



BRISTOL & WEST ARCHAEOLOGY

The former Post Office Sorting
Depot, Cattle Market Road,
Bristol

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Client: Kier Construction (Western and Wales)
07 September 2017

Bristol & West Archaeology

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The former Post Office Sorting Depot, Cattle Market Road, Bristol
Archaeological Watching Brief Report

1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	SITE LOCATION AND GEOLOGY	1
3.	OBJECTIVES AND RECORDING METHODOLOGY	1
4.	HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	1
5.	RESULTS.....	2
6.	CONCLUSIONS.....	3
7.	BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES	3
8.	APPENDIX 1 TABLE OF CONTEXTS.....	3

Figures

Figure 1. Location of the site and layout of testpits and boreholes to date. Scale as shown. .8

Plates

Plate 1.	STP 01 as excavated, looking NW, scale 2m.	9
Plate 2.	STP03 as excavated, with culvert in SW corner, looking SW, scale 2m	9
Plate 3.	STP4 as excavated, looking WNW, scale 2m.....	10
Plate 4.	STP 07 as excavated to lower concrete surface, looking E.....	10
Plate 5.	STP 9 as excavated, looking W, scale 2m.	11
Plate 6.	STP 10 as excavated, looking SE, scale 2m.	11
Plate 7.	STP12 as excavated, looking N, scale 2m.	12
Plate 8.	STP8 as excavated, looking NE, scale 2m.....	12
Plate 9.	STP 14 as excavated, looking SE, scale 2m.	13
Plate 10.	Borehole SBH 01 cores showing alluvial clay, all 1m length.	13

The former Post Office Sorting Depot, Cattle Market Road, Bristol

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Summary

Bristol & West Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological monitoring (watching brief) at The Former Post Office Sorting Depot, Cattlemarket Road, Bristol during groundworks to excavate fifteen test pits and two boreholes. The archaeological objective of the works was to provide further evidence of the Cholera Burial ground located within the study area, part of which was probably located during test-pitting in 2014 (BHER 25409) although a MOLAS watching brief in January 2010 (BHER 24814) had found no evidence of the cholera burial ground..

During these works no features or deposits of archaeological significance were revealed. Those deposits affected by the works comprised modern surfaces of tarmac and concrete sitting over made-ground deposits of later post-medieval date. In some of the Test pits deposits of alluvium were observed below the made-ground horizon and this was excavated to a maximum of 2.4m though no evidence of the Cholera Burial ground was observed.

The former Post Office Sorting Depot, Cattle Market Road, Bristol

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Acknowledgements

Thanks are owed to Timothy Lloyd-Foxe of Kier Construction (Western and Wales) and the groundworkers..

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Planning Consent (11/01328/R) has been granted by Bristol City Council for the refurbishment of the former Post Office Sorting Depot and associated external works located off Cattle Market Road in the centre of Bristol. Attached to the planning consent was a planning condition (#2) for an archaeological watching brief during all groundworks.
- 1.2 The monitoring was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation commissioned by Kier Construction (Western and Wales) which detailed the methodology to be adopted by Bristol & West Archaeology to undertake the archaeological monitoring. It was guided in its composition by *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIFA 2014), *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MORPHE: *The Project Managers' Guide* (EH 2006).
- 1.3 The Archaeological Monitoring (watching brief) will be assigned a Historic Environment Record number. The project will be entered in the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) as Bristol03-291801. An accession number has been requested from Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery.

2. SITE LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1 The site is centred on NGR ST 59894 72452 and is a roughly triangular piece of land that sits on a promontory between the River Avon and Totterdown Basin, part of the Floating Harbor network, to the east. Abutting the site to the west is Bristol Temple Meads station and associated lines entering and exiting the station, whilst immediately to the south is the Castle Market Tavern and a building currently used as timber merchants.
- 2.2 The site itself consists of the former Post Office building, now vacant and completely gutted, its associated car parking and dispatch area to the north and an area of hardstanding to the south.
- 2.3 The British Geological Survey 1:50,000 scale map for the area indicates the natural strata to be Redcliffe Sandstone of the Triassic Period overlain by estuarine alluvium.

