupied by Terret's Mill, first documented in 1708 and later by an open air pool by the name of Rennison's Baths, an 18th century bathing pool and Bristol's oldest public baths -, said to have formed the core of the new, fashionable suburb of Montpelier. The site has now been redeveloped into the Montpelier Health Centre and was the subject of an archaeological excavation and watching brief as part of that development. That work revealed a series of buildings and associated features of 18th century date, including construction phases thought to comprise Victorian alterations and additions to the

Baths (Longman and Smith 2013). Also revealed was part of the culvert for Cutler's Mill Brook, including evidence for a sluice gate.

- 4.2 There is, however, documentary evidence for industrial use of the site the subject of this report from 1855, with workshops, timber yard toy factory and engineering works occupying the site (Etheridge 2013).

## **5. RESULTS**

### **Piles/Pile Caps**

- 5.1 A contiguous piled wall was constructed along the western and northern boundaries of the site and piles were also utilised as a foundation for a sprinkler tank and generally for building foundations. Although piling itself was not monitored as part of the watching brief, excavations to remove obstructions which could hinder the piling, and for the formation of pile caps, were observed.
- 5.2 Pile-caps 16-18 for Sprinkler Tank - excavated into the north side of the culvert for Cutler's Mill Brook. The culvert (Structure 106) had vertical walls of mixed brick and sandstone rubble, up to 0.8m thick, while the roof was flat, of heavily mortared brick supported over iron rafters. Internal dimensions of the culvert were 3.1m. across and 2.1m. high and although partially filled with rubble, there were no signs of a flowing brook within the chamber. Built above the walls of the culvert were two masonry walls (107) and (108).
- 5.3 Immediately south of the culvert lay a rectangular, concrete chamber (102) divided in two by a brick wall, truncated by a brick culvert (103) and with a barrel-vaulted roof. Nearby lay a brick-built cistern (115).

### **5.4 Ground beams**

- 5.5 Extensive ground-beams were excavated between pile-caps and approximately eighty-percent of these were monitored. Dug to depths of between 0.5m - 1.5m, generally the excavations revealed deposits of made-up ground (101), averaging 200mm deep underlying concrete surfaces and overlying brownish/red natural geological deposits (111). The exception to this sequence was in an excavation in the south of the site which revealed 0.8m of made ground (109) overlying a 0.5m deep layer of topsoil (110) above the natural clay.

### **Service Trenches**

- 5.6 Trenches were excavated across the site for a variety of services. Service Trench 1 reached a maximum depth of 2m, revealing below a modern road surface, made-ground layer (109) above garden soil deposit (110). The northeast side of the trench was the face of a masonry wall (104) which continued above ground level beyond the trench where it became the garden boundary to No 27 Bath Buildings.
- 5.7 Service Trench 2 - dug to a depth of 1.1m and revealed a rectangular brick built pit over a concrete base.
- 5.8 Service Trench 3 - excavated to a maximum depth of 1m through made-ground (101) averaging 200mm thick and archaeologically sterile clay (111). The culvert for Cutlers Mill Brook was breached at the northeast end of the trench for manhole MH C02.

- 5.9 Service Trench 4 – excavation revealed a shallow layer of made-ground (101) over the natural clay (111) which was cut by an un-dated, silty clay-filled, pit-like feature (113,114).

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 No significant archaeological features were revealed during the watching brief.
- 6.2 Not surprisingly, the site was covered in made-ground of late post-medieval date, with the culvert for Cutlers Mill Brook forming a north-eastern boundary. Elsewhere on the site, 19th/20th-century features such as cisterns, machine bases and an inspection pit were indicative of the site's industrial use as workshops and, until recently, an engineering works.
- 6.3 The fieldwork resulted in the recovery of no finds.