3. OBJECTIVES AND RECORDING METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The watching brief followed the methodology outlined in the Written Scheme of investigation (BWA 2017) and involved monitoring all groundworks. Features of archaeological potential were to be cleaned and investigated by hand.
- 3.2 All archaeological and non-archaeological features and deposits were recorded on standard BWA Ltd 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.

4. HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 4.1 None of the early plans of Bristol show the site area in any detail. Rocque's map of 1742 does show the site area as undeveloped marginal land, part of Temple parish. The land was owned by the Corporation and used for grazing. Donne's map of 1826 also shows the site area as undeveloped. Ashmead's plan of 1828 depicts the site of the intended Cattle Market on the development area along with several unidentified structures and a yard. The Cattle Market was moved to this site in 1830. The adjacent plot with its frontage to the non-tidal

- Floating Harbour was chosen as the burial ground of the victims of the 1832 cholera epidemic (1131M].
- 4.2 By 1885, the Ordnance Survey map confirms that the Cattle Market had been constructed with the remainder of the site occupied by a cab stand, carriage shed and saw pit. Other buildings were added to the west of the hotel that was built in circa 1885.
 - 4.3 In 1929 the government made loans available to carry out large public works and it was agreed that the enlargement of Temple Meads would qualify. Under the direction of P.E. Culverhouse the station was enlarged from 1930 to 1935 to more than twice its size. To increase the number of platforms from nine to fifteen, a large slice of the Cattle Market was bought and the hotel and buildings to the west shown on the 1885 Ordnance Survey map were demolished.
 - 4.4 The Cattle Market Tavern and the buildings currently used as a timber merchant's which lie immediately south of the site were constructed between the mid-1930s and early 1940s. The Cattle Market Tavern is marked as "ruins" on the 1949 Ordnance Survey map, probably a result of bombing during WWII. The tavern had been refurbished by 1952. The post office building was constructed in the 1930s' with extensions in the mid-1950s' and again in the late 1960s'. The Cattle Market remained on the site into the mid-20th century.
 - 4.5 Archaeological Monitoring of 7 test pits in July 2014 (BWA 2014) found remains of coffins and burials in one test pit (TP 05, Figure 1).

5. RESULTS

- 5.1 A total of 15 trial pits were opened during the current phase of work, full details of these are listed in the appendices.
- 5.2 Four pits (STP 01 – 04) were excavated to the north of the building. No archaeologically significant deposits were observed in these pits. Those deposits recorded comprised modern tarmac surfacing, gravel bedding deposits and made-ground material overlying an earlier tarmac surface and further deposits of made-ground.
- 5.3 The depth of made-ground between the upper and lower tarmac surfaces varied between 50mm and 800mm between test-pits STP02 and STP04, suggesting an attempt to create a more level area of surfacing.
- 5.4 Six test pits (STP 05 – 10) were excavated to the east of the building to test the location of the cholera burial ground. No evidence of the burial ground was revealed in any of these. In three of the pits (STP 5, 6 and 8) modern tarmac surfaces and gravel bedding deposits overlay a variety of made-ground deposits and above alluvial clay. Test pit STP 07 was halted at a lower concrete surface, approximately 1m deep whilst STP 9 and 10 were wholly excavated into the backfill of a large excavation of modern date, probably the backfilled hole left by removal of fuel storage tanks in 2014.
- 5.5 Four test pits were excavated to the south of the PO Building (STP11-14). Of these, STP 13 was halted because of obstructions. The remaining three revealed a variety of late post-medieval and modern made-ground deposits sealing alluvial clay with no evidence of the cholera burial ground being observed. No features or deposits of archaeological significance were exposed.
- 5.6 A single test pit (STP15) was excavated inside the old Postal Sorting Office. After removal of the reinforced concrete floor mixed made-ground deposits were recorded to an

approximate depth of 1.5m. No further excavation was possible at this time owing to limitations of available space and no evidence of the cholera burial ground or any features of archaeological significance were exposed.