## 7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## 8. APPENDIX 1 TABLE OF CONTEXTS

No	Type	Description	Length	Width	Depth	Date
100	-	Unstratified finds	-	-	-	-
101	Deposit	Made-ground horizon, very mixed and of varying colour from pale grey to dark brown, red-brown and black according to constituent parts. Compacted but poorly sorted mix of brick and tile (whole and broken) mixed sandstone and limestone rubble (up to very large size) mortar, coal	Whole of site but also recorded as (109).			C18/ 19



		waste and dark brown silty clay. Varying amounts of scrap metal and rare sand lenses. Made-ground material, same as (109).				
102	Structure	Rectangular concrete tank with a central partition of bricks and a base of concrete – no roof apparent.	c.8m long c2.5m wide overall 2 compartments of 1.05m and 1.10m		0.9m	C20
103	Structure	Two parallel brick walls (bricks 230 x 110 x 70mm) with a brick arch formed using tongue and groove, hollow, airway bricks (150 x 230 x 70mm). No base visible. Uppermost course of bricks in side walls is recessed to act as springer for arch. Conduit of unknown function.	c.5m	0.8m	0.7m	C19
104	Wall	Large, unworked, uncoursed, sandstone rubble (average size 230 x 170 x 80mm). Bonded with grey lime mortar with lime and charcoal fleck inclusions. Probably a boundary wall.	c. 9m	-	1m	C19
105	Surface	Limestone slabs abutting south side of (106). Recorded in section only.	2m x unexcavated		50mm	C19
106	Structure	Two parallel side walls and a roof of bricks (230 x 110 x 70mm) and dark grey lime mortar, supported by iron girders. No visible base. Largely backfilled with bricks. Culverted Cutlers Mill Brook. Sidewalls are random coursed, limestone rubble (average 200 x 150 x 80mm) bonded with a strong dark grey lime mortar.	Interior chamber is 3.1m wide. Structure is 2m from bottom of walls to inside of roof.			C18
107	Wall	Built over the southwest side of culverted Cutlers Mill Brook. Unworked, random coursed limestone rubble (average size 180 x 100 x 80mm) bonded with a weak brownish grey lime mortar.	In section only 450mm wide		0.8m	C19
108	Wall	Built over the northeast side of culverted Cutlers Mill Brook. Unworked, random coursed limestone rubble (average size 180 x 100 x 80mm) bonded with a weak, brownish/grey lime mortar.	In section only 300mm wide. 3.1m wide cavity between (107) and (108) filled with bricks		1m	C19

109	Deposit	Made-ground. Very mixed and of varying colour, from pale grey to dark brown, red-brown and black. Compacted, poorly sorted mix of brick and tile, sandstone and limestone rubble (up to very large size) mortar, coal waste and dark brown silty clay. Varying amounts of scrap metal and rare sand lenses	Same as (101) but recorded in Trench 1	300mm – 700mm	C18/19
110	Deposit	Firm, very dark brown/black silt and clay (c 50-50%) with rare small sandstone fragment inclusions as well as charcoal and lime mortar flecks. Garden soil.	Mostly on the west side of the site in a strip approximately 5m wide but also recorded during excavation of services along the site entrance road	Varies but averages 400 – 500mm	-
111	Deposit	Stiff brownish red clay with mudstone outcropping within it.	Much of the site in base of pile-caps, services and footings	2m+	-
112	Structure	Rectangle of four brick walls (mainly laid stretcher bond) over a concrete base.	c. 2m x 1m	1m	C19
113	Cut	Sub-oval pit feature in base of MHF 05b. Top 500mm removed but not fully excavated.	1.7m x 1.1m	>500mm	-
114	Deposit	Firm, mid brown/strong brown silty clay with rare, small medium limestone fragment inclusions. Fills cut (113).	1.7m x 1.1m	>500mm	-
115	Structure	4 walls of brick with cement bonding and a base of Pennant sandstone slabs. Probable cistern.	1.5m x 4m	1.2m	C19

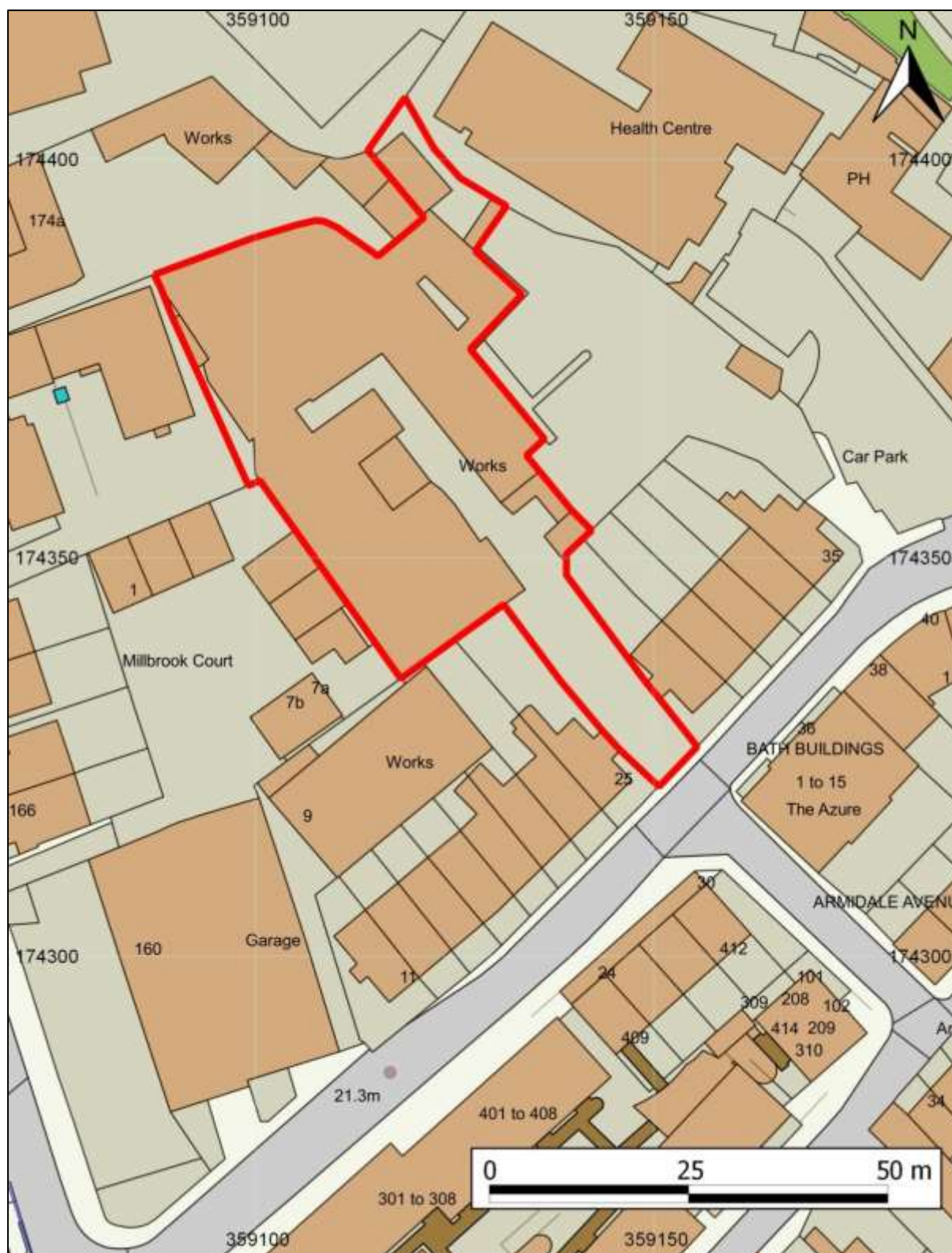


Figure 1. Site location. Scale as shown. © Ordnance Survey maps reproduced by consent of the Controller of H M Stationery Office, Licence No. WL1005476.