- 5.7 Two bore holes (SBH 1 & 2) were also monitored as part of the works and these also produced no evidence of the cholera burial ground. Two further boreholes were abandoned during attempts to open the second borehole owing to subterranean obstructions (SHP 01 & SH02).
- 5.8 A large test pit of irregular shape had previously been opened on the site adjacent STP's 2 and 3. No detailed recording was undertaken but a linear brick wall running across the pit may be related to buildings of former railway buildings that were shown here on the Ordnance Survey 1st Edition.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The excavation of four test pits north of the Post Office Building revealed modern surfaces and made-ground the full extent of which was not determined.
- 6.2 Six further test pits and a borehole east of the building exposed similar made-ground sealing alluvial clay but no further evidence of the previously located cholera burial ground.
- 6.3 Test pits south of the building exposed a similar sequence of made-ground over alluvial clay and likewise no evidence of the former burial ground. A test pit and borehole inside the post-office building made-ground deposits, and in the case of the borehole, alluvial clay, but no trace of the burial ground.
- 6.4 No further evidence for the cholera burial ground identified during the 2014 watching brief was recorded during this phase of works. The location and extent of the former burial pit is therefore difficult to ascertain though at least part of it could have been removed during the installation of the now removed fuel tanks.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

BWA 2017, *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief at the former Post Office Sorting Depot, Cattle Market Road, Bristol.*

8. APPENDIX 1 TABLE OF CONTEXTS

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Date
100	Deposit	Tarmac surface also recorded as (200) (300) (400) (500) (801) (1100) (1200) (1400) in test pits 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 11, 12 and 14	Whole test pit(s)		50-140mm	C20
101	Deposit	Modern gravel as bedding for tarmac also recorded as (201) (301) (401) (501) (802) (1201) (1401) in test pits 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 12 and 14. Also recorded as part of (1100) in	Whole test pit		300 - 500mm	C20

		test pit STP11.			
102	Deposit	Made-ground Deposit, Black, compacted deposit with high coal waste content and occasional small-medium (150mm average width) sandstone rubble fragments.	Whole test pit	300mm	C20
103	Deposit	Lower Tarmac surface also recorded as (203) (302) (402) (502) in test pits 2, 3, 4, 5	Whole test pit	50-120mm	C20
104	Deposit	Made-ground deposit, c.90% bricks and brick rubble in matrix of very dark greyish brown sandy, silt.	Whole test pit	2.6m+	C19/20
105	Deposit	Made-ground deposit of brick rubble and mid-brown, sandy/gritty silt.	Whole test pit in section	200mm	C19/20
202	Deposit	Very dark greyish brown made-ground deposit with high coal waste content and occasional small-medium (150mm average width) sandstone rubble fragments.	Whole test pit in section	300mm	C20
204	Deposit	Red/red brown compacted clay and brick rubble made-ground deposit.	Whole test pit in section	200mm	C19/20
205	Deposit	Very dark greyish brown, sandy silt and sandstone/brick rubble made-ground deposit.	Whole test pit in section	600mm	C19/20
206	Deposit	Black made-ground deposit with abundant coal waste content.	Whole test pit in section	500mm	C19/20
207	Deposit	Lime mortar band. Made-ground Deposit.	Whole test pit in section	150mm	C19/20
208	Deposit	Brown/reddish brown silty clay with occasional sandstone rubble fragment inclusions, made-ground deposit.	Whole test pit in section	1.4m	-
303	Deposit	Compacted layer including large rubble blocks (c300 x 180mm average size). Made-ground deposit.	Whole test pit in section	500mm	C19/20
304	Deposit	Red-brown clay with occasional brick and sandstone rubble fragment inclusions. Made-ground Deposit.	Whole test pit in section.	300mm	C19/20
305	Deposit	Made-ground deposit, c.90% bricks and brick rubble in matrix of very dark greyish brown sandy, silt.	Whole test pit in section.	250mm	C19/20

306	Deposit	Made-ground, black, compacted deposit with high coal waste content. Excavation halted at this level due to presence of culvert structure.	Whole test pit in section.	c200mm	C19/20
403	Deposit	Compacted layer including large rubble blocks (c300 x 180mm average size). Made-ground deposit.	Whole test pit in section	500mm	C19/20
404	Deposit	Brick rubble made-ground deposit.	Whole test pit in section	500mm	C19/20
405	Deposit	Lime mortar and small rubble fragments, made-ground deposit.	Whole test pit in section	800mm	C19/20
406	Deposit	Reddish brown clay with occasional (3%) approx. sandstone rubble and brick fragments. Made-ground Deposit.	Whole test pit in section	800mm	C19/20
407	Deposit	Made-ground, black, compacted deposit with high coal waste content.	Whole test pit in section	400mm	C19/20
408	Deposit	Reddish brown stony clay. Interbedded with bands of very dark greyish brown silty clay.	Whole test pit in section	2m	-
409	Deposit	Red sandy clay and sandstone. Made-ground Deposit.	Whole test pit in section	400mm	-
503	Deposit	Concrete Surface.	Whole test pit in section	300mm	C20
504	Deposit	Dump of pale grey lime mortar. Made-ground Deposit.	Whole test pit in section	140mm	C20
505	Deposit	Made-ground, black, compacted deposit with high coal waste content.	Whole test pit in section	500mm	C19/20
506	Deposit	Stiff, brown (upper parts) and grey (lower parts) alluvial clay.	Whole test pit in section	2.4m	-
600	Deposit	Modern gravel layer.	Whole test pit in section	100mm	C20
601	Deposit	Gravel and rubble made-ground deposit.	Whole test pit in section	600mm	C20
602	Deposit	Made-ground, black, compacted deposit with high coal waste content.	Whole test pit in section	700mm	C19/20
603	Deposit	Stiff, brown (upper parts) and grey (lower parts) alluvial clay.	Whole test pit in section	2m	-
700	Deposit	Used to number tarmac and concrete road surfaces and bedding deposits in STP07.	Whole test pit in section	500mm	C20

701	Deposit	Mixed made-ground deposit, mainly coal waste and brick rubble. Test pit halted at 2nd (unnumbered) concrete road surface.	Whole test pit in section	500mm	C20
803	Deposit	Concrete surface.	Whole test pit in section	150mm	C20
804	Surface	Cobbles – part of an earlier surface. Sandstone 240 x 100 x 180mm average.	Whole test pit in section	180mm	C19/20
805	Deposit	Made-ground deposit of clinker.	Whole test pit in section	120mm	C19/20
806	Deposit	Made-ground, black, compacted deposit with high coal waste content.	Whole test pit in section	150mm	C19/20
807	Deposit	Stiff, brown (upper parts) and grey (lower parts) alluvial clay.	Whole test pit in section	2.5m	-
901	Deposit	Gravel/crushed demolition rubble	Whole test pit in section	3m	C19/20
1001	Deposit	Gravel/crushed demolition rubble	Whole test pit in section	3m	19/20th
1101	Deposit	Made-ground, black, compacted deposit with high coal waste content.	Whole test pit in section	500mm	C19/20
1102	Deposit	Brown silty clay with occasional small rubble inclusions. Made-ground Deposit.	Whole test pit in section	1m	C19/20
1103	Deposit	Black ashy made-ground deposit.	Whole test pit in section	300mm	C19/20
1104	Deposit	Stiff, brown (upper parts) and grey (lower parts) alluvial clay.	Whole test pit in section	1.5m	-
1202	Deposit	Mixed interbedded made-ground of varied make-up, includes bricks, stone rubble from small – medium sized, coal waste and lime mortar.	Whole test pit in section	1.5m	C19/20
1203	Deposit	Stiff grey alluvial clay.	Whole test pit in section	1m	-
1402	Deposit	Made-ground, black, compacted deposit with high coal waste content.	Whole test pit in section	400mm	C20
1403	Deposit	Brick rubble and strong brown clay – made-ground deposit.	Whole test pit in section	300mm	C20
1404	Deposit	Stiff grey alluvial clay.	Whole test pit in section	c2.9m	-
1501	Deposit	Modern reinforced concrete floor of Post Office building	Whole test pit in section	200mm	C20