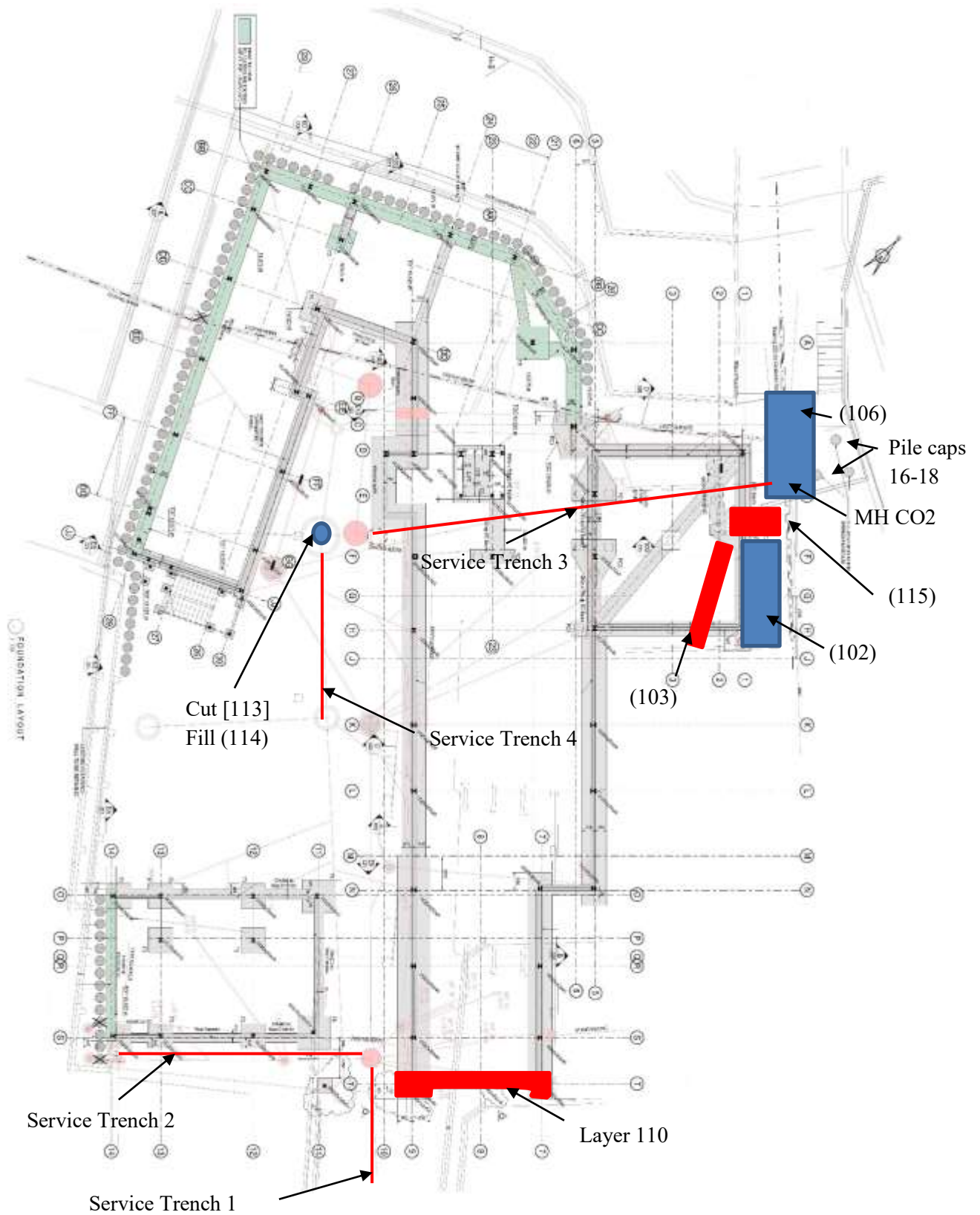




Figure 2. Location of features and deposits located during the Archaeological Monitoring, scale 1: 357.



Plate 1. Culvert (103) foreground and Structure (102) background, looking NW. Scale 2m.



Plate 2. Interior of Culvert (103) looking N. No scale.



Plate 3. Interior of Culvert, (Structure 106) looking N. No scale



Plate 4. Cross-section of the culvert (Structure 106) as exposed during excavation for pile-cap, looking S. Scale 2m.



Plate 5. Service Trench 1 as excavated, looking N. Scale 2m.



Plate 6. Cut 113, Fill 114 in base of Trench 4, looking S. Scale 2m.





Plate 7. Excavation for Groundbeam in west corner of the site, looking NW. Scale 2m.



Plate 8. Typical trench for Groundbeam, looking S. Scale 2m.





Plate 9. Groundbeam excavation showing Layer (110), looking SW. Scale 2m.



Plate 10. Service Trench 1 as completed, looking N. Scale 1m.