1502	Deposit	Mixed, very dark greyish brown/black made-ground deposit. Concrete, rubble and lime mortar within a sandy, clayey silt soil matrix.	Whole test pit in section	1.3m	C20
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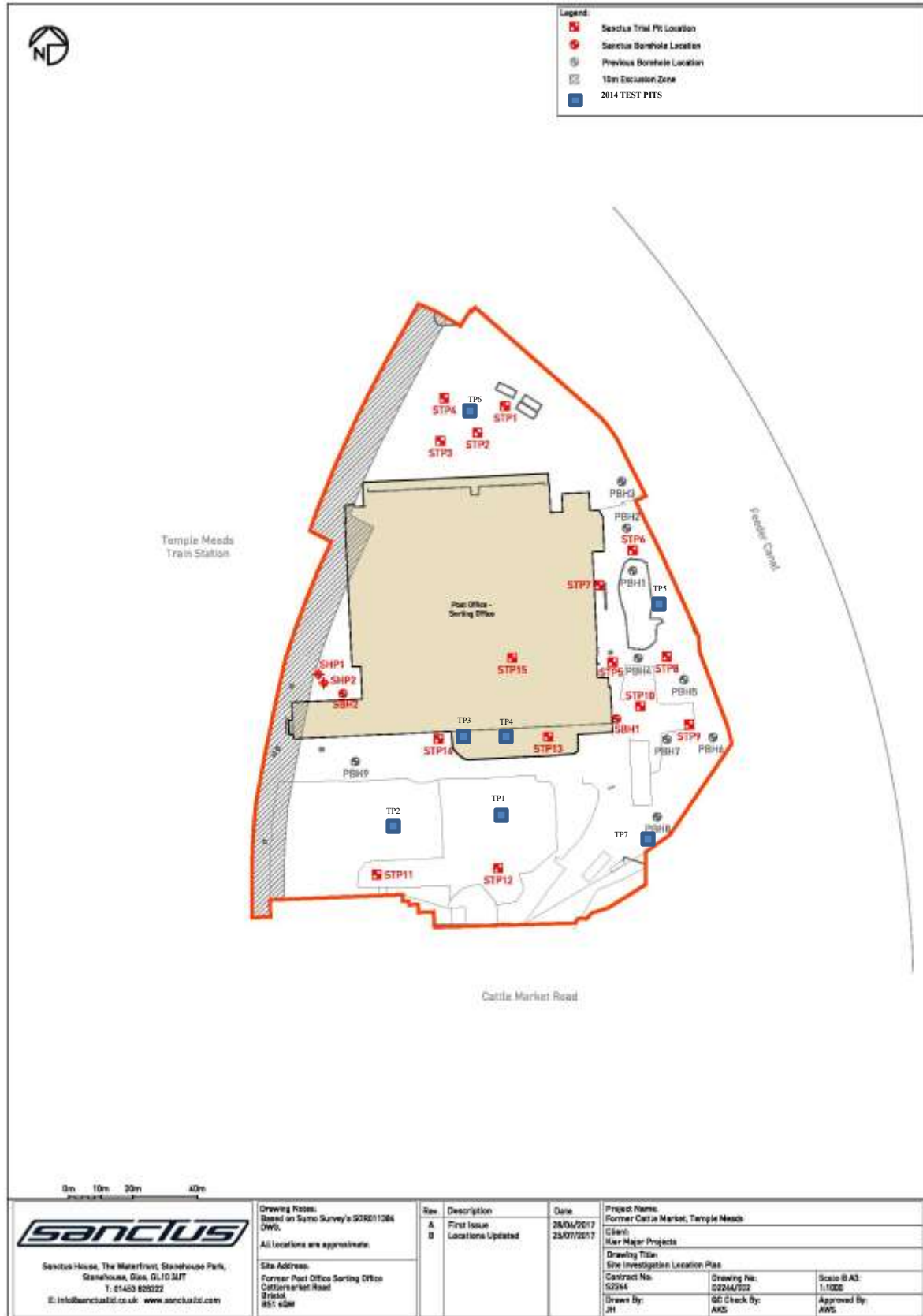


Figure 1. Location of the site and layout of test-pits and boreholes to date. Scale as shown.



Plate 1. STP 01 as excavated, looking NW, scale 2m.



Plate 2. STP03 as excavated, with culvert in SW corner, looking SW, scale 2m



Plate 3. STP4 as excavated, looking WNW, scale 2m



Plate 4. STP 07 as excavated to lower concrete surface, looking E



Plate 5. STP 9 as excavated, looking W, scale 2m.



Plate 6. STP 10 as excavated, looking SE, scale 2m.



Plate 7. STP12 as excavated, looking N, scale 2m.



Plate 8. STP8 as excavated, looking NE, scale 2m.



Plate 9. STP 14 as excavated, looking SE, scale 2m.



Plate 10. Borehole SBH 01 cores showing alluvial clay, all 1m lengths